

A THEORY OF RECURRENT STATUS VALIDATION  
PROCESSES: AN EXTENSION AND ASSESSMENT  
WITH EMPHASIS ON THE ADULT PROTECTIVE  
SERVICES EVALUATION AND THE ROLE  
OF STATUS CHARACTERISTICS IN  
THE CREATION OF THE  
ABUSED ELDER

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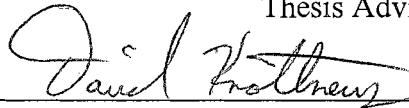
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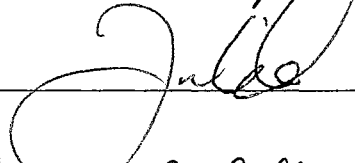
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## Chapter I

### Nature of the Problem

Today the social context in which many elderly people live is one of negative stereotypes and opinions. These stereotypes not only denigrate one's self worth and self esteem, but may often result in differential treatment. In many respects, the elderly in current society probably bear the burden of more discrimination, societal indifference, and less advocacy than any other large group of people. Confort (1978), for example, has observed that as a society, we have imposed arbitrary roles upon seniors. Moreover, we have convinced ourselves and the aged that they are incapable of independence, intelligent behavior, sexuality, employment, or functional mental health. As a result, behavior which is counterintuitive to the expectations engendered by the "senior" status may be met with quite negative sanctions. Such sanctions, from an unapproving glance to institutionalization, are most likely imposed to preserve our conception of social reality rather than a necessary reaction to the reality of which we are actually a part. Hickey and Douglass (1981) have documented some of these perceptions and report that older dependent adults are often treated in ways that diminish their identity and dignity. In addition, the aged are quite often treated like children, over-protected, over-supervised, denied most opportunities to become independent, and frequently omitted from participating in important decisions that have a lasting impact on the remainder of their lives.

According to data collected by AARP and the Administration on Aging (1992),

persons 65 years or older numbered 32.3 million in 1992. This is a substantial increase in the number of elderly within this century alone; approximately ten times the 3.1 million elderly of 1900. Yet, this is not the end of America's transformation to an aged culture, but rather a point on the continuum. The AARP and Administration on Aging project that by 2030, there will be approximately 70 million older persons. This is more than twice their number in 1990. In addition, people aged 65 and over are projected to represent 13% of the population by the turn of the century and they are expected to increase to 20% by 2030.

This demographic trend known as the "graying of America" will not necessarily bring with it a host of new social problems. Rather, the magnitude and recognition of existing social problems associated with the elderly is likely to increase as a greater proportion of the population reaches old age. Among the social problems which have most recently gained our society's attention is elder abuse. However, contrary to many accounts, the phenomenon of elder abuse is not new.

Abuse and neglect of older persons are by no means new phenomena. Shakespeare's King Lear is replete with many brilliant psychological insights into how abuse of one's own parent can occur. What's new however, is a mounting public awareness of this problem (Movsas and Movsas, 1980, p. 163)

Adult abuse was recognized at the federal level as early as 1975. Following this recognition, in 1981 the U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Aging wrote that "the abuse of the elderly at the hands of their children until recent times has remained a shameful and hidden problem..."

In considering the construction of social knowledge and the generation of social policy regarding elder abuse, analogies with other forms of domestic violence,



namely child abuse and wife battering, are instinctive. Like child abuse or wife battering, the discovery of elder abuse and its conceptualization as a social issue were not primarily the result of the emergence or escalation of the problem. Whether we look to Shakespeare's King Lear or to homicide statistics, the evidence suggests that elder abuse is not a new phenomenon though the magnitude of the problem is likely to increase as a greater proportion of the population reaches old age. In effect, awareness of abuse was not stimulated by changes in incidence or prevalence, but rather by changes in attitudes. As the women's movement has been credited with fostering recognition of wife abuse, so has the rise of champions for the aged - as well as the snowballing effects of investigations in other areas of abuse - encouraged the transformation of elder abuse into a social problem worthy of state intervention (Filinson, 1989, p. 17).

Recent studies on elder abuse have given rise to basic questions such as: who is the abused and who is the abuser? Although these questions may be necessary from the perspective of the social worker or other service provider, they may not be sufficient to provide sociological understanding of this emerging phenomenon. If the sociologist is truly interested in understanding elder abuse, he can not simply investigate what Alfred Schutz has called the "world-taken-for-granted." Instead, the sociologist must paradoxically broaden and narrow his focus to gain understanding of the multilevel characteristics of the phenomenon under study which he calls social reality. According to Peter Berger (1963), social reality has many layers of meaning. Consequently, things are not always what they seem. In this respect, elder abuse is not unique. Common sensical explanations and assessments have, to one degree or another, addressed the phenomenon as an isolated interaction between the "abuser" and the "abused." In so doing, typologies of the abused elder have emerged which are then used to direct classification and state intervention. This, of course, is carried out at the expense of a sociological understanding of the phenomenon.

This understanding begins with not only the acknowledgment of ageist attitudes, but also with the recognition that they can only exist within a cultural context which gives them meaning. These attitudes and the meaning they engender are evidenced in the social world, through the creation of cognitive constructs. These constructs (i.e., social stereotypes) then provide the actor with a framework through which to make sense of ambiguous social situations (i.e., formulate structure). Ironically, while providing the actor with a mechanism which can be used to structure ambiguous social realities, the same construct (i.e., social stereotype) provides the basis for the differential treatment of certain status groups. These socially assigned identities contained within a specific cultural context then determine the relative power and prestige order of actors during periods of interaction. This phenomenon is further intensified in task oriented (i.e., problem solving) groups or during interactions in which one actor is charged with the specific task of evaluating another. Martin and Knottnerus (1994) suggested this process in their work on the role of status stereotypes and their influence on the judicial decision making process. The decision making process which is inherent in the Adult Protective Services Evaluation is not unlike the decisions made in any other ambiguous situation. Moreover, the processes have been bureaucratized and status stereotypes have been modified into typologies.

These typologies of the abused elder then structure the Protective Services' Evaluation. Interestingly, these older persons who previously may have not been relegated to a minority position are suddenly equated with their newly assigned identities. Berger (1963) suggests that the sociological perspective is innately at odds with view

points that totally equate men with their socially assigned identities. As such, the sociologist moves beyond the official interpretation of a phenomenon by uncovering the inconsistencies and implications associated with strict interpretations of such socially assigned identities.

The sociologist ought, therefore, to have difficulties with any set of categories that supply appellations to people - "Negros," "whites," "Caucasians," or for that matter, "Jews," "Gentiles," "Americans," "Westerners." In one way or another, with more or less malignancy, all such appellations become exercises in "bad faith" as soon as they are charged with ontological implications. Sociology makes us understand that a "Negro" is a person so designated by society, that this designation releases pressures that will tend to make him into the designated image (Berger, 1963, p. 157).

This, too, can be said of the abused elder, he or she is recognized as being abused, neglected, or exploited because they have been so designated by society. In the case at hand, the elder is not only designated by society, but also may be subjected to a complex set of interactions with an agent of the state. This agent then employs (as do all social actors attempting to structure an ambiguous social reality) pre-existing cognitive constructs (i.e., social stereotypes) to determine the power and prestige of the abused elder relative to other members of society. More specifically, this decision-making process may result in the differential treatment of various segments of the elderly population.

The purpose of this research, then, is to examine how status characteristics (i.e., social stereotypes) affect the Adult Protective Services' Evaluation. It will be argued that these characteristics may increase the likelihood that pre-existing typologies of the abused elder will be used (i.e., exert some influence) in the assessment, resulting in

differential rates of institutionalization for different categories of persons within the elderly population. A theory focusing on status generalization processes involving a status validation effect will be formally presented and then used to explain the interactional processes which constitute the Protective Services Evaluation. Previous elder abuse research has not been theoretically informed by a context-based theory of decision making. In contrast, this research suggests a formal theoretical model which is built upon the social psychological research program known as expectation states theory which presents an explanation for how status characteristics structure group interaction and social inequalities.

## Chapter II

### Review of Selected Literature

#### Introduction

The following literature review is concerned with providing a general overview of the elder abuse research which has been conducted to date. While there are potentially as many valid perspectives as there are researchers, to progress and therefore potentially gain insight, closure is needed. This approach excludes some perspectives and approaches which might otherwise have been included. Nevertheless, for some level of understanding to occur, both conceptualization and closure are needed.

The focus of this literature review will be to draw the diverse and somewhat conflicting literature related to elder abuse together and present it in a more manageable form. More specifically, the vast array of literature has been drawn together into three conceptual headings. Although some research will be excluded by necessity, the vast majority of research in the field will fall under one of these three headings:

Descriptive/Exploratory, Incidence/Identification, and Service Delivery/Advocacy.

This literature review will be divided into four sections. Section one will examine those studies which are exploratory in nature or which attempt to describe the phenomenon of elder abuse. Section two will provide an overview of those studies which have attempted to either identify indicators of elder abuse or document the incidence of the phenomenon. Section three will address the body of literature which focuses on service delivery and advocacy for the abused elder. Section four will provide a brief summary.

## Descriptive and Exploratory Studies

Exploratory studies which have attempted to assess empirically and describe the phenomenon known as elder abuse originated in the late 1970's and early 1980's. In one of the first articles on elder abuse Katz (1980) argued that although public attention to elder abuse was mounting and mandatory reporting statutes were likely, these statutes would not be without problems. Katz (1980) insightfully suggests that unless such statutes are well thought out, the statutes coupled with ageism, which is pervasive in our society, may actually contribute to abuse by creating an even stronger image of the elderly as incompetent. In the same article Katz also cautions against the use of a child abuse analogy when describing elder abuse. Such an analogy may lead both legislators as well as social workers away from respecting the older person's rights of self determination. Katz (1980) continues, if we believe that the aged enjoy the same fundamental rights of privacy, personal autonomy, and freedom of religious or ethical beliefs as other adults, we must respect their choices, even if they hasten death.

The development of elder abuse policy in the United States as well as the lack of knowledge and focus has been the concern of other authors as well. Wolf (1988) supports Katz's (1980) assertion that in most instances, states relied on child abuse models to develop their legislation, most of which include mandatory reporting laws. In addition:

Mandatory reporting procedures must be stringently analyzed to ensure that they do not look upon the elderly as children, that they do not encourage bigotry against the aged, or that they do not limit older persons' control over their lives (Wolf, 1988, p. 13).

Concerns with defining maltreatment and estimating its prevalence, coupled with concern for the elderly persons natural lifestyle seem to be pervasive. Also in the late 1980's the issue of intervention strategies became the focus for some researchers. Foelker and Chapman (1988) suggest that intervention can be viewed as a continuum from least intrusive to involuntary civil commitment to an institution (i.e., maximally intrusive). These authors continue by noting that when the older person complies with the assessment and recommendation of the professional, there are few if any problems. Unique circumstances tend to arise, however, when the older people object to the intervening professionals recommendations or insist on self determination. This situation then places the intervening professional in position to invoke the powers of the state if he or she sees fit. "When objections are made, the professionals then have to determine if the situation poses such risks that they will have to effect the move by judicial process without the consent of the elderly person" (Foelker and Chapman, 1988, p. 93). Still others suggest that these perspectives may be too severe and argue that much can be learned from the child abuse analogy. "While differences in the two populations require different responses, the experience of the human services in child abuse and neglect can instruct those who plan for services to abused and neglected elderly" (Schene and Ward, 1988, p. 14). Among Schene and Ward's (1988) suggestions are the standardization of definitions, the establishment of a data base, education of the public and professionals, the establishment of a broad continuum of services and a multidisciplinary team approach to treatment and prevention. Hall (1989) echos Schene and Ward's (1988) suggestion that definitions need to be standardized. Hall (1989) argues that despite the many assertions

that there is a general agreement as to what constitutes elder abuse, the research literature contains so many different definitions, descriptors, and labels that a comparison between studies is prevented. As a result Hall (1989) urges specification: "Elder maltreatment encompasses a wide range of acts and conditions, which suggests that policy and practice require greater specification" (Hall, 1989, p. 191).

Researchers from the field of social work also find it notable that there is a lack of specification regarding the definition of elder abuse. "Currently, there is no one uniform accepted or acceptable definition of elder mistreatment" (Valentine and Cash, 1986, p. 17). This lack of specificity is not in the state statutes per se; rather it is in their interpretation. The state statutes are somewhat vague (i.e., abstract) and must be interpreted and applied by various investigating agencies and the consultants or investigators within each agency. As such, various typologies of the abused emerge, as well as different sets of high risk indicators of abuse. Nevertheless, Nachman (1991) in an exploratory study of the Wisconsin elder abuse reporting system found higher substantiation rates for self neglect (i.e., unpopular lifestyle, life choice), elders living alone, and those with several "high-risk characteristics." This finding is of particular interest to this research which will argue that the "high-risk characteristics" (i.e., status characteristics/social stereotypes) actually shape the Adult Protective Services assessment and may actually guide the number and type of alternative services offered (e.g., institutionalization, community-based services).

One such service which has been suggested by some (Frolik, 1990; Iris, 1990; and Wilber, 1990) is the use of protective intervention through a court ordered guardian. Iris



(1990) notes that this would be used primarily for the frail elderly and those "at-risk" of abuse and exploitation. Interestingly, both of these constructs are status characteristics and as evidenced by Frolik (1990), Iris (1990), and Wilber (1990) they seem to play a definite role in the decision to intervene. Results from Iris (1990) suggest that guardianship may not always be the most effective means for meeting the needs of "at-risk" older adults.

### Identification and Intervention

It has been argued by Callahan (1982) that the well being of the elderly will not be improved substantially by focusing on elder abuse and the development of special programs. Callahan (1982) further suggests that the position of the elderly, relative to others in society, may actually be weakened by the continued emphasis on identification (i.e., of abuse) and institutionalization. Others (Hooyman, Rathbone-McCuan, Klingbeil, 1982) suggest that this is no longer merely a family problem, but a problem of community, and therefore of national concern. Callahan (1982) apparently supports this position and asserts that the real problem is one of community. The solution, according to Callahan (1982) is in building and maintaining the support systems people need.

A community level assessment is also the focus of Bookin and Dunkle (1985). Their perspective, however, is unique in light of previous research as they suggest that practitioners lack adequate community supports. Consequently they may be unduly influenced in their assessments of older adults by a lack of knowledge, cultural biases, and personal biases.

Lack of adequate community supports has placed a heavy burden upon practitioners who are assigned to cases of elder abuse. For the individual practitioner, intervention in cases of elder abuse presents significant problems and challenges for which the limited knowledge base on elder abuse provides few answers. Although the present knowledge base relies heavily on data supplied by human services professionals, it has thus far failed to address the unique problems and dilemmas faced by those who must intervene in such situations. Workers assigned to cases of elder abuse experience significant difficulties related not only to the nature of the problem but also to their own personal feelings, biases, and attitudes about violence and the aging family (Bookin and Dunkle, 1985, p. 3).

This is of specific interest to this research because it implies that personal and cultural biases regarding status characteristics may form, shape, or help to create the social reality of elder abuse and the abused elder. The questions then are: What is an abused elder? How do we identify one? This is particularly stimulating, sociologically speaking, in that it parallels Berger's (1963) discussion of "bad faith" in the giving of ontological status to those categories which supply appellations to people. Also of interest here is Sartre's description of the anti-semitic as one who legitimates oneself by hating the figure one has set up as the opposite of oneself. These two examples are particularly insightful in that they speak to the cultural conditions which have produced not only elder abuse but also the image of the abused elder as one of excessive age, frail health, poor, dirty, demented, and alone. All of these characteristics are evaluated negatively in a culture which prefers youth, beauty, success (i.e., material possessions), and entertainment. After all, the typology which constitutes the typical or "at-risk" of being an abused older person just isn't who we are. "In the identification process, the worker is no less influenced by his or her own cultural biases and environmental influences than others involved in this situation" (Bookin and Dunkle, 1985, p. 6).

Once again drawing an analogy from Berger's (1963) discussion of the "Negro," Berger (1963) would probably suggest that sociology makes us understand that an abused elder is a person so designated by society, and this designation may tend to shape the elder into that image. Other research (Sengstock and Hwalek, 1986; Cariere, Newton, and Sullivan, 1991; Blakely and Dolan, 1991; Greene and Soniat, 1991; and Lucas, 1990) has focused on household, family, individual, and situational indicators (i.e., status characteristics/social stereotypes) which are likely to put an elder "at risk" of abuse.

The literature on identification of the abused elder tends to focus on the identification of status characteristics which are antithetical to the average Americans ideal of who they are. Articles offering sociological insight into the process of identification and intervention are for the most part absent, with the exception of Bookin and Dunkle (1985). Perhaps the reason for the scarcity of sociological literature in the field is because of a lack of interest. Or, it is quite possible that sociologists have failed to write about this phenomenon because they, like others, find the possible abuse of an older person morally revolting. Consequently, the cultural milieu in which the sociologist exists eases him or her into granting the same ontological status to elder abuse as have other professionals. "Like them, his or her values and attitudes are shaped by the norms, values, and cultural influences operant in society at large" (Bookin and Dunkle, 1985, p. 6). The lack of sound sociological writing on the subject has given rise to speculation and as a result, it is no wonder that elder abuse is believed to exist with a frequency and rate comparable to other forms of domestic violence.

### Service Delivery and Advocacy

The body of literature regarding the delivery of services and advocacy for the abused elder is sparse, yet a few prominent articles have recently emerged. Vinton (1989) studied elders in Wisconsin who were reported to have been abused or neglected in 1986. According to Vinton (1989), the alleged victims were primarily female, old-old, and disabled. This typology is consistent with others (e.g., Arkansas Adult Protective Services Annual Report, 1993). Vinton (1989) found that overall, non-disabled victims and victims of male perpetrators rejected services at a higher rate. Vinton (1989) concludes that it is likely that these elders perceive their needs differently than others.

These findings were supported by another study conducted by Vinton (1991) which suggested that the dynamics of victim-perpetrator relationships need further exploration. Vinton (1991) concludes by suggesting that the continuum of services be expanded to address not only the needs of the victim but the needs of the perpetrator as well.

In a third article, Vinton (1991) re-addressed the child abuse analogy. Specifically, Vinton (1991) addressed the paternalistic approach that has been taken toward abused elders. Here Vinton (1991) argued that this approach may be particularly harmful to abused women. Vinton (1991) concludes by arguing for service providers to more closely examine the battered women's movement as opposed to the child abuse movement in order to better serve abused elders.

There are two primary articles regarding advocacy for the abused elder which have recently emerged. One of these articles (Jones and Kapp, 1988) is a case study of a

mentally impaired, institutionalized individual. The individual had no one to act as an advocate and was denied proper medical treatment. This person died. The article turns it's focus to the role of the advocate and the qualities they should possess.

The other prominent article in this area is by Filinson (1993). This article serves as a descriptive account of the first eighteen months of the Rhode Island Elderly Abuse Support Project. Filinson (1993) concludes that this system rather than the state's system may lead to a more extensive monitoring of elder abuse cases. Others such as Callahan (1982) suggest that the problem with advocacy, like other service strategies, is that we don't know it's effectiveness.

In the child abuse area, professional opinion has swung between two poles. One pole is automatically removing a child from home and placing him or her with foster parents. The other pole is maintaining children in their own homes even when there are severe problems. Guidelines as to when and where to apply different techniques do not exist. We know less about what happens to elders in similar situations, and have even fewer guidelines (Callahan, 1982, p. 16).

### Summary

The research literature on elder abuse is quite diverse and definitely inconclusive. Consequently, the lay person's and quite often the professional's opinions about extent, patterns, and causes seems to be based on nothing more than conventional wisdom and cultural myth. "What is truly regrettable about the current state of research on elder abuse is that the lack of quality data has lead to the widespread dissemination of myth, conventional wisdom, and in some cases falsehood" (Pedrick-Cornell and Gelles, 1982, p. 463). Both policy and programs are often based on statements which have no scientific foundation, as are legal changes, treatment programs, and other recommendations; all of

which are intended to treat or prevent the abuse of older persons (Pedrick-Cornell and Gelles, 1982). These authors suggest that the only conclusive knowledge regarding the numerous aspects of elder abuse is "We do not really know" (Pedrick-Cornell and Gelles, 1982, p. 463).

Finally, the question that needs to be answered, according to Callahan (1982) is, "To what extent will the well-being of the elderly be enhanced by conceptualizing their behavior as 'elder abuse' for which programming is required?" Callahan (1982) suggests that the well being of the elderly will not be enhanced. Rather, the treatment of abuse may actually increase institutionalization. If this is accurate, as this research will later argue, then why has so much of the reviewed literature focused on services for the abused elderly?

One reason particular social programs get developed is because there is a supply of professionals looking for new markets - resources in search of needs. It is interesting for example, that the expansion of special education programs coincided with the surplus of teachers. When there was a tight supply of teachers, the priority was to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic to normal children. When there were more teachers around, and new markets were sought, more attention was given to the handicapped (Callahan, 1982, p. 15).

Interestingly, it has been noted that one of the factors moving the United States toward a service economy is the employment needs of the middle class (White and Gates, 1974). White and Gates state that many of the programs intended to alleviate "social problems" have little effect on the problem. Instead they serve to distribute various forms of personal income to service professionals and their clients (White and Gates, 1974). Is this situation true for elder abuse? Callahan (1982) suggests that it is probable that law schools and schools of gerontology have overproduced. This coupled with demographic

changes may create new markets such as elder abuse. Finally, the literature has suggested that the research on elder abuse has at times been theoretically and methodologically insubstantial. In addition, it has been plagued by the lack of an agreed upon definition of elder abuse. Moreover, there has been a lack of uniformity among state statutes which outline under which circumstances, if any, state intervention is both required and justified.

## Chapter III

### Elder Abuse Statutes and Definitions

#### Introduction

Critical to the sociologists' investigation is conceptualization. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to draw into focus those terms, definitions, and concepts which together constitute the core of elder abuse practice and policy. This chapter is divided into two parts. Part one provides a basic overview of elder abuse legislation including types of abuse covered, reporting provisions, investigation, and central registry. Part two focuses on Arkansas statutes and definitions since Arkansas has been chosen for the research site. This will include an historical perspective as well as a brief summary of legislative intent, including definitions for abuse, neglect, and exploitation. This chapter will conclude with a brief summary and overview of some of the problems with existing adult protection and elder abuse laws.

#### State Statutes

The dilemmas which must be confronted in defining elder abuse are numerous. As a result, there are neither universal definitions nor set standards for creating any federal statutes. Each state is, for the most part, left to develop its own statutes as well as policies and procedures. Further, there have been few attempts to provide a survey of elder abuse laws. Traxler (1986) has contributed most to this effort by providing an overview of elder abuse statutes. Traxler (1986) begins by noting that the House Select Committee on Aging initiated the first congressional examination of elder abuse in the



United States in 1978. This alone signified that elder abuse had become a legitimate social problem and was appropriate for social scientific investigation. The committee also determined that elder abuse was a hidden problem that seldom comes to the attention of the appropriate authorities. As a result, the committee encouraged legislation.

In 1981, the committee recommended that states enact statutes analogous to those they have for child abuse, specifying an agency to identify and assist victims of elder abuse. Further, at the national level, the committee urged Congress to enact legislation that would provide financial incentives to those states with elder abuse statutes (Traxler, 1986, p. 139).

Legislation has not been enacted at the federal level, however, states have not been any less reluctant. According to Traxler (1986), 43 states and the District of Columbia have statutes on adult abuse reporting or some type of comprehensive Adult Protective Services.

#### Content of State Statutes

Each state is unique in that it expresses special characteristics. However Traxler (1986) argues that the majority of states have used a basic set of elements to develop Adult Protective Services and elder abuse statutes. Block and Sinott (1979) suggest that any mandatory reporting law should consist of the following: statement of purpose, definition of age, definition of abuse, criteria for reporting abuse, persons responsible for reporting, method of reporting, agency receiving report, the mandate to the receiving agency, immunity, the waiver, the penalty clause, a central registry, and protective services. Traxler (1986) concludes that most states address these basic elements, however there are variations between states. But Crouse, Cobb, Harris, Kopecky, and

Poertner (1981) state that the variations in statutes between states may be due to differences in governmental structures at the state and local level as well as to prevailing attitudes toward spending public funds. Culturally specific attitudes toward the aged and the needs of an aging population may also be added to these arguments..

### Abuses Covered by State Statutes

The lack of consistency in elder abuse statutes between states is primarily due to the lack of uniformity in the definition of abuse. This lack of uniformity is the result of the different types of abuse encountered by social service workers within specific geographical contexts. This leads to ambiguity in defining the phenomenon in question. "Key terms such as abuse, neglect and exploitation are often vague and unstandardized from state to state" (Traxler, 1986, p. 152). Although there is an obvious definitional dilemma, most states address physical abuse, neglect, and exploitation within the parameters of their elder abuse laws. In addition to legislation, some states simply mandate the reporting of physical abuse. In these states a more lenient or permissive reporting procedure may also be used to cover any other form of perceived abuse or neglect. Traxler (1986) offers the following sub-categories of abuse and neglect: psychological abuse, sexual abuse, abandonment, confinement, intimidation, hazardous living conditions, self neglect, extortion, financial and material neglect.

### Provisions for Reporting Abuse

In general, most states make some provisions for reporting abuse.

The majority of states list a wide variety of professionals in the health care and

social service fields as required reporters of elder abuse. Many states also mandate law enforcement officers and employees of long term care facilities and other institutions serving the elderly to report cases of abuse (Traxler, 1986, p. 153).

Arkansas' reporting procedures mandate "a wide variety of professionals" who are to report, but protective services also encourage voluntary reporting. However some states (i.e., Hawaii, Kansas, Maine, Montana, and Ohio) have specific legislation detailing who is to report. Other states (i.e., Iowa, Mississippi, Missouri, and Wisconsin) tend to rely more heavily on voluntary reporting. Traxler (1986) offers the following example: in Missouri the statute states "Any person having reasonable cause to suspect that an eligible adult presents a likelihood of suffering serious physical harm shall report such information to the department."

It is not surprising that with the passage of mandatory reporting laws, penalties for failing to report suspected abuse followed. Penalties for failure to report vary and may be as severe as a felony. "Most states include penalties of misdemeanor and/or fines from \$25 to \$1,000 for failure to report" (Traxler, 1986, p. 154). These penalties tend to create a climate which may perpetuate over-reporting, ultimately leading to the overall inefficiency of the system and contributing to negative and paternalistic attitudes toward the aged.

#### Investigating Allegations of Abuse

Most states with elder abuse statutes designate which office or agency is to receive reports (i.e., allegations of abuse) and consequently conduct the investigation. This usually falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Human Services or some

similar social service agency. Although there is some discretion on the part of the agency and its workers on when to investigate, most states require that the investigation be conducted within a specific time frame; for example, within 72 hours. Also of interest here is the power given to the individual agencies on behalf of the state. More specifically, since most states have drawn from their child abuse statutes, their elder abuse statutes are highly paternalistic and may, in some cases, authorize the state to interfere in someone's life who may rather be left alone.

Almost half of the statutes specify that the investigating agency may gain access to the victim's residence through a court order if permission has been denied ... A number of statutes have provisions for involuntary and emergency services for individuals deemed too mentally incompetent to request or consent to services (Traxler, 1986, p. 154, 155).

These powers, it would seem, may violate one of the basic premises of our society -- the right to be left alone. In so doing, the state and the service agency are faced with many difficult issues including those of service, privacy, and due process. Salend, Satz, and Pynoos (1985) argue that each state must decide how far it will intrude on the privacy of non-consenting adults. The importance of due process in these situations is also discussed by Crouse, Cobb, Harris, Kopecky, and Poertner (1981) who point out that due process must be safeguarded.

A child is assumed to require a guardian with custodial authority, while an adult is assumed to be competent to make basic life decisions on his or her own. Parents have both the responsibility to care for a child and the authority to make decisions for that child; in investigating the possibility of child abuse or neglect, the state acts as a substitute parent (*parens patriae*), exercising its traditional responsibilities to look after the welfare of legal incompetents and minors (Crystal, 1987, p. 59).

This is a complex issue which not only jeopardizes the older person's autonomy, but

potentially lessens their status relative to others in a society in which some argue already possesses ageist attitudes.

### Central Registry

Central registries are maintained in several states with mandatory reporting statutes. Typically, central registries contain written records of allegation and investigations of elder abuse. Traxler (1986) states that seventeen states and the District of Columbia maintain central registries. Traxler (1986) also points out that states with mandatory reporting statutes and central registries also must have detailed procedures for maintaining adequate confidentiality of case records as well as specific procedures for granting access to them.

### Arkansas' Perspective

Since the research will ultimately be conducted in Arkansas, a discussion of the state's perspectives and definitions of abuse, neglect, and exploitation is necessary. Further, from this point on in the research, all references to elder abuse will be per Arkansas statutes. Therefore, in the following sections, unless otherwise noted, all perspectives and definitions are taken from the Arkansas Division on Aging and Adult Services, Adult Protective Services 1993 Annual Report as well as the consultants policy and procedures manual for the same time period. Adult Protective Services is in fact a branch of the Division on Aging and Adult Services which has been charged with the task of protecting the elderly.

## Historical Perspective

As with most states, Arkansas points to the discovery of elder abuse in the mid-70's and the House Select Committee on Aging Congressional examination of 1978 to legitimate its rush to initiate elder abuse and mandatory reporting statutes. Arkansas passed its first adult protective services law that same year (1978), (Arkansas Statute Annual, 59-1301). This legislation has since undergone several amendments. It was first amended in 1983 during the regular session of the legislature and again in special sessions in 1988 and 1992. Arkansas legislators and social service workers offer this legislation as an example of their commitment and progress toward the resolution of elder abuse.

The Arkansas abuse of adults statute, one of the first statutes in the nation, contains the minimum authority necessary to carry out functions to protect those who cannot protect themselves. The statute provides for penalties for willful or culpable negligence, notice of intent to prosecute and a provision to allow for spiritual treatment. It also created a central registry, mandated reporters, established penalties for failure to report, established general reporting procedures and a toll free telephone reporting number. Investigation procedures expunging information, immunity for investigative participants, emergency custody, voluntary placement, temporary custody, long-term custody hearings, placement and appeal procedures are also included (Adult Protective Services Annual Report, 1993, p. 6).

This identifies, to some degree, a historical precedent for today's Adult Protective Services system. Currently Adult Protective Services does more than investigate allegations of abuse. More specifically, Arkansas' Adult Protective Services unit serves as an entry point into the social services system.

## Legislative Intent

There are many issues to be considered when constructing legal statutes, especially when the statutes may in fact infringe on the rights of the citizens whom it is designed to protect. It is the intent of Arkansas' legislation to resolve this conflict by focusing its efforts on protecting the rights of the adult who has been reported; thus providing the older person with maximum protection and simultaneously maintaining this person's autonomy.

The Legislature recognizes that there are persons in this state who, because of age or disability, are in need of protective services. Protective services should allow those individuals the same rights as other citizens and at the same time protect individuals from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. It is intended that mandatory reporting of such cases will cause the protective services of the state to be brought to bear in an effort to prevent further abuse, neglect, and exploitation of endangered adults (Adult Protective Services Annual Report, 1993, p. 4).

By taking such action, the Arkansas Legislature intended to place the fewest restrictions possible on the individual's personal rights and liberties as outlined by the Constitution.

In passing this legislation, the Arkansas Legislature was successful in its attempt to appear concerned about what had been defined as a problem. However, they were unable to escape the paradox of freedom vs. security which plagues all human societies.

Moreover, politicians often overlook the unintended consequences (i.e., latent functions) of the legislation they pass. In particular, some argue that the passage of such laws is merely political grandstanding at the expense of an aging population.

There is, unfortunately, little correlation between the drama and media appeal of a social services problem and the actual incidence of the problem. 'Discovering' a 'new' social problem has more appeal than devising more effective solutions to boring old problems. Mandatory reporting laws offer politicians an opportunity to go on the record in opposition of beating elderly grandmothers, while spending

relatively token sums. The need to develop a comprehensive set of services to address a range of different types of endangerment lacks appeal by comparison. Topics such as financial-management services and public guardianship are complicated and dull, while the problems of those who simply need a caretaker lack novelty and threaten to involve expensive and open-ended service demands. The appearance of strong elder abuse enforcement serves to substitute for a more costly commitment to such services (Crystal, 1987, p. 65-66).

While not surprising, it seems that the "new" enforcement-oriented programs merely add to the bureaucracy by creating new professional opportunities for social workers, administrators, and other experts, all of which not only benefit, but whose professional existence depends on defining the aged through status characteristics as potentially at risk and therefore dependent. The emergence of these new professional opportunities at a time when social services of a more general nature for the elderly are being cut back is more of a symbolic gesture rather than a useful response to the perceived social problem. Moreover, this type of legislation may in fact serve to provide for the differential treatment of the elderly at the hands of the state, simply because they are elderly.

### Definitions

Programs administered by Adult Protective Services (APS) are aimed at adults who are endangered, abused, maltreated, and exploited. Following are the legal definitions of each category of adult mistreatment per the Arkansas Abuse of Adults Statute 5-28-101 et seq.

Endangered Adult: "One who is 18 years or older and who is found to be in a situation or condition which poses an imminent risk of death or serious bodily harm to such person



and who demonstrates the lack of capacity to comprehend the nature and consequences of remaining in that situation."

Abuse: (a) "Any intentional and unnecessary physical act which inflicts pain on or causes injury to an endangered adult, including sexual abuse." (b) "Any intentional or demeaning act which subjects an endangered adult to ridicule or psychological injury in a manner likely to provoke fear or alarm."

Neglect: (a) "Negligently failing to provide necessary treatment, rehabilitation, care, food, clothing, shelter, supervision, or medical services to an endangered adult." (b) "Negligently failing to report health care problems, changes in health problems, or changes in health conditions of an endangered adult to the appropriate medical personnel." (c) "Negligently failing to carry out a prescribed treatment plan."

Exploitation: "Any illegal use or management of an endangered adult's funds, assets, or property or the use of an endangered adult's power of attorney or guardianship or person for the profit or advantage of himself or another."

Imminent danger to health or safety: "A situation in which death or severe bodily injury could reasonably be expected to occur without intervention."

These definitions provide somewhat of a formal overview of the language used by Adult Protective Services Consultants (i.e., those who do assessments in the field). It is also important to note that even though most allegations of abuse and exploitation are generated by a second party, other allegations (e.g. neglect) need not involve a second party. An adult who is at risk due to his own inability to care for himself may be the sole subject of a neglect report. This is interesting because if these disparate categories are

collapsed into one category based on punishment, then it becomes possible for an older person to abuse themselves (i.e., self neglect). This raises a troubling question which is in fact one of the concerns of this research. Are the older persons neglecting themselves or are they simply continuing to live an unpopular lifestyle? Whatever the answer may be, this research argues that the social worker (typically of middle class background) uses status characteristics/social stereotypes and available performance information to evaluate and construct an opinion which will ultimately determine the fate (i.e., institutionalization, etc...) of certain segments of the elderly population.

Plainly, elder abuse reporting statutes present troubling questions of self-determination. Does the fact that the social worker finds the person's way of life intolerable or risky mean that the aged person must change their lifestyle? "Does the elderly person have the right to be left exploited, or neglected, or to starve himself to death, or to die prematurely of an acute illness if he chooses?" (Katz, 1980, p. 719).

### Problems with Current Statutes

Evidenced throughout this chapter are not only the promises of Adult Protection/Elder Abuse legislation, but some of the potential problems and consequences as well. The attempt to solve the perceived elder abuse crisis has illuminated rather than resolved the complexities of the multi-dimensional phenomenon. Traxler (1986) has provided six somewhat standard criticisms of the problem with the current statutes. First, many of the state elder abuse statutes were modeled on the child abuse prevention and treatment act of 1974. It was believed that the analogy between child and elder abuse

could be made without significant modification. However as outlined in this chapter, there are numerous and vital differences between children and adults. Second, Traxler (1986) and Crystal (1987) note that states with mandatory reporting laws provide little funding for social services. Third, elder abuse statutes lack uniformity between states. Traxler (1986) suggests that the statutes are couched in vague terminology, leaving considerable latitude for different interpretations of the laws by social service providers, health care providers, and law enforcement personnel. Terms such as abuse and neglect tend to be defined in general or vague terms. This allows courts and agencies too much leeway to disapprove of an older person's behavior. The result is that these agents of the state possess tremendous discretionary power which allows them to impose on the older person their own views regarding what is and what is not a proper lifestyle (Regan, 1983).

This a very important problem area, since there are so many myths and stereotypes regarding aging and the elderly population. Normal aging changes increase the variance within the population, and statutes need to be written clearly enough to permit a full spectrum of behaviors in old age without infringing on the elderly client's right of self determination (Traxler, 1986, p. 159).

Fourth, statutes are not clear regarding who has jurisdiction of the abused elder.

Consequently, the fate of the older person may tend to lie in the negotiation of who is willing to take responsibility. Fifth, elder abuse statutes have been, for the most part, unsuccessful in mobilizing professionals to report suspected abuse. The exceptions are those who are mandated to report. Sixth, many states hurriedly put together statutes in anticipation of federal assistance. As a result, many of the statutes put together in the early 1980's simply do not meet the needs of an aging population.

## Summary

From reviewing various authors it has become clear that society has defined elder abuse as a legitimate social problem worthy of social scientific inquiry. Some authors suggest the positive impacts of legislation, early identification, the development of abuse typologies, and appropriate service delivery. Others have posited the negative impact of legislation which seems to be based on inaccurate interpretations of normal aging and variance within the population. These authors point out that legislation which allows the state to determine the normal range of human behavior may create troubling questions of self determination.

By considering both of these points of view it would seem that the critical issue is not simply to interpret the same questions through the conventional elder abuse models and methods ultimately deriving less than insightful conclusions. Instead, what seems to be necessary is an examination of how Adult Protective Services Consultants determine who is and who is not abused. Further, what role, if any, do cultural myths and stereotypes as well as pre-existing typologies of the abused play in the consultants interpretation of the social situation (i.e., is the elder at risk, abused, etc... or simply continuing to live a pre-existing lifestyle). In essence, the state statutes have very little to do with who is abused or aging normally. Similarly, family members, caretakers, and friends also play a small role in this determination as well. The abused elder is a product not only of culturally based stereotypes and myths, but also of the interaction between the older person and the consultant, as well as the consultants' evaluation of that interaction.

Thus in the interaction, status characteristics and performance information are

filtered through a cognitive construct (i.e., pre-existing typology) to create or exonerate the abused elder; the result being differential treatment for different segments of the elderly population. This process is known as a status validation.

To suggest that the abused elder is the product of a status validation and that the creation and maintenance of the typologies and potentially differential rates of institutionalization are the result of recurrent validation processes is not meant to indicate the morality or immorality of the process. Although there may be moral forces at play, this does not imply the necessity of moral judgement. Some will argue that the questions of good and bad and right and wrong are of great importance in this or any other interaction. The answers to those questions are beyond the scope of this research. What is of interest, however, is the influence of status characteristics on the Adult Protective Services Evaluation.

## Chapter IV

### Theory

#### Introduction

Some argue that the abuse and neglect of older persons is by no means a new phenomena. Movsas and Movsas (1980) suggest that Shakespeare's King Lear is replete with many brilliant psychological insights into how abuse of one's own parent can occur. Even so, elder abuse has only recently been legitimated as a social problem. Consequently, to date there have been few, if any, adequate theoretical explanations of elder abuse. "The research on elder abuse is sparse, methodologically weak, and theoretically insubstantial..." (Filinson, 1989, p. 17). Others (Boudreau, 1993) suggest that because the research has such a short history, there hasn't been time for theoretical integration. Thus, Boudreau (1993) asserts, most theories which have attempted to explain elder abuse remain in a conjectural state. Generally speaking, elder abuse theories have focused on characteristics of the abused and abuser, the prediction of high risk factors, and various other explanations for why it occurs. Overall, there has been little progress, but Boudreau (1993) suggests that there are at least four commonly used perspectives.

#### Existing Models

First is the theory of intergenerational transmission of violence. This perspective has its roots in social learning theory and Pedrick-Cornell and Gelles (1982) assert that it is based primarily on research about other types of violence. To summarize, the theory

suggests that the experience of growing up in an abusive home is an antecedent to violence. Thus, according to the theory, elder abusers are more likely to have been abused as children. Research has failed to provide support for this theory (Wolf and Pillemer, 1989).

Second is the psychopathological model. This model suggests that the abusers have some type of personality trait, problem, or disorder which may cause them to be abusive. The influence of psychopathology on elder abuse has been supported through cases reported to social service agencies (Wolf, Strugnell, and Godkin, 1982) as well as surveys (Finkelhor and Pillemer, 1987) and by perpetrator interviews (Anetzberger, 1987).

Third is the dependency model. This perspective, drawing from exchange theory, attempts to address the intricacies of dependency and the relationship of dependency to abuse. According to Dowd (1975) and Homans (1961), human interaction is guided by attempts to maximize rewards and minimize costs, both material and non-material. As this occurs, the parties involved may become interdependent. However, an imbalance in the exchange process may lead to differences in power (i.e., asymmetrical exchange) and increase the risk of elder mistreatment. Two models have been proposed to explain these asymmetrical relationships. The first model suggests that older persons may become overly dependent on their care givers and this may lead to elder abuse. This has been supported by Quinn and Tomita (1986) and Steinmetz and Amsden (1983). The second model suggests that caretakers, usually adult children, become financially dependent on the older person. These persons may then feel powerless in the relationship and resort to

violence in an attempt to alter the power structure in an asymmetrical exchange. This idea has been supported by Anetzberger (1987), Pillemer (1985), and Wolf and Pillmer (1989).

The fourth model suggested by Boudreau (1993) is the familial stress model. "Stress theory is closely allied with conflict theory" (Boudreau, 1993, p. 150). This perspective suggests that the needs of various family members often conflict, leading to stress and instability, which increases the likelihood of elder abuse.

Many families caring for elderly parents have limited economic resources. The costs associated with insufficient income, combined with the inherent stress of caring for an individual who requires a great deal of assistance, can sometimes become overwhelming, precipitating neglect or abuse (U.S. House Select Committee on Aging, 1991).

This overview of the competing theoretical perspectives seems to be consistent with Boudreau's (1993) argument that the phenomena of elder abuse is complex, inconsistent, and not easily analyzed. Therefore, no one theory appears to account for its existence.

### Theoretical Model

The theoretical model forwarded in this paper does not attempt to explain the phenomena in its totality, as do the others. Rather, it offers a perspective from which the different social and psychological forces involved in the interaction between the Protective Services Consultant and the older person may be evaluated. Moreover, the model is general in nature and could possibly be applied to any human interaction.

Therefore, the purpose of this section is to examine how status characteristics (i.e.,



social stereotypes) may affect the institutionalization of the "abused elderly" as a result of the Adult Protective Services Evaluation. It is argued that this will result in differential rates of institutionalization for different groups within the more general population of stigmatized elderly. A theory focused on status generalization processes involving a status validation effect which operates in settings such as the Protective Services Evaluation is developed. The formulation which builds upon work conducted by expectation states theory (EST) will then be tested to determine if there is sufficient evidence to suggest that this theory is at least a plausible explanation for the decision-making process which occurs within the context of the Protective Services Evaluation.

The volume of literature addressing stereotypes and negative attitudes toward the aged is too great to be listed. Nevertheless, a limited number of studies have directly addressed age and other personal characteristics associated with age, such as "beauty" (i.e., the lack of physical attractiveness), as diffuse status characteristics and their effect on actual and expected performance (e.g. Boyd, J.W., and Dowd, J.J. 1988; Driskell, James E., Jr. 1982; Harris, Monica J., Moniz, Andrew, J., Sowards, Bruce A., and Krane 1994). These studies have, to one degree or another, taken into account how status characteristics influence the decision-making process. However, (with the exception of Harris, et al., 1994) they assume that actors make decisions in a more or less mechanistic manner. Consequently, these versions of status characteristics theory based on EST rest upon certain assumptions and arguments which are quite different from those presented in this research. The fundamental difference is that their research utilizes the aggregation

assumption discussed later in this section.

In contrast, this research argues that the conceptualization of humans as rationalistic or mechanistic information processors does not fit the facts of human existence (see Knottnerus, 1988). Humans are often less than rational in the judgements they make. People use heuristics, exhibit biases, make generalizations based upon inadequate evidence, and are influenced in their thinking by emotional, motivational, and other factors. For these reasons, it is argued that people quite often do not make decisions, reach their goals, and organize their lives in a "statistical" or "scientific" manner. On the contrary, we often times live by inference. Such an observation can be applied to all social actors including those individuals occupying positions of authority and expertise within a bureaucracy or institutional context such as the Adult Protective Services System.<sup>1</sup>

### Status Characteristics Theory

Status characteristics theory seeks to explain how status differences such as occupational rank, age, verbal, or mechanical ability determine the distribution of power and prestige (e.g., differences among group members in influence, degree of activity, evaluations of performance) in problem-solving task groups (Knottnerus, 1994). This theory is considered to be one of the oldest and most developed branches of EST, a formal theory which seeks to explain in a cumulative manner the processes shaping social interaction (Berger and Fisek, 1974; Berger, Fisek, Norman, and Zelditch, 1985; Humphreys and Berger, 1981; Wagner and Berger, 1993; Webster and Foschi, 1980).<sup>2</sup>

Essentially, status characteristic theory argues that social characteristics serve as cues from which actors form expectations concerning their own and others' task abilities. Once these expectations form, they then shape the behavior of actors and the power and prestige order of the group, i.e., unequal patterns of interaction among group members. Such processes, it is argued, structure the interaction among actors in various task groups throughout society such as work groups, study groups, athletic teams or clubs, and organized groups dedicated to solving some problem. Numerous tests in a standardized laboratory setting have confirmed the predictions of the theory (e.g., Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch, 1966, 1972; Berger, Conner, and Fisek, 1974; Berger, et al., 1977; Berger and Zelditch, 1985).

More precisely, several conditions define a task group setting. First, two or more actors must be engaged in some collective task. This task must have value in that there is an outcome that is considered to be either a failure or success. Second, an ability is necessary for accomplishing the task. This ability can be evaluated positively or negatively. Third, actors must be committed to success in the task oriented group. They are motivated to solve the group problem and, therefore, to discover the abilities of other group members. These conditions imply interdependence among members as they attempt to accomplish the task (Meeker, 1981).

Five assumptions constitute the core of status characteristics theory (Knottnerus, 1994). First, when the status characteristic is clearly defined as relevant to a task, it will become salient to actors. For example, cultural beliefs might define females rather than males, white rather than black, or young rather than old as best suited to solve a particular

task. Furthermore, when the characteristic discriminates among actors in a situation, it will become salient. Thus, if actors in a task setting are distinguished by their ethnic background, gender, educational rank, or age, these diffuse status characteristics will become salient.

The second assumption, the burden of proof assumption, states that a salient characteristic will link the actor to the outcomes of the group's task. This means that a salient status characteristic will be normally applied to every new situation or task unless it is shown not to be applicable, meaning that the status characteristic will be treated as relevant to each situation until otherwise proven inappropriate.

The third assumption, the sequencing assumption, states that the restructuring of a situation will occur as new actors enter or depart the task setting. In addition, while in the task situation, pre-existing task situation structures will persist, meaning that the actors' past experiences will significantly influence their present situation (i.e., decision making process).

The fourth assumption, the aggregation assumption, argues that actors combine all information that has become salient and relevant to the task to form overall performance expectations for themselves and others. More precisely, "all positive status characteristics are combined according to the attenuation principle (e.g., learning that a person is white, male, and highly educated, with each additional item having less of an impact) and all negative characteristics are combined according to the same principle" (Knottnerus, 1988, p. 426-27). Then, the positive and negative subsets are combined with expectations developing from this combination. It is a distinctive cognitive

processing model which, as we shall see, differs from the model of social cognition discussed in this paper.

The fifth assumption, the basic expectation assumption, states that an actor's position in the power and prestige structure is a direct function of his or her aggregated performance expectations relative to those for the other actor.

In sum, this theory attempts to explain and predict how structured inequalities emerge in interaction based on initial status evaluation. As such, it focuses on an ubiquitous process which pervades much of social interaction.

In regards to status characteristics, the theory (Berger and Fisek, 1974) asserts that regardless of the status category employed (e.g., ethnicity, age, occupation) all characteristics have at least two properties in common: (1) differences in status always imply differential evaluation of individuals (e.g., high or low evaluations of competence or worthiness); and (2) differences in status always provide the basis for inferring differences in one or more capacities or attributes possessed by the individual. Some research has confirmed these general propositions. For instance (Knottnerus, 1988, p. 422):

The effects of diffuse status characteristics such as age (Freese 1974), military rank (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972), education (Markovsky, Smith, and Berger 1984), race (Webster and Driskell 1978), and general performance skills, such as verbal or mechanical ability (Freese 1974), have been reported and the argument that such characteristics are accompanied by differential evaluations, which lead to differential expectations and interaction inequalities has been confirmed (Greenstein and Knottnerus 1980).

In sum, repeated tests and continued theory development over the last several decades have provided strong support for status characteristics theory and EST in general.

For these reasons it would seem logical to extend this work into the realm of the Adult Protective Services Evaluation and consider the potential effect of status generalization processes resulting in disparities among the institutionalized elderly--a situation which is approximately equivalent to the situation examined by EST because it involves an Adult Protective Services worker making decisions about actors who are members of different status groups in the task setting of the evaluation (i.e., typically the older person's home). In discussing these issues, a particular theory grounded in the EST tradition will be utilized which is especially relevant to this type of situation. Building on this formulation an outline of the processes by which status biases and generalization processes may affect the evaluation and institutionalization of the "abused" elderly has been developed.

#### A Theory of Recurrent Validation

This model is an extension of the formulations of Martin and Knottnerus (1994) which is rooted in the theoretical developments of Knottnerus and Greenstein (1981). In its original form, the theory was considered applicable only when certain conditions were met.

In any status validation situation (S) two types of social information about actors are available. Knottnerus and Greenstein (1981) suggest that the first type of social information is that of a diffuse state characteristic (D). The concept of D is defined by Berger et al. (1977, p. 94) as consisting of two kinds of evaluations. An actor may be inferior or superior with respect to (1) specific traits associated with the characteristic and (2) a general evaluation associated with these specific traits. Based on these criteria, an

evaluation of an actor may be made which ultimately determines the actor's overall position relative to other actors (Knottnerus and Greenstein, 1981, p. 340). "Within American society, for example, ethnicity has been a status characteristic in which blacks have, in relation to whites, been negatively ranked both on a variety of specific traits such as intelligence or responsibility, and on their overall value, as in the imputation of general competence or morality." The second type of information available in S is that of a specific status characteristic (C). Such characteristics differ from diffuse status characteristics in that they are not associated with a general expectation state (Berger, et al., 1977, p. 94). Examples would include information about specific abilities such as musical or reading ability.

In this situation the two characteristics are consistently evaluated. The diffuse status characteristic and the specific status characteristics are either evaluated positively or they are evaluated negatively (e.g., an actor who is identified as possessing the negatively evaluated diffuse status characteristic of being old and the negatively evaluated specific status characteristic of self-neglect). It is further assumed that both C and D serve as points of reference from which a subject (P) can differentiate two social objects, self (P') and one other (O) in S. "This perception creates a distinction between P' and O due to P's focusing upon these cues and attributing to P' and O those qualities and evaluations associated with the appropriate states of these characteristics" (Knottnerus and Greenstein, 1981, p. 340).

Based on the previous discussion, the theory of status validation is composed of the following principles, extensions, and definitions (the original formulation per

Knottnerus and Greenstein (1981) contains principles 2 through 6 and definitions 1, 2, and 3). The first extension to the theory states that beliefs specific to cultural or subcultural environments influence the desirability or undesirability of D or multiple D's. The existence of D is not a universal occurrence which exhibits an invariant form in all cultural settings. Rather, D is a function of the social setting which gives it meaning and strength in terms of the evaluated beliefs which may be associated with it. As is the case with the other extensions to this theory, this idea has not been formally dealt with in the EST literature.

**Proposition 1: Cultural Context Assumption.**

Status validation occurs within specific cultural contexts which determine the degree to which evaluated beliefs, i.e., stereotype, are associated with characteristics.

Thus, P is subject to cultural influences in the evaluation of O with respect to D or multiple D's. This assumption suggests that the negative or positive value of status characteristics such as age, physical attractiveness, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or other forms of group affiliation is culturally specific within or between societies. For example, in the United States certain diffuse status characteristics such as old age or physical disability have generally been negatively evaluated in relation to youth and physical ability; while in other cultures these characteristics or certain other combinations might have very different values relative to each other. Or, in regards to a status constellation, an older male may have high or moderate status value within some societies while being evaluated quite negatively in others. Similar differences may also exist within a society. For example, in the Midwestern or southern United States older



females may be negatively evaluated in relation to older males, while in the Southwest older males may be negatively evaluated in comparison to older females (regional or other differences such as urban/rural attitudes concerning status evaluations are also possible).<sup>3</sup>

Proposition 2: Activation.

If C and D are available in S, and C and D are not specifically associated nor dissociated, then C and D are activated in S.

Here it is assumed that in S being reported as abused or neglected serves as a kind of specific status characteristic (i.e., negative performance information). In the eyes of the social actors during the Protective Services Evaluation, especially Protective Services Caseworkers, knowledge that an individual has been formally reported is viewed as information concerning the specific attributes of that person (e.g., has been abused, neglects self, lives in dangerous situation, devious, etc.). Of course, actors are also usually clearly identified by D whether they are, for instance, young, old, white, black, male, or female.

With the activation of both C and D in the "status validation situation beliefs associated with D are increased" (ibid, p.340). Before this process can be explained, however, the part of the status characteristic concerned with beliefs must be defined. This definition differs slightly from the one given in the original formulation so that it can apply to more than one D.

Definition 1: Stereotype.

Status validation occurs if the evaluated beliefs associated with C become part of the collection of evaluated beliefs associated with the stereotype of D or D's.

As previously noted, this occurs when either negative or positive specific and diffuse status information is consistently evaluated, for example, learning in a task situation that an actor is a male (high ranked D) who possesses high verbal ability (high state of C) or learning in an evaluation that a white (low ranked D based on elder abuse typologies) has been reported for self neglect (low state of C).

**Proposition 3: Status Validation.**

Status validation occurs if a single C and a single D, which are consistently-evaluated and neither associated nor dissociated from each other or the task, are activated in S.

Through this process, information about an actor is filtered through the cognitive construct (i.e., stereotype) confirming the status typification. In saying this, it is assumed (ibid, p. 341-342) that the validity of status evaluations, which serve as symbolic referents for the valued worth of actors, are routinely accepted by people. Because of the significance such evaluative distinctions hold for people, they will use other information to substantiate these status designations unless specifically shown otherwise (e.g., burden of proof). Such an interpretative bias is also enhanced because the status typification provides a collection of "typical" traits which can be used as standards for understanding the social world. They enable actors to structure an ambiguous social reality. For these reasons people, including Protective Services workers, are inclined to utilize a validating strategy for interpreting consistently evaluated status characteristics. Of course, such a strategy has direct consequences for the status stereotype and judgements concerning institutionalization.

**Proposition 3.1: Status Validation Effect.**

If a consistently evaluated C and D are activated in S, the number and consistency

of differentially evaluated beliefs associated with the stereotype of D increases.

This status validation effect is very important because it has a direct effect on actors' expectations and behaviors. Why this is so is due to the differential evaluation accompanying the characteristic.

**Definition 2: Differential Evaluation.**

A differential evaluation is the affective response generated by the collection of evaluated beliefs of the stereotype associated with a specific state of D.

The affective intensity of the differential evaluation varies. Determining this variation in strength are differences in the evaluated beliefs connected to the status characteristic. It is argued that this difference in strength is due to the number and consistency of evaluated beliefs contained in the stereotype.

**Proposition 4: Strength of Differential Evaluation.**

The strength of the differential evaluation associated with a specific state of D is a positive function of the number and consistency of evaluated beliefs of the stereotype associated with that state of D.

The logic of the argument is straightforward. If status validation leads to an increase in the number and consistency of evaluated beliefs associated with a status stereotype, then the strength of the characteristic's differential evaluation should be enhanced.

**Proposition 4.1: Effects of Status Validation.**

If status validation occurs in S, the differential evaluation associated with D will increase in strength.

Since differential evaluations are necessary for the emergence of inequalities in group interaction and the strength of differential evaluations may vary, what must be explained is the relationship between the strength of the differential evaluation and the

development of expectation states. It is assumed that the former has a corresponding effect on the latter.

Proposition 5: Formation of Expectation States.

Following status validation in S, P will develop expectation states for P' and O consistent with the states and strength of the states of D possessed by P' and O.

Consistent with the argument of Berger et al. (1977), Knottnerus and Greenstein (1981) suggest that P's power and prestige position in the group reflects the expectation advantage P holds over O.

Proposition 6: Basic Expectation Assumption (from Berger, et al., 1977).

Given that P has formed expectation states for P' and O, P's power and prestige position relative to O will be a direct function of P's expectation advantage over O.

Given this formulation, it is predicted that the inequalities of influence created by performance and status differences will be magnified when actors possess consistently high or low evaluations on both characteristics. Results consistent with the predictions of the theory have been obtained in an experimental test (Knottnerus and Greenstein, 1981).

In regards to Adult Protective Services Evaluations, this theory helps explain how such decisions may be influenced by status generalization processes. More specifically, it is suggested that a validating strategy may influence the decision-making of Protective Services workers leading to a status validation effect in which the number and consistency of beliefs associated with the stereotype of D increases. This results in the strengthening of the differential evaluation associated with D and the exacerbation of Protective Service workers' expectations concerning the person who is being evaluated. Such processes lead to more extreme evaluations and a greater likelihood of

institutionalization for low status group members (i.e., those fitting "abuse" typology).

To explain this process, Martin and Knottnerus (1994) introduce additional extensions to the present theoretical formulation. To begin with, it is possible that actors (e.g., those reported) are identified by multiple diffuse status characteristics (D's) which form a "typical" or meaningful social stereotype within a social setting (e.g., white female, poor male Hispanic). The collection of evaluated beliefs and, therefore, the differential evaluation associated with this stereotype will be greater than a differential association associated with just one D. More precisely, if a combination (or configuration) of two or more D's form a typical social stereotype for O who is evaluated by P in S, then there will be a status constellation effect in which the negative (or positive) differential evaluation will be greater than that associated with just one D.

**Proposition 7: Status Constellation Effect.**

The strength of a differential evaluation generated by a stereotype associated with a meaningful configuration of consistently evaluated multiple D's will be greater than the differential evaluation generated by a stereotype associated with a single D.

For example, during the Adult Protective Services Evaluation, it is possible that the Protective Services worker will identify the person being evaluated in terms of several D's which typify a particular status group or category. If a validating strategy is utilized, the effect of status validation will be greater in this case than in one where a weaker differential evaluation associated with a single D were confirmed. We would, therefore, expect that in such a situation O will be more likely to be referred for institutionalization.

To address the extenuating circumstances which influence this process, two additional extensions to the present theoretical formulation seem warranted. Both of

these extensions move beyond Martin and Knottnerus (1994) by addressing what seems to be two relevant, yet neglected (i.e., by EST), social psychological aspects of the validation process. The first suggests that if P' is anxious in the presence of O, then the strength of the differential evaluation will be increased.

**Proposition 8: Anxiety Effect.**

If p' experiences anxiety in the presence of a stigmatized O, then C and D are more likely to be activated in S, and the number and consistency of differentially evaluated beliefs associated with the stereotype of D increases.

The concept of anxiety as being a mediator in the expectancy confirmation (i.e., status validation) process was first introduced by Harris, et al. (1994). This is consistent with the argument of Jones, et al. (1984) which stresses the role of the anxiety that is aroused in others in the presence of a stigmatized individual. Jones, et al. (1984) suggest that this may be a significant factor in determining how interactions with such individuals go awry.

What is being assumed is that if Adult Protective Services worker's anxiety level is raised while evaluating the older person (i.e., stigmatized individual) by the older persons living conditions, social environment, or significant others, then the worker is more likely to evaluate negatively specific states of D. Thus increasing the severity of the worker's evaluation and consequently the strength of the differential evaluation associated specific states of D, increasing the likelihood of institutionalization.

The second extension assumes that if the status characteristics of O are negatively evaluated by P' then they will be communicated in S by an effort dimension, increasing the strength of the differential association.

Proposition 9: Effort Dimension.

If C and D are activated in S, and the number and consistency of differentially evaluated beliefs associated with the stereotype of D increases, P' communicates the differential evaluation through reduced input in S.

The logic here is straightforward. In the setting of the Adult Protective Services Evaluation, if the Protective Service worker is made anxious (i.e., nervous) in the presence of the older person or by the older person's living conditions, or by a third party in the immediate physical environment; then the evaluator will put less effort into the evaluation by offering fewer services. This will increase the likelihood that the older person will be institutionalized. Harris, et al. (1994) established the influence of nervousness on effort when videotaping teachers (i.e., subjects) as they were interacting with the elderly. They suggested that females were more strongly influenced by this variable than males. They argued that this may be due to greater apprehension and less confidence about the teaching task (Harris, et al., 1994). Although contextually different, this is still of relevance to the present study since the majority (e.g., eight out of nine for 1990) of Protective Services Evaluators in Arkansas were female.

There is limited generalizability from the research of Harris, et al. (1994). However, they suggest that future research should examine how to operationalize the effort dimension in other situations to determine if it plays a significant role in the mediation process in contexts other than education. "Nervousness has not been examined widely in research on the process underling expectancy confirmation" (Harris, et al., 1994, pg. 47).

What is being suggested is that the context of the Protective Services Evaluation

is, while less controlled, similar to the task group setting examined in the laboratory and is characterized by a status validation effect. Here, diffuse status characteristics/social stereotypes and heuristics enter into the predominant decision making process occurring in this setting. The Protective Services Evaluation, like the laboratory, is a microcosm of the social world. Furthermore, when these types of judgments are repeated hundreds or thousands of times, patterns of racial and gender discrimination with respect to pre-existing elder abuse typologies should be evident at the macro level.

The next extension of the theory as developed by Martin and Knottnerus (1994) broadens the focus of the theory to address multilevel aspects of the validation process. Here the argument suggests that the macro level phenomenon of differential rates of institutionalization among the elderly has its basis in a micro level dynamic known as the recurrent validation process.

**Proposition 10: Recurrent Validation Process.**

A recurrent validation process occurs if status validation involving C and a single D or multiple D's repeatedly takes place in a specific S.

The most relevant example concerns Protective Services workers who are repeatedly subject to a status validation process in their decision making (i.e., Adult Protective Services Evaluation). The key idea here is that status validation processes may occur not as an occasional, random, or periodic occurrence, but as a regular event among actors who meet in a specific setting or settings. It is a patterned behavior which occurs within a delimited arena within the social world. The potential effects of such a process are quite profound, not just for the individual actors involved, but for more distant levels of the social order.



When this process is regularly engaged in within a specific S which is embedded within and directly linked to a clearly defined institutional setting, such as Adult Protective Services which is embedded within the legal institution, human services, and the nursing home industry, the outcomes of this process have consequences for the entire system. More precisely, recurrent validation processes can have an aggregate effect which becomes evident at a more macro level within that institution.

Proposition 11: Aggregate Effect of Recurrent Validation Process.

If a recurrent validation process occurs in S, P will make decisions concerning P' and/or O which have corresponding aggregate effects in the institutional setting S is located in.

What this suggests is that through the repetition of status validation processes within the context of an evaluation, corresponding status group differences will gradually emerge among those populating nursing homes or other long term care facilities.

### The Micro to Macro Transition

Building on Martin and Knottnerus (1994), the argument suggests that the Protective Services Evaluation and the resulting disparities in the institutionalization of certain status groups within the already stigmatized elderly population has multilevel characteristics. At the lowest level is the individual (i.e., Protective Services Workers, older persons who have been reported) and at more macro levels is the institution (i.e., group differences in populations in long term care or nursing facilities) and the society as a whole. What this theory does is make a transition between these levels. This thesis is consistent with the argument of Coleman (1986, 1987) that sociological analysis must demonstrate how the actions of actors mediate structural-level effects if it is to be

explanatory without attributing a purposiveness to social systems. While the present discussion is not based on Coleman's theory of individual rational behavior, his general thesis is still of value to the present study. Coleman suggests that explanatory arguments must demonstrate the micro level processes by which macro level occurrences lead to other macro level phenomena and clearly express this idea with the use of a model. This model is adopted in the following diagram:

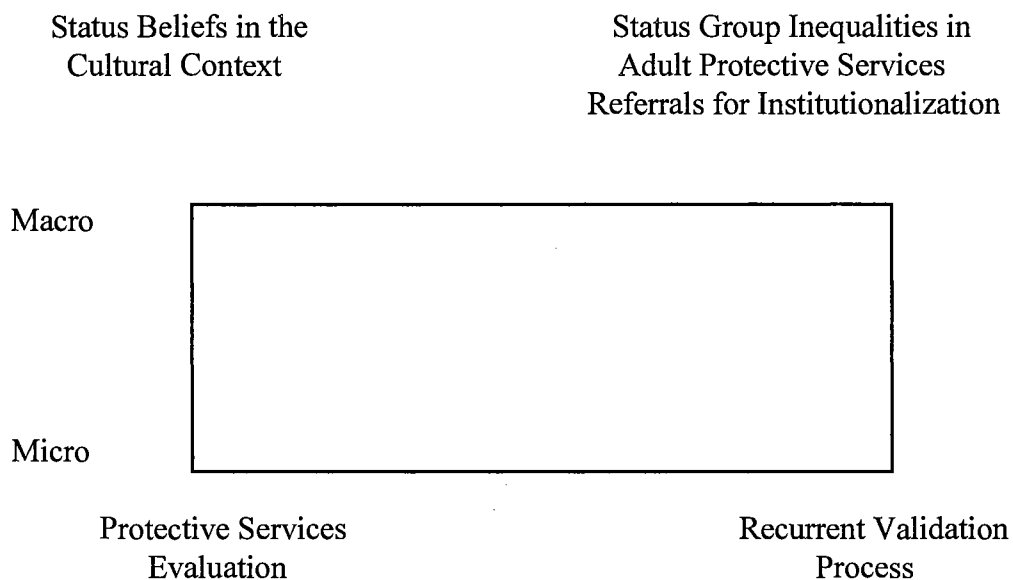


Figure 1: Multi-level processes assumed to occur within the Adult Protective Services system.

This figure provides a way of diagraming the social processes which are assumed to occur within a multilevel system. The top half of the diagram represents the macro level and begins with status beliefs which are assumed to be rooted in a cultural setting.

More precisely, it is assumed that there are cultural beliefs that establish which status characteristics are most and least desirable for a given culture. This affects the formation of status group inequalities in nursing homes or other long term care facilities. However, this occurs through the cultural context influencing micro level processes, leading to a recurrent validation effect among social actors. This cognitive/interpretational process in turn influences the type of recommendation (i.e., institutionalization, in home services, etc.) prescribed by various Protective Services Workers. When repeated numerous times, status group inequalities emerge in the populations of nursing homes or other long term care facilities at the macro level.

#### Summary

The theoretical formulation presented in this section has been guided by EST and, in particular, status characteristics theory. It suggests that the decisions of Protective Services workers in the context of an evaluation are influenced by diffuse status characteristics (i.e., social stereotypes) such as race and gender. It is argued that a status validation effect quite likely shapes recommendations contributing to the disproportionate institutionalization of certain groups--a macro level consequence within the system.

This is significant in that it offers a different version of one aspect of social reality (i.e., Adult Protective Services Evaluations) than other research. It further suggests that the decision making process is inherently social, being influenced by such factors as biases, interpretational strategies, and inferences concerning social status. This perspective is expressed in the status validation formulation and further amplified in the

new assumptions and definitions presented in this section.

## Hypotheses

Considering the reviewed literature and the theoretical formulations which have been developed, the following hypotheses have been formulated for empirical investigation:

H1: Those individuals who possess certain diffuse status characteristics (white female, 80+ years of age) are more likely to experience status validation.

Hypothesis one is consistent with the original formulation. What is being assumed here is that there will be a positive relationship between the presence of a single diffuse status characteristic (as negatively defined by the abuse typology) and substantiated cases of abuse (i.e., status validation). For example, in the Adult Protective Services Evaluation being female rather than male or white rather than black will increase the likelihood of status validation.

H2: Those possessing a combination of certain diffuse status characteristics are the most likely to experience status validation.

Hypothesis two is proposed for the evaluation of the status constellation proposition. Here what is being assumed is that actors are often identified by multiple diffuse status characteristics which are grouped together in some meaningful way rather than being identified by just one diffuse status characteristic. Therefore it is believed that there will be a positive relationship between the presence of multiple diffuse status characteristics and substantiated abuse. For example, during the Adult Protective Services Evaluation, being a very old, white female would be more likely to increase the

probability of status validation then would any of these characteristics alone.

H3: In any status validation situation if P' experiences anxiety then the strength of the differential evaluation will be increased resulting in status validation.

Hypothesis three is proposed for the evaluation of the anxiety proposition. Here it is assumed that there will be a positive relationship between anxiety producing events (i.e., those referrals deemed as emergencies) and substantiated cases of abuse. For example, it is assumed that those evaluations which have been deemed as emergencies and therefore necessitating an immediate response will be more likely to result in status validation (i.e., substantiated abuse) as a result of P' increased reliance on the interpretation of status characteristics.

H4: In S, P' will reward negatively evaluated status characteristics by reducing the length of the interaction.

Hypothesis four also addresses an extension to the theory. Here it is assumed that if the status characteristics present in the situation are negatively evaluated, then the length of the interaction will be reduced by P'. Two additional assumptions are also inherent in this hypothesis. First, that the amount of effort (i.e., attempts to reach other conclusions) introduced into the situation by P' will be reduced. Second, that this process is characterized by a decision making process which is truncated. Therefore, it is believed that there will be a negative relationship between the number of days elapsed in closing a case and substantiated cases of abuse. For example, if the Adult Protective Services Consultant negatively evaluates the characteristics present in the interaction, then the case will be closed sooner; possibly within one day. If not, then the process may take up to four or more days to evaluate and/or offer services other than institutionalization.

H5: If a recurrent validation process occurs in S there will be aggregate effects in the institutional setting which corresponds to S.

Hypothesis five is introduced primarily as a theoretical point. However, it addresses the extension introduced by Martin and Knottnerus (1994). Here it is assumed that there will be a positive relationship between substantiated cases of abuse and nursing home placement. For example, the aggregate effect of recurrent validation process proposition suggests that within the context of the Adult Protective Services Evaluation, validation processes will be repeated, thus resulting in status group differences in nursing homes or other long term facilities.

## Chapter V

### Research Methods

#### Introduction

Although elder abuse has become recognized as a social problem, little has been done in terms of sociological research. There have been few attempts to assess empirically the phenomenon from a sociological perspective and even fewer attempts to develop and assess formal theory through an assessment of elder abuse. As a result, little guidance for research efforts is found in the writings on the subject. Interestingly, the phenomenon (i.e., elder abuse) seems to be of the type for which professionals and lay persons alike already possess some kind of conceptual understanding, if not a self proclaimed expertise. Consequently, definitive statements regarding the nature of the phenomenon have emerged in articles, textbooks, and lectures despite scientific analysis.

Undoubtedly the reasons for avoiding elder abuse vary. Perhaps the disinterested attitudes of professionals stem from the realization that this really is an old problem. Or, it is quite possible that no one wants to appear calloused to the apparent needs of elderly grandmothers. Thus, whether the lack of scientific inquiry into elder abuse is the result of boredom with the problem, a moral or political objection, or an extension of our society's denial of the aging process, it is absent nonetheless.

Consequently, the purpose of this chapter is to develop a research methodology or methodologies which are logically consistent with the theoretical position outlined in chapter four. Thus, there are three objectives of this research. First, a quantitative assessment of the hypothesis developed from the theoretical model. Second, a qualitative

analysis of the same hypothesis will be conducted. Third, the propositions proposed in the theoretical model will be reformulated in light of this analysis for the purpose of further theory development and elaboration. However, problems with past research strategies must first be examined in order to avoid the dilemmas of past elder abuse as well as the methodological criticism associated with expectation states theory research.

### Problems With Past Research

As previously stated, this research has two goals: first, to develop and test a number of theoretical extensions and to offer a new and perhaps insightful perspective on elder abuse. Given that both elder abuse research and expectation states theory research have been criticized for a number of methodological inadequacies, a brief examination of the problem areas seems to be in order.

Two major problems with elder abuse research as identified by Cornell and Gelles (1982) are: non-representative sampling and low response rates on survey type research. Since instruments, such as surveys, have proven to be unsuccessful in the past, other strategies will be used in this research.

Although elder abuse is of interest, it is only of secondary concern to this research. The primary interest is in theory development and assessment. Consequently, the problems associated with the traditional methodological strategy of expectation states theory should be explored. To the methodological critique, Molseed and Maines (1987) have probably made the greatest contribution. They note that the "standardized experimental situation" is the primary methodological procedure used by expectation



states theorists to test their propositions. The "standardized experimental situation" has been described at length by numerous expectation states theorists (e.g., Moore, 1968; Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch, 1972; Cook, Cronkite, and Wagner, 1974; Meeker, 1981); and so an elaborate explanation of the process is not needed here.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the most outstanding feature of the standardized experimental situation is the attempt on the part of the researchers to produce an environment of precise control. Constructing a controlled research environment is not at issue. Moreover, Maines and Palenski (1986) suggest that reducing extraneous factors can enhance research. However, Molseed and Maines (1987) argue that in the case of the standard expectation states experiment, "control has become a useless fetish." Those authors argue this because, based on their interpretation, subjects interact only with positioners and not with one another. According to Martin and Knottnerus (1994) this would seem to be somewhat ironic for social psychological research, given that the decision making process is inherently social.

Further, this attempt for control in the standardized experimental setting may in fact introduce some degree of artificiality into the research process, thus producing results that otherwise might not have been obtained. Molseed and Maines (1987) argue that not only is such control often useless, but it may also produce results that are a function of the procedures. "The elimination of non-verbal behavior as a source of information regarding another as well as the imposition of a time frame which excludes the possibility for contemplation may well affect decisions subjects make during experiments" (Lee and Ofshe, 1981, p. 80). Finally, it is of relevance to this research to note that Berger and

Zelditch (1985) assert that expectation states theory is applicable to any interaction, not just that which occurs within the confines of the standard laboratory setting.

Consequently, it is the intent of this research to extend the work of the aforementioned theorists as well as Knottnerus and Greenstein (1981) and Martin and Knottnerus (1994) into the realm of the Adult Protective Services Evaluation. It is argued that the situation in which this interaction takes place is, while less controlled, similar to the task group setting examined in the laboratory and is characterized by a status validation effect.

Further, this examination of a social reality which is arguably more mundane than the "standardized experimental situation" may in fact reveal the more complex and yet subtle ways humans have of displaying status within the confines of the task group setting.

Having examined what some (Molseed and Maines, 1987; Ofshe and Lee, 1983) consider to be the primary methodological inadequacies of expectation states experiments, it is time to develop an alternative methodological strategy. A methodology which allows for transition to a naturalistic setting yet which allows for maximum control. This methodological transition from the "standard experimental situation" to the everyday interaction of ordinary persons is a necessity if expectation states theory is going to continue to contribute to and develop cumulative sociological knowledge.

### Methodology

To achieve the stated objectives, two methods were utilized. The first method was secondary data analysis and the second method was analytic induction. Data collected by Arkansas' Adult Protective Services were used to construct variables and tests of research

questions. While this method has criticisms (i.e., primarily problems of validity), it is used extensively in the social sciences. This is done primarily because of two major benefits. First is the factor of cost. This method allows the researcher to analyze quite large data sets which most individual researchers could not afford to collect. Second is the factor of time. Quite obviously, large data sets are not only expensive, but also consume numerous hours to collect and construct. Therefore by utilizing existing data sources the researcher can spend time analyzing data rather than collecting it.

### Data Source

Arkansas was selected as the site for this inquiry for several reasons. First, the researcher had a contact within the Arkansas Department of Human Services. Second, Arkansas is centrally located and has a relatively large elderly population. Third, the definitions of elder abuse used by the Arkansas Department of Human Services, in particular Adult Protective Services, are fairly straightforward. Fourth, Adult Protective Services maintains both a hard copy as well as computerized central registry (i.e., record of all reported cases of abuse including characteristics needed for the analysis). As such, the primary data source for this evaluation will be the data base maintained by Adult Protective Services for the year 1994. This year was selected because the research was being conducted in 1995 and subsequently, 1994 was the most recently completed data set. The entire data set  $N=1,959$  was used rather than selecting a sample for two reasons. First, based on problems with past research and the exploratory nature of this method when coupled with the theoretical model, there needed to be a clear determination that the

conclusions were not derived by chance alone. Second, it is argued that because of the abstract nature of this theoretical model and the proliferation of Adult Protective Services organizations in other states and the maintenance of a central registry in many of them, that Arkansas can serve as somewhat of a sample. Theoretically then, the results of this research can then be generalized to any state with similar statutes and data collection systems.

The second type of data utilized in this research will be collected in the field using participant observation and informal interviews with Adult Protective Services Consultants. Analytic induction will then be used to reformulate the theoretical model.

Gaining access to the data and permission to enter the field has been accomplished. Initially this was done through telephone contact with the Adult Protective Services Administrator. This was subsequently followed by a formal letter and a contract with the Arkansas Department of Human Services Adult Protective Services attorneys which stipulated the agreement as well as the parameters of confidentiality.

#### Characteristics of Data

The primary unit of analysis for this research was the individual case known as a referral according to Adult Protective Services procedures. The present research examined all 1,959 cases referred during the year 1994. Therefore, a complete coverage of the state of Arkansas was accomplished.

The study involved 28 variables. Twenty-seven status characteristic, status constellation, anxiety, and effort variables were treated as independent variables.

Substantiated cases of abuse was used as the one dependent variable, all of which were coded as dummy variables.

### Independent Variables

Twenty-eight independent variables were utilized in this research. They were included in various types of analysis as predictors of substantiated cases of abuse.

Male was defined as those persons having masculine characteristics as related to gender. The variable male was operationalized as those persons being recorded as male by Adult Protective Services Consultants. Female was defined as those persons having feminine characteristics as related to gender. The variable female was operationalized as those persons being recorded as female by Adult Protective Services Consultants. White was defined as those persons having characteristics of, or characteristics related to being Caucasian. The variable white was operationalized as those persons being recorded as white by Adult Protective Services Consultants. Black was defined as those persons having characteristics of, or characteristics related to being of African origin. The variable black was operationalized as those persons being recorded as black by Adult Protective Services Consultants. Age 18-59 was defined and operationalized as those persons who reported their age to fall within this category. Age 60-69 was defined and operationalized as those persons who reported their age to fall within this category. Age 70-79 was defined and operationalized as those persons who reported their age to fall within this category. Age 80 plus was defined and operationalized as those persons who reported their age to fall within this category. Abuse was defined in two parts. (A) Any

intentional and unnecessary physical act which inflicts pain on, or causes injury to an endangered adult, including sexual abuse. (B) Any intentional or demeaning act which subjects and endangered adult to ridicule or psychological injury in a manner likely to provoke fear or alarm. Abuse was operationalized as those referrals which indicated that this behavior had or was taking place. Neglect was defined in three parts. (A) Negligently failing to provide necessary treatment, rehabilitation, care, food, clothing, shelter, supervision, or medical services to an endangered adult. (B) Negligently failing to report health care problems, changes in health problems, or changes in health conditions of an endangered adult to the appropriate medical personnel. (C) Negligently failing to carry out a prescribed treatment plan. By implication these also include self neglect, meaning that an individual is capable of committing these violations against him or herself.

Neglect was operationalized as those referrals which indicated that this behavior had or was taking place. Exploitation was operationalized as any willful misuse of an adult's property or finances. The next set of variables addresses the theoretical extension known as a status constellation. A status constellation is defined as a set of, or multiple diffuse status characteristics which form a "typical" or meaningful social stereotype within a delimited arena of the social world. The indices used to construct these variables contained a number of categories of diffuse status characteristics which, in addition to the concept of status constellation, have already been defined. Therefore, the status constellation variables are operationalized in the following way. Constellation one was operationalized as those persons who are male, black, and less than 60 years of age. Constellation two was operationalized as those persons who are male, white, and less

than 60 years of age. Constellation three was operationalized as those persons who are female, black, and less than 60 years of age. Constellation four was operationalized as those persons who are female, white, and less than 60 years of age. Constellation five was operationalized as those persons who are male, black, and between 60-69 years of age. Constellation six was operationalized as those persons who are male, white, and between 60-69 years of age. Constellation seven was operationalized as those persons who are female, black, and between 60-69 years of age. Constellation eight was operationalized as those persons who are female, white, and between 60-69 years of age. Constellation nine was operationalized as those persons who are male, black, and between 70-79 years of age. Constellation ten was operationalized as those persons who are male, white, and between 70-79 years of age. Constellation eleven was operationalized as those persons who are female, black, and between 70-79 years of age. Constellation twelve was operationalized as those persons who are female, white, and between 70-79 years of age. Constellation thirteen was operationalized as those persons who are male, black, and 80 plus years of age. Constellation fourteen was operationalized as those persons who are male, white, and 80 plus years of age. Constellation fifteen was operationalized as those persons who are female, black, and 80 plus years of age. Constellation sixteen was operationalized as those persons who are white, female, and 80 plus years of age. One other status constellation variable was added primarily as an exploratory variable. The variable is “validated,” or a validated report. From the theoretical model it is assumed that when this appears in the central registry, that the consultant felt that there were enough significant variables in some combination to warrant substantiation. The

limitation here is, of course, that this research cannot be clear as to what characteristics constitute the specific status constellation. Validated was defined as a confirmed set of characteristics as detailed on the initial referral. Validated was operationalized as those cases which were determined by the consultant to be consistent with the initial referral. Emergency was defined as a referral in which the client is allegedly in imminent danger of death or physical harm within a twenty-four hour period. Emergency was operationalized as those cases which met the above criteria per the initial referral. Days elapsed was defined as the number of days elapsed from the time of the initial referral until the assessment was complete. Days elapsed was operationalized in terms of a standard 24 hour day. This included weekends and was quantified as one, two, or three days, and four or more days.

#### Dependent Variable

The following variable was used as the dependent variable throughout the research. Substantiated cases of abuse (i.e., abuse, neglect) was used as the abuse variable. Since this is one of the major theoretical points (i.e., that one actor is able to make a judgement regarding another's position relative to his/her own and that of other actors) of the research, then using substantiated cases of abuse as the dependent variable allows for a determination of the net effect through the use of multiple regression analysis of each of the other variables proposed in the model on the creation of elder abuse.

#### Analytic Induction

The second phase of the research will proceed using participant observation.



More precisely, the technique to be used in the field is that of analytic induction in an attempt to falsify and then reformulate the theoretical propositions offered in chapter four. This technique seems to be particularly appropriate given the emphasis in this research on formal theory development and extension. More precisely, this method is particularly advantageous in that it allows a solution to the problem of causal inference. As noted earlier, this general theoretical approach (i.e., expectation states theory and specifically status characteristics theory) has typically solved this problem through the use of the "standard experimental situation" (Molseed and Maines, 1987, p. 20).

However, Denzin (1989) argues that in participant observation "the experimental model is approximated through the use of analytic induction, which is a strategy of analysis that directs the investigator to formulate generalizations that apply to all instances of the problem" (Denzin, 1989, p. 166). Denzin (1989) further suggests that, conceptually, this represents an approximation of the experimental model and when combined with participant observation requires the researcher to search for cases that negate the theory or hypothesis, thus leading to a reformulation of the causal hypothesis or theoretical proposition (e.g., Lindesmith, 1947; Becker, 1953; and Sutherland and Cressey, 1966).

Also of importance is "the reliance of analytic induction on theoretical rather than on strict statistical sampling models" (Denzin, 1989, p. 169). This research will also utilize theoretical sampling using Lindesmith (1947) as a model. Lindesmith took advantage of other research and existing data, as has this research. However, the primary strategy both for Lindesmith (1947) and this investigator will be to search for crucial cases that will invalidate the theory. This position is further supported by the following:

“In one sense, the use of theoretical saturation as a criterion for concluding observations on a concept has its analogue in the dictum of analytic induction that a theory is complete in so far as negative cases which invalidate it are not identified” (Denzin, 1989, p. 169).

Finally, this approach coupled with the multivariate analysis detailed in phase one should allow for the generation of knowledge through formal theory development.

Perhaps more importantly though it will do so in a manner that is not only cumulative, but also agrees with Denzin's (1989) assertion that scientific causal propositions must be stated as universals.

#### Data Handling

As already noted, the data for this research were obtained from existing sources (i.e., Arkansas Department of Human Services, Adult Protective Services). When obtaining data from existing sources the accuracy or reliability of the data may be questioned. Consequently, the data must be evaluated to be sure they are reliable. With data tapes, the keying process is of the utmost concern.

The accuracy of the keying process for the file was excellent. This is so primarily because there is an in-house check of the keying procedure. Basically this means that each record is double checked once it is keyed to ensure accuracy. According to the Adult Protective Services Administrator, this process is required by their policy and procedures. As a result of this procedure it was believed that a smaller sample would be adequate for an initial analysis of the accuracy of the keying process. For the abuse data file a sample of 20 (approximately 1%) of 1,959 records was randomly drawn. For these 20 records no

keying errors were detected. This yielded an error rate of zero which is less than the 0.5% which is typically allowed. It can therefore be concluded that the accuracy of the keying process is within an acceptable range and that the data are reliable.

The handling of data collected in the field is often criticized as being overly subjective. However, this criticism is no more accurately applied here than it is with the handling of quantitative data. As such, observations made in the field which are relevant to the research hypothesis will be noted. This process will be aided by the fact that the researcher will be able to carry a clipboard and notepad at all times. While this may seem unusual, this is standard equipment for Adult Protective Services Consultants and it is believed that this will not have a negative impact on the research process.

Since cases which negate the hypothesis are sought, negative cases will be recorded. Further, any relevant comments or answers to informal questions will also be noted. At the end of each session this data will be analyzed and a new or modified set of hypotheses will be constructed for the next set of observations.

#### Methodological Limitations

Although a number of measures were taken to ensure the soundness of this research, limitations still exist in its design and implementation. This section discusses some limitations and problems of this research.

#### External Validity

This study examined the construction/creation, vis a vis interaction, of the abused elder in Arkansas. Therefore, generalizations regarding this specific process beyond the

boundaries of Arkansas would be difficult. However, since the primary objective of this research is formal theorizing, that is the construction of a formal theory of decision making with the propositions stated as universals, possibilities do exist. First, the theoretical model should be generalizable in any social context which meets the scope conditions as presented in the theory. Second, findings from this research may serve as a basis for similar research in states which have Adult Protective Services or at the national level once there is a consensus on the definitions and parameters of abuse. Given this, the characteristics of the data can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequencies of both reported (N=1,959) and substantiated (N=59) cases of elder abuse, Arkansas, 1994.

Variable	Rep. Freq.	Sub. Freq.
Male	653	19
Female	1297	40
Race 1 (White)	1371	42
Race 2 (Black)	553	17
Age 1 (<60)	299	9
Age 2 (>59<70)	260	8
Age 3 (>69<80)	571	17
Age 4 (>79)	829	25
Abuse	314	10
Exploit	110	3
Neglect	1524	46
Const 1	48	1
Const 2	85	3
Const 3	58	2
Const 4	94	3
Const 5	30	1
Const 6	79	2
Const 7	32	1
Const 8	115	3
Const 9	41	1
Const 10	136	4
Const 11	100	3
Const 12	285	8
Const 13	68	2
Const 14	157	4
Const 15	174	9
Const 16	419	12
Emer 2 (yes)	46	5
Val T	728	22
DYSELSP <1	768	768

\*Freq. may not total to 100% because of rounding.

Table one illustrates the frequencies of both reported and substantiated cases of abuse. Begin by noticing the variables associated with gender, race, and age. These are of importance given the construction of abuse typologies by human services professionals. First, look at the reported frequency of females. It is interesting to note that females are reported far more often (N=1,297) compared to males with an N=653. Second, notice that according to the data, this is an overwhelmingly white phenomenon. Whites are reported more frequently (N=1,371) than Blacks (N=553). Third, the age category of 80 plus years of age appears to have a higher incidence of reports (N=829) than the other categories. Taken together, these characteristics of the sample population are important in that they seem to serve as a baseline for human services professionals. Thus, the decision making process of these individuals may be influenced by the presence or absence of these characteristics. The other variables are largely exploratory, however of particular interest is the variable neglect (N=1,524). Given this researchers orientation, this would suggest the reporting of unpopular lifestyles and/or persons in the community who fit the existing typology of an abused or vulnerable elderly person.

#### Measurement Validity

The validity of measures used in this research was difficult to establish concretely. Each measure, however, does have some degree of face validity (e.g., it was assumed that when a consultant evaluates a referral by interviewing a client, they can establish whether or not the client is male, female, black, white, etc...). Further, measures in this study are consistent with those used in past elder abuse research (Martin, 1994) and do adequately measure the concepts with which this research dealt.

## Reliability

Questions of reliability often arise when secondary data sources are used. The concern is that the data sources may not be complete or completely accurate. This issue as well as errors in the keying process have already been addressed. It is assumed that the data are reliable with two possible exceptions. (1) The Adult Protective Services Registry only reflects those cases which were referred, and (2) all individuals and agencies which are legally mandated to report suspicion of abuse or neglect may not participate in the reporting process. Other similar problems may also exist, but again it will be assumed that given the parameters of this research that these data are acceptable.

## Summary

In general this chapter has presented this researcher's original intentions for operationalizing this study. Both multivariate analysis as well as analytic induction have been proposed as not only logical, but also legitimate and compatible methodologies for assessing the theory in question. Perhaps the data which will be presented in the following chapters will offer insight into the nature of the variables and their relationship to each other in light of the theoretical framework.

## Chapter VI

### Analysis of Data: Qualitative

#### Introduction

Given the objectives of this research, perhaps a subjective discourse may be helpful in analyzing the theoretical model and the hypotheses which were generated. Each case observed was within itself a unique collection of diffuse and specific status characteristics, as well as their meaningful combinations and interpretation. To further complicate each observation, each of these characteristics and their presentation and interpretation were set within the linguistic maze of interaction. The complexity of this maze is then compounded by attempts to discern and bracket information given, label, negotiate, and produce an acceptable account given the parameters of the Adult Protective Services Evaluation.

For this research the objective, as previously noted, is to utilize analytic induction to evaluate the proposed hypothesis and reformulate, if necessary, the theoretical model. A discussion of any theoretical modifications will follow in Chapter VIII. Since the qualitative analysis in the research is offered as a subsequent test of the hypotheses which will undergo quantitative assessment, the analysis will be presented in a similar format (i.e., truncated) as that employed by Becker (1953) who utilized the same methodology. Given the approach which has been selected rather than the lengthy narratives of individual cases filled with the "thick, rich" description which so many researchers and anthropologists hold as the standard, this research is open to criticism from those who



prefer this method. Obviously there are numerous criticisms and limitations of any analysis based on sense perceptions. However, given the following objectives of the qualitative analysis, a subsequent evaluation of the hypothesis, meaning that the same hypotheses which have been evaluated through quantitative methods will be evaluated based on the researcher's sense impressions; and efficiency, meaning the researcher was able to gain access to the field in a manner which was both cost and time efficient, this approach seems reasonable. Further, since this portion of the research served as a secondary methodology, the ethnographies and emphasis on descriptions of physical settings and personal history do not seem warranted.

The observations consisted of approximately 80 hours in the field. The attitudes and cognitions of the Adult Protective Services Consultants were of the utmost concern. Therefore, the first 40+ hours of the research were spent at the Adult Protective Services Office. Here the researcher was introduced to the consultants (four of nine consultants) who worked out of this office. Later the researcher accompanied a fifth consultant on an assessment in another region of the state and interviewed a sixth by phone. Further, the researcher had the full cooperation and lengthy discussions with the Adult Protective Services Administrator. The other three consultants were in regions of the state which were too remote to provide for feasible contact. Further, the researcher was assured that their caseload and procedures did not vary in any significant way from the consultants which were being observed. The second 40+ hours were spent accompanying various consultants as they made evaluations. In all, the researcher observed ten assessments.<sup>4</sup> The majority of the assessments were white (six) female (seven) and between 70 to 80

years of age (seven). There were three exceptions in terms of age, two were in their 60's. This, of course, still meets the criteria for elder abuse. The third was a developmentally disabled black female in her twenties. Her case proved to be not only interesting, but also promising for the theoretical model. This is so because the same processes assumed to occur in the evaluation of an allegedly abused elder also took place during her evaluation. Given the researcher's previous and lengthy time in the field and the structured nature of the observations as dictated by the theoretical model, it was determined that no new information with regard to the hypotheses was being generated after the first four evaluations in the field. This is not to say that other "new" information was not obtained in the subsequent evaluations, but that information was just beyond the scope of the initial research objectives.

This chapter is intended to present the researcher's general overall impression of the Adult Protective Services Evaluations. As such, throughout the next section the proposed hypotheses will be evaluated in relation to the researcher's subjective interpretation of the events which were observed.

#### Evaluation of Hypothesis One

Hypothesis one states: Those individuals who possess certain diffuse status characteristics (white, female, very old) are more likely to experience status validation.

In general, the qualitative data support this to some extent. Initially, consultants are given a referral which they evaluate in the office. This situation is then roughly analogous to the experimental setting previously mentioned in which P' and O do not have contact. Here,

status characteristics coupled with a brief explanation of the situation are used exclusively to set some parameters or make some predictions of what will be found.

"When you get an initial referral can you tell from the information on the sheet [e.g., race, gender, age, etc...] whether or not it is likely that the case will be substantiated?"

Researcher

"Oh sure, we use this stuff all the time. I mean, we have to, it's all we've got and were under so much pressure to make a decision..."

Consultant A.

"It's all we have until we see the client... Sometimes we can tell if it's going to be substantiated or not, but we still have to make the home visit."

Consultant D.

"Sure we do, hell, it's all we got. But what you don't understand is that it's more complicated than that. We have to go out and see their living conditions, and what they have to say about the information on the referral."

Consultant C.

Hypothesis one then seems to have some limited support. However, as the consultants suggest, the real life world of an evaluation is infinitely complex. Therefore, the exact mechanism, characteristic, or combination of characteristics which results in a substantiated case of abuse lie somewhere beyond the presence of a single status characteristic. However their presence nor importance should be ignored. All consultants acknowledged the use of these characteristics to some extent making the evaluation of the referral in the office, outside the presence of the client. Consequently, this situation is roughly analogous to the aforementioned experimental setting.

### Evaluation of Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two states: Those possessing a combination of certain diffuse status

characteristics are the most likely to experience status validation.

The results for hypothesis two are roughly equivalent to those for hypothesis one. All consultants who were questioned agreed but reasserted their original position that there was more to it than these characteristics alone. As one consultant put it,

“We don't just add these things up ... we have to go out to where they are and see what's going on. Of course it helps to have as much information as possible before we get there, but it's more complicated... Look, we have to determine if they are in imminent danger and if they're competent, and we have to see them and talk to them before we can know that.”

Consultant C.

Both consultants B and D concurred that the assessment made by consultant C was correct. Consequently, both hypotheses one and two have limited support. While status characteristics and status constellations are necessary and important for an evaluation, they are not sufficient. Moreover, the consultants suggest, as do critics of EST (Molseed and Maines, 1987; Ofshe and Lee, 1983), that during the evaluation process, both client and consultant interact with each other rather than basing decisions on some standardized form or simple reporting of the other actors characteristics. This in turn supports Martin and Knottnerus' (1994) assertion that the decision making process is inherently social.

### Evaluation of Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis three states: In any status validation situation if P' experiences anxiety, then the strength of the differential evaluation will be increased, resulting in status validation.

The data supported this hypothesis as well. However, the source of anxiety was different than what was assumed by the researcher. This researcher had initially assumed that

anxiety would arise on the part of the consultant based on one or more of the following factors: (1) interaction with a stigmatized individual, (2) conducting the evaluation in an unclean environment or in a neighborhood which was perceived to be dangerous, or (3) the presence of a family member or caretaker who appeared to be threatening or physically abusive.

These assumptions were rejected for two reasons in particular. First, when asked about living conditions, one consultant responded like this:

“Sure it's gross, but you adjust to it -- it's just like you get used to going to work at a school everyday. I get used to working in someone's filthy house.”

Consultant B.

Apparently consultants go through a conditioning process and they may become accustomed to being exposed to such conditions. Therefore, their level of anxiety may be considerably less than the person who is encountering this setting for the first time. Also, when consultants were asked about encountering dangerous situations or confrontive relatives and their impact on their level of anxiety, they responded in the following way:

“Most of the time if it looks like a questionable situation we go in teams.”

Consultant D.

“Hell, there are areas of Little Rock where the cops won't go without cops. If it looks like a dangerous situation, we call the cops and they go with the consultants.”

Adult Protective Services Administrator.

“Sure things can get pretty hairy ... I've had knives pulled on me, guns stuck in my face, a woman wrapped in aluminum foil with a pot on her head claiming to be controlled by aliens, and I've even had a guy masturbate in the back seat of my car while I drove him to the hospital. But if we think things are going to get bad or if someone runs us off, we get the cops and go back.”

Consultant C.

The other consultants echoed these responses. Thus, anxiety on the part of the APS consultants was not due to the physical environment nor the people with whom they interacted. Ironically, the anxiety which existed was generated by the bureaucracy and political powers which created APS and was the result of recent bad press.

Prior to and during this researchers time in the field, Adult Protective Services was receiving bad press. There were a number of stories but two in particular received the typical highly sensationalized media coverage which tends to outrage the public. The stories (which will be discussed briefly) were part of a four part series entitled "Aging in Arkansas" and ran on the front page of the states largest paper, the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

The first story was the story of Lois Burnett, an 82 year old blind woman who was found dead on the floor of her home. The home was by any standards filthy, without electricity or water, and infested with rodents and roaches. However, Ms. Burnett had been assessed and did not meet the criteria to be taken into custody. This was primarily because she had lived in the same place in similar conditions since 1972. Always being able to offer an acceptable account of her behavior or living conditions, Ms. Burnett did not meet the requirement of imminent danger. The medical examiners report concluded that she died of hardening of the arteries rather than as a result of her situation. Nevertheless, this fact as well as her history of living in these conditions was ignored on February 21, 1995 when Police Detective Tom Ramsey of the Benton Police Department testified for 30 minutes before the Senate Aging and Legislative Affairs Committee. Detective Ramsey found Ms. Burnett and like most moral entrepreneurs became a

self-proclaimed expert on elder abuse. As a result of his testimony, it was concluded that the state had let Ms. Burnett down and as a result, the heat was once again turned up on Adult Protective Services.

The next day, another sensationalized story of Adult Protective Services alleged failure also appeared as the newspaper series continued. Here a similar yet unrelated story was conveyed to the public. This is the story of Elmer Broome, an 85 year old man who kept between 40 and 130 cats in his home. This lifestyle and the fact that he spent his money on his cats rather than on himself seemed to upset everyone. However, the Area Agency on Aging social worker who evaluated him prior to his death said, "...he knew who he was, where he was, and knew what he was doing." The story was added in the article entitled "Risks vs. Rights: Pondering Questions of Life and Death," primarily for dramatic effect. The article reported: "On March 19, 1988, Broome's body was found in his house, just outside town next to a cemetery. Broome had been eaten by his cats." Although Mr. Broome had lived this way for many years and according to Poinsett County Coroner Paul S. Thompson, III, he died of cardiovascular disease, Protective Services once again served as a scapegoat.

The point of this brief anecdotal presentation is this. Although these persons had chosen to live this way for a number of years, they were being stigmatized for it now simply because they had become old. Further, for the past several years highly sensationalized cases have been presented to the public by the media as the norm. Consequently, it is believed that stories such as this do not significantly impact the behavior of Protective Services Consultants, rather, it seems to reinforce their sense of

self. Therefore, the pressure is always on to make the right decision, not just when the media chooses to sensationalize their everyday lives. Thus, the anxiety which comes into play in the evaluation is produced by the state Senate Aging and Legislative Affairs Committee, and occasionally the media rather than from the living conditions of clients or the clients themselves. What this means then is that the consultants often take the brunt of the public scrutiny, the disapproval of other state agencies, the legal liability, and the bad press to ensure that a client can live the way he or she chooses to if the client is able to make that decision. Another article found in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reports the following:

We find people living in appalling conditions, but these people have always lived like that. Rats and roaches or not having enough running water or utilities are not enough to take someone from their home. If that is what they're used to, the simple fact that someone has gotten old doesn't suddenly make this a danger. We tend to err a little bit on the side of freedom. These are adults. They have the right to choose the way they want to live. (Norton Bray, Attorney with the Department of Human Services Office of Chief Counsel).

The anxiety produced among the consultants as a result of this situation is obvious. When accompanying clients on evaluations this researcher noted that if they were paged for an emergency, their whole manner changed. They became rushed and agitated and portrayed a feeling of 'we have to make a decision now.' If they were in teams, the consultants immediately began to discuss the case and possible outcomes among themselves. When asked if these "emergency" situations made them anxious, the following responses were obtained:

"Oh sure, we never know what's going to happen or if we will lose our job for making the wrong decision."  
Consultant A.



“You bet, with all the negative publicity we've been getting and with these triple A [i.e., Area Agency on Aging] people constantly bitching, and with the politicians on our ass to do something even though the law says we can't we're in a tough position. We're in a tough position. Our hands are tied. But we're expected to work miracles. What do you think we should do?”

Consultant C.

Of course this researcher could not offer any suggestions at that point, but the sense of despair and a feeling of anxiousness with regard to what is the right thing to do seemed apparent. When asked the same question, others responded in a similar fashion. However, one worker summed it up succinctly:

“You're damn right we're anxious. We've got people on our backs all the time. They want us to perform miracles out there. My consultants are good and I try to protect them from that stuff, but they still feel it. What we need is more money.”  
Adult Protective Services Administrator.

The data support hypothesis three. Anxiety does play a role in the evaluation process, especially in cases deemed as an "emergency". The parameters of "anxiety" however, need to be better defined and operationalized for future research.

#### Evaluation of Hypothesis Four

Hypothesis four states: In S, P' will reward negatively evaluated status characteristics by reducing the length of the interaction.

The data do not support this hypothesis. Based on the researchers observations, there was no difference (generally speaking) in the length of the evaluation based on the consultants evaluation of status characteristics. Differences in the length of the interaction, if any, were potentially based on a number of intangible variables (e.g., whether the evaluation was indoors or not, the weather, body odor, odor of the residence or accounts given)

including the presence of the researcher. Therefore, hypothesis four was not supported.

#### Evaluation of Hypothesis Five

Hypothesis five states: If a recurrent validation process occurs in S there will be aggregate effects in the institutional setting which corresponds to S. In general the data tended to provide limited support for hypothesis five. Consultants suggested the following:

“Sometimes the report is validated (i.e., the information on the initial assessment is correct), but they can explain their behavior, or they don't meet some other criterion. If that's the case, then we don't take them into custody.”

Consultant B.

“Sometimes we take them into custody, and then a relative volunteers to take them. That keeps them out of the nursing home.”

Consultant G.

“There is a lot that can happen. Sometimes we just get them medical care (i.e., hospitalization) and then they return home.”

Consultant A.

What appears to be happening here is this. Once the evaluation is done there are a number of possibilities: (1) report not validated, (2) report validated but not substantiated (i.e., report true but client offers appropriate account of behavior), (3) report validated, short term placement more appropriate, (4) report validated, long term care appropriate, family or guardian agree to take custody, or, (5) report validated, no account given, client taken into custody resulting in institutionalization. These outcomes may influence the macro level consequences suggested in hypothesis five. However, Adult Protective Services records for specific cases are destroyed so no direct measure of each outcome is possible. As such, there does seem to be sufficient support to establish that hypothesis five is

incorrect in its premise (i.e., given that the outcome of hypothesis five has not been disputed) and therefore should remain as a part of the overall theoretical model.

### The Accounts

It is important to note that throughout the qualitative assessment of the hypothesis, reference was made to the social dynamic known as interaction and the production of accounts. This section provides a description of accounts, types of accounts employed, and concludes by suggesting that although status characteristics, both diffuse and specific, status constellations, and anxiety were present in all of the evaluations, it was the offering and plausibility of an account which activated or neutralized the evaluation of (C) and (D) in (S).

The question now turns to what is an account, and what value, if any, is the sociology of talk per Scott and Lyman (1968) to this extension of status characteristics theory? Two theoretical positions with seemingly different ontological orientations. An account according to Scott and Lyman (1968) who developed their formulation from Austin (1961) is, "a linguistic device employed whenever an action is subjected to evaluative inquiry. Such devices are a crucial element in the social order since they prevent conflicts from arising by verbally bridging the gap between action and expectation. Moreover, accounts are 'situated according to the statuses of the interactants, and are standardized within cultures so that certain accounts are terminologically stabilized and routinely expected when activity falls outside the domain of expectation" (Scott and Lyman, 1968, p. 46). As one can see, there is a logical and empirical fit between accounts

and the theoretical model proposed in this research. More specifically, the Adult Protective Services Evaluation provides a setting in which there has been a gap between "action" and "expectation." Thus the evaluation (i.e., action--initial report of clients behavior and the subsequent interaction--being subjected to valuative inquiry) and the necessity of renegotiating one's identity (i.e., account). Moreover, the account must be appropriate given the settings and meanings evoked (i.e., culture of elder abuse) and must be plausible given the status and expectations of the interactants.

By an account, then, we mean a statement by a social actor to explain unanticipated behavior--whether that behavior is his own or that of others, and whether the proximate cause for the statement arises from the actor himself or from someone else... To specify our concerns more sharply we should at this point distinguish accounts from the related phenomenon of 'explanations.' The latter refers to statements about events where untoward action is not an issue and does not have critical implications for a relationship" (Scott and Lyman, 1968, p. 46-47).

But the question remains--How do we know that accounts are an adequate explanation of the phenomena encountered in the field and/or an appropriate addition to the theoretical model which has been proposed? This researcher acknowledges that any elaboration of how one "knows" anything is open for endless debate and criticism. Therefore, this researcher appeals to Rubin's appraisal: "The only answer to these criticisms lies in the quality of work itself--in its ability to persuade by appealing to a level of 'knowing' that exists in all of us but is not very often tapped; in its ability to borrow a phrase from psychology -- to generate an 'aha' experience" (Rubin, 1976, p. 5). This researcher confronted the "aha" experience full face early during the research process. During one of the initial assessments which was being conducted by two consultants, the mental

condition (i.e., competency) of an elderly black male was being questioned primarily because he was non-verbal. Granted, his living conditions were poor and he was not verbalizing a response to the middle aged, middle class, white, female social workers who had entered his home and as he initially stated "interrupted" his nap. Further, the situation was complicated by the fact that the consultants had been paged and informed that this was an emergency case and the client would die today without dialysis. Regardless of these conditions, the client did not appear to be incompetent to this researcher. Rather, he appeared to be uncooperative. As the consultants excused themselves to the other side of the room to discuss the characteristics by which they might characterize the client's mental capacity and determine whether or not he was in "imminent danger," this researcher, not being a part of the evaluation, but an observer approached the client. Sitting next to the client on his bed, only feet away from the bucket he used for a toilet, this researcher, while observing and trying to make note of the process occurring among the consultants asked an all-too-common question to which I received an all-too-uncommon response.

“How are you doing today?”

“I think I'm okay. But I'm trying to figure this thing out.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, you seem okay. You're polite. But these women come in here and start asking all these questions and I've got to figure out what they're all about so I'll know the right thing to say.”

Black male, 70 years old.

Given this man's response, the “aha” experience impacted this researcher with

exceptional force. It became evident that what the theoretical model proposed was on the right track. Any type of evaluation based on status characteristics which occurred outside of the laboratory was based in interaction. Thus, O or the client plays a major role in the evaluation of P' and O simultaneously as they attempt to negotiate an identity which has meaning given the parameters of the specific culture within which they interact, and which are appropriately "situated" according to the statuses of the interactants.

One criticism which may be leveled here is that in the interaction described as well as others (e.g., judicial decision making, teacher student evaluations, etc...), one actor P' has a legitimately (i.e., given the social structure within which the interaction occurs) defined status which allows them to make decisions regarding O. While this is accurate it should also be noted that when outside the standard experimental situation, P' must engage in a ritualized greeting process given the parameters of the culture. Here P' or the consultant must identify themselves and their stated purpose. That is, the actor (P') offers an account. This account is more specifically a justification of who and what they are and an attempt to get O to recognize the legitimacy of their authority over them. This in turn sets the tone of the interaction as both interactants engage the role of P' and O as they simultaneously attempt to present themselves and evaluate the status characteristics of the other actor. Thus, in addition to an evaluation, the negotiation of identity is occurring in S. Therefore, the introduction of accounts into the theoretical model, although in a formal sense as will be presented later, is important because it provides a foundation on which future research conducted outside of the laboratory setting can build. More specifically, it provides an orienting insight into the use of linguistics (e.g.,

semiotics) and the construction of meaning (i.e., of status characteristics) through interaction. Therefore, accounts serve more or less as a semiotic device through which the actors use status characteristics and language to construct their identities mutually (e.g., consultant and abused or non-abused older adult) and the greater social meaning.

With this elaboration, further attention can now be given to the types of accounts. Also, examples of various types of accounts (A) encountered in the field will be offered to illustrate the emerging premise that in S, either or both C and D may be activated or neutralized by an account (A), provided (A) is appropriately situated with regard to the statuses and background expectancies of the interactants within a given context.

#### Excuses and Justifications

Scott and Lyman (1968) suggest that there are two types of accounts: "Excuses and Justifications." Either, and occasionally both, are likely to be invoked when a person has been accused of engaging in untoward behavior.

Justifications are accounts for which one accepts responsibility for the act in question, but denies the pejorative quality associated with it. Thus, a soldier in combat may admit that he has killed other men, but deny that he did an immoral act since those he killed were members of an enemy group and hence "deserved" their fate. Excuses are accounts in which one admits that the act in question is bad, wrong, or inappropriate but denies full responsibility. Thus our combat soldier could admit the wrongfulness of killing but claim that his acts are not entirely undertaken by volition: he is 'under orders' and must obey (Scott and Lyman, 1968, p. 47).

Given these introductory comments, the discussion now turns to the types of excuses and justifications. Examples encountered in the field will be offered as well.

Scott and Lyman (1968) suggest that excuses mitigate or relieve responsibility for

conduct and typically take one of four model forms: appeal to accidents, appeal to defeasibility, appeal to biological drives, and scapegoating. First, excuses claiming accidents are acceptable simply because of their rarity. Further, they appeal to the inefficiency of the body (Scott and Lyman, 1968). This is especially plausible among the elderly. As one elderly person who had been admitted to the hospital for bruises, malnutrition, and confusion attempted to account for his behavior when it was suggested that he might be better off in a nursing home:

“I was confused because I fell and hit my head, but I'm okay now.”  
White male, 79 years; old.

Second, appeals to defeasibility are acceptable as excuses because they contain some element of 'knowledge' or 'will.' "One defense against an accusation is that a person was not fully informed or that his 'will' was not completely 'free'" (Scott and Lyman, 1968, p. 48). Therefore, because of a lack of information an individual might excuse themselves from full responsibility. For example, when questioned about the care of her aging mother-in-law (60 year old, black female) who had had a severe stroke and why the family was not utilizing home health aides who were available based on the family's income, the daughter-in-law replied,

“We ain't using them cause we didn't know about 'em.”  
Black female, early 20's.

When an elderly white female was questioned about not having any food in the house she replied:

“I don't have enough money.”

When further questioned about her income and informed that she qualified for food



stamps she replied:

“I didn't know about that. How do I get them?”  
White female, 80 years old.

This, of course, implies that the situation was not her fault because she didn't have the needed information, but now that she had it she would remedy the unacceptable behavior.

Third, excuses which appeal to biological drives fall under the category of "fatalistic" forces which are, depending on the culture, believed to be responsible for controlling numerous events. Cultures such as ours tend to place less stock in fatalistic excuses except for those cases in which we lack understanding, yet want what are perceived to be quick and pragmatic solutions.

Cultures dominated by universalist-achievement orientations tend to give scant and ambiguous support to fatalistic interpretations of events, but rarely disavow them entirely. To account for the whole of one's life in such terms, or to account for events which are conceived by others to be controlled by the actor's conscience, will, and abilities is to lay oneself open to the charge of mental illness or personality disorganization. On the other hand, recent studies have emphasized the situational element in predisposing certain persons and groups in American society to what might be regarded as a 'normalized' fatalistic view of their condition. Thus, for example, Negroes and adolescent delinquents are regarded and tend to regard themselves as less in control of the forces that shape their lives than whites or middle-class adults (Scott and Lyman, 1968, p. 49).

To these groups we should also add the elderly. Further, sociologists should also consider the degree to which lay persons as well as professionals are willing to give and/or accept accounts based on biology as potential indicators of actual belief in fatalistic forces. For example:

“What do you expect; that lady is old...”  
Consultant D.

“That one's eccentric as hell, but I don't think she's incompetent. Do you? Boy, it

must be hell getting old. I bet I'll drive my son out of his goddamn mind.”  
Consultant C.

Developments since the nineteenth century point to personality and social environment as causal factors in human behavior. Despite these, there still tends to be a tremendous amount of faith in the human body as a determinate in human behavior. As such, Scott and Lyman (1968) suggest "the fatalistic items most likely to be invoked as an excuse are the biological drives." This seems to be highly relevant in terms of accounts given and accepted among the elderly. After all, as a culture we expect them to have physical problems which directly impact daily living. Examples of this would include the following. When a middle aged, white female was asked why she allegedly never dressed her elderly mother (white female, 85 years old), she replied,

“Sometimes I do, but when we're not expecting company I just let her wear her Depends. She wets herself so frequently it's a real pain to keep changing her.”  
White female, late 40's.

When an elderly white man was asked why he refused to cooperate (i.e., he would not answer questions) he replied,

“What, what... oh, I'm sorry, my hearing is not too good and sometimes I miss what you're saying.”  
White male, 79 years of age

When asked, “Why do you keep a bucket next to your bed instead of using the toilet?” one client responded,

“I'm getting so old and it hurts my arthritis so bad to walk that far. This is just better. Besides, my son cleans it everyday.”  
Black male, 70 years of age.

The bucket appeared not to have been cleaned in quite some time; yet the excuse was

accepted as legitimate. The consultants talked as we drove away:

“Whew! Did you smell that God-awful place?”

Consultant C.

“Yeah, but his son will be over later to clean it up.”

Consultant D. The fourth and final type of excuse is scapegoating. According to Scott and Lyman (1968), this is another form of fatalistic reasoning in which the persons claim their behavior is in response to the behavior or attitudes of another. This type of excuse was not directly encountered in the field, but one consultant shared two personal encounters which would most likely qualify.

“I had this little old lady that used to sleep under her daughter’s car. They had to check under there every morning before they left for work. When I asked her why she did it, she told me it was because aliens were after her.”

Consultant C.

“One time I had this old lady, she was as sweet as she could be, but I'd be damned if she wouldn't wrap herself up in aluminum foil and put a stove pan on top of her head. She told me it was because aliens were shooting rays at her.”

Consultant C.

Granted, these two incidences may be indicative of some type of psychological or personality disorder; however, they also seem to fit the criteria for scapegoating.

Although justifications are similar to accounts, there is a crucial difference. Primarily justifications serve to legitimate an act. Thus, "to justify an act is to assert its positive value in the face of a claim to the contrary" (Scott and Lyman, 1968, p. 51). For a more complete discussion of justifications, one may explore what have come to be known as "techniques of neutralization."<sup>5</sup> Scott and Lyman (1968) assert that although these neutralization techniques have been discussed with respect to accounts offered by juvenile delinquents, their wider use has yet to be explored.

Scott and Lyman (1968) offer the following five part schema. The first technique of neutralization is the denial of injury. Here the actor acknowledges that they committed a particular act but argues that it is acceptable because no one was hurt by it, or because the consequences were minimal. For example, an elderly female who was quite wealthy was being questioned about giving away money and whether or not she felt she had been taken advantage of by a particular couple, she responded,

“Sure, I gave them some money... I'm not really sure this is any of your business. They needed the money and I've got plenty. What's the problem?”  
White female, early 80's.

Second is denial of the victim. Here the actor expresses that the act was permissible because the victim deserved the injury or possibly the alleged victim was not injured. Typically this is reserved for members of outgroups (e.g., homosexuals, whores, thieves, ethnic or racial minorities). But here, within the culture of the Protective Services Evaluation, the actors are often alleged to have abused or neglected themselves. Therefore, the actors may deny that they are a victim. Although this is not necessarily consistent with Sykes and Matza (1957) nor Scott and Lyman (1968), it is accurate within this context and as personal lives are evermore intruded upon, this researcher suspects this will become more prevalent. No specific examples are given here, but it should be noted that virtually all of the previous examples given (i.e., excuses) also double as this form of justification. Asserting “nothing is wrong, my situation is normal, I'm not a victim, I'm okay.”

Third is the technique of condemnation of the condemners. Here the actor admits performing an act but asserts that it is trivial if not irrelevant when compared to the acts

of others who may not be discovered, but who if discovered may even be praised. For example, the lady who was questioned about giving money away stated,

“What gives you the right to come in here and tell me what to do with my money? Why don't you help someone who needs it?”  
White female, early 80's.

A man being questioned while in the hospital replied,

“I appreciate you being here [sarcastically] but if you really want to help someone, why don't you check on my neighbor.”  
White male, 79 years old.

Consultants also seem to internalize the fact that not only their agency but they as people are condemned as well for the job they do. In turn, the stigma of being an Adult Protective Services Consultant, which they must negotiate and manage during each evaluation, no doubt takes a toll on the consultant's willingness to take someone into custody. The following quote by Lois Cox, an APS consultant which recently appeared in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, supports the notion that condemning the condemners takes its toll on the psyche of the consultant and may ultimately influence the evaluation process: "Rarely does someone go out voluntarily. So you pick them up a-kicking and a-screaming and a-fighting and strap them to a gurney ... What an indignity to force on anyone." (Lois Cox, Adult Protective Services Consultant, As quoted in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette).

The fourth neutralization technique discussed by Scott and Lyman (1968) is appeal to loyalties. "Here the actor asserts that his action was permissible or even right since it served the interests of another to whom he owes an unbreakable allegiance or affection." This technique was not encountered in the field. Therefore, further elaboration

is not justified.

The fifth and final technique suggested by these authors is what they refer to as a modern justification they call "self-fulfillment." Here the actor claims that self-fulfillment is a legitimate ground for their behavior. This technique was not encountered either. However, the reader should note that independence or a type of self reliance has been an underlying theme in many of the older person's comments.

Given this elaboration of the types of accounts as well as examples of the accounts encountered, it is of particular interest to note what constitutes an acceptable account. For this, this researcher would expand on Scott and Lyman (1968) by suggesting that there are three primary criteria. First, the account must be contextually accurate given the parameters of the culture within which the interaction takes place. For example, when an elderly person is asked, "Are you always alone?" it is contextually accurate to respond, "No, my neighbor checks on me every afternoon and my children come on weekends." In contrast it would not be contextually accurate to respond, "No, my buddies from the football team come over every afternoon. We have lots of fun riding bikes, playing Nintendo, and listening to CD's." The former account would probably be accepted while the latter would most likely not be.

Second, accounts must be "situated" (Scott and Lyman, 1968) according to the statuses of the interactants. Thus, the account must be appropriate given the actors status. For example, when an Adult Protective Services Consultant is asked "Why are you here?" an account which is appropriately situated to the status might be, "I'm an Adult Protective Services worker ... ." An account which is not appropriately situated to the same question

might be "I'm a Nazi and I'm here to take you from your home." The former account would probably be accepted while the latter would most likely not be.

Third and finally, accounts must be consistent with the background expectancies of the interactant. In particular, the account must be consistent with the background expectancy of the actor who is assuming the role of P' as his/her dominant role at the time and thus making the evaluation. For example, in the case at hand most of the Adult Protective Services Consultants are middle class, middle aged, white females. As such, they have background expectancies regarding those members of other racial and ethnic groups as well as ideas about how older, middle class, white persons and others should age. Therefore, for an account to be accepted, it must be consistent with the background expectancies of the interactants. For example, if an elderly, black female accounts for her lack of food in the house by saying that it is really not a problem because she has six children and they take turns bringing her food and checking on her, then her account seems plausible given the background expectancies of the consultant and the "common sense" assumption made by many whites that blacks typically have large extended families that are more or less matriarchal. If the situation were the same with a change in one diffuse status characteristic (i.e., race, from black to white) the result may be different. After all, few middle class, middle aged, white females equate their life experience with large extended families. Therefore, the first account would be most likely accepted and the latter would, at the least, invoke more inquiry and would most likely not be accepted.

## Summary

When considering each of the Adult Protective Services Evaluations as separate entities (i.e., individual cases), the lay person would probably suggest that they may appear to be unique events with their own characteristics, problems, interpretations, and solutions. As such, the apparent uniqueness of each may seem to overshadow any similarities that might exist. However when the individual observations are summarized in terms of the hypothesis of this study, some of the more general characteristics become apparent.

Generally speaking, there seemed to be support for hypothesis one, hypothesis two, and hypothesis three--with two qualifications. All interactions were characterized by a linguistic device known as an account. The account then must meet the criteria outlined in the text and depending on its success or failure in meeting these, the account either positively or negatively impacts both activation and the strength of the differential evaluation. Second, rather than simply being involved in a collective task where one actor has the power to define or make a judgement about another as the theoretical model suggests, the actors simultaneously assume both roles. For example, both actors assume the roles of P' and O simultaneously. As such, each actor is constantly giving an account of who and what he/she is both verbally and non-verbally and are subsequently evaluating the account given by the other actor. As such, a highly complex interaction dynamic emerges in which identity and inequality is formed. Although a rational calculation of all or part of the social forces occurring in the interaction dynamic most likely does not occur, the interaction is still influenced by the social structure of a given



culture as well as by the relative status positions of the actors and by the accompanying power differential inherent in those statuses. Further, the process is influenced to some degree by status characteristics and status constellations (the focus of this research) and the evaluation of language based codes such as arbitrariness and motivation coupled with kinesics in the formation of an account which the actors negotiate to establish identity. Granted this process does not eliminate the institutionalized authority given to some persons and established through law (e.g., Adult Protective Services Consultant, Judge, Police Officer); but this may in fact have the potential to explain the recognition and lack of recognition and/or lack of recognition of legitimate authority by some actors.

Hypothesis four was not supported by any of the observations. Therefore, hypothesis four was eliminated from further analysis.

Hypothesis five can be neither confirmed nor denied by this research. Unbeknownst to the researcher before entering the field, this type of data (i.e., ultimate disposition of each case) would not be made available to the researcher because of issues of confidentiality for the clients families. As a result, no usable information was obtained beyond the casual comments of various consultants who suggested that the idea probably had some merit. Consequently, this researcher recommends that the proposition which generated this hypothesis remain within the context of the theoretical model until further research which can assess more accurately the potential micro-macro interplay of these variables can be conducted.

Whether or not the subjective impressions of one researcher can be quantified and measured is difficult to determine. From the observations, evaluations, and the comments

of consultants, it would appear that there is a definite relationship between status characteristics, status constellations, anxiety, accounts, and substantiated cases of elder abuse. However, to operationalize and therefore measure the newly introduced variable of accounts is difficult; and more consideration of accounts in light of the theoretical model and the specific research to be conducted will be needed. Chapter VII will present the results of this researcher's attempt to test quantitatively the hypotheses which have been proposed and have thus far only been evaluated in terms of the researcher's sense impressions and the responses of Adult Protective Services Consultants.

## Chapter VII

### Analysis of Data: Quantitative

#### Introduction

In modern sociology perhaps the most acceptable method or technique for determining the validity of any hypothesis is the utilization of statistical procedures. Such techniques require that the data be transformed into indices which can be measured (i.e., the data must be quantified). Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to analyze the hypotheses generated by the theoretical model through the use of the data which has been collected and quantified for statistical analysis. Multiple regression analysis has been chosen as the primary technique to be utilized for the analysis, primarily because of the complexity of the world in which we live and study. More specifically, Bohrnstedt and Knoke (1994) assert that few if any social scientists today hypothesize that all the variation in some measure can be completely accounted for by its covariation with a single independent variable. The logic here is straightforward. Very few social scientists believe in single-cause explanations such as elder abuse being the result of a person's gender, or that elder abuse results from an older person associating with a younger person. Such explanations "have been largely replaced with complex accounts in which several unique sources of variation are posited" (Bohrnstedt and Knoke, 1994, p. 263). This alone suggests the need for multiple regression techniques.

## Multiple Regression Analysis

The examination of the relationship between a dependent and two or more independent or predictor variables (i.e., multiple regression analysis) is a complex subject. As already asserted by Bohrnstedt and Knoke (1994) and previously discussed by Snedocor and Cochran (1971), the regression of Y on a single independent variable is often inadequate. "Two or more X's may be available to give additional information about Y by means of a multiple regression on the X's" (Snedocor and Cochran, 1971, p. 381). Further, Snedocor and Cochran (1971, p. 381) suggest that multiple regression has at least three principle uses. First, they are "constructing an equation in the X's that gives the best prediction of the values of Y." Second, "when there are many X's, finding the subset that gives the best linear prediction equation." An example is offered to illustrate this point. In predicting elder abuse there may be as many as 50 or 100 X variables which may measure some aspect of elder abuse. However, a prediction equation with 50 or 100 variables is quite large and it is difficult to avoid mistakes, establish stability over time, and they require very large samples. Although standard computer programs are of considerable help, it is still unwise to engage in such a prediction equation if many of the X variables are not significantly correlated with Y and therefore add nothing to the improved accuracy of the prediction. Consequently, what is done is that an equation based on those variables which are significantly correlated is typically constructed. "An equation based on the best three or four variables might be a wise choice" (Snedocor and Cochran, 1971, p. 381). Third, in a number of studies prediction is not necessarily the goal of the research. Rather, it is to discover which variables are related to Y and

subsequently to rate their order of importance.

To summarize, a brief overview based on the discussions of Bohrnstedt and Knoke (1994), McClendon (1994), Moore and McCabe (1989), Popham (1967), and Snedocor and Cochran (1971) of both simple and multiple regression analysis seem warranted. Simple regression attempts to predict the value of a dependent variable (Y) based on the changes of an independent variable (X). That is to say, what when X changes a given amount, it will then be possible to predict what Y will be. This outcome and simple regression is, of course, based on a number of assumptions which must be met. First, Y must be related to X in a linear fashion. Second, that the data to be analyzed are at the interval level. Third, there must be an equal distribution of Y at each X. Fourth, there must be homoscedasticity or an equal variation of Y at every X.

In a sense, multiple regression is an extension of simple regression, primarily because multiple regression introduces other or more variables (X's) into the equation (i.e., abandons single cause explanations, assuming that few things are actually in a single cause and effect relationship) to make the prediction of Y more accurate. Two other assumptions must also be recognized in multiple regression. First, it is assumed that there is no multicollinearity (i.e., X's are not highly correlated and Y's and X's are highly correlated.) Second, it is assumed that X's are additive.

Simple regression is based on the correlation of X and Y which produces a linear shape showing the change in Y as X changes. The point where this line crosses the Y axis (i.e., when X is zero) is called the Y intercept. This point is produced by what is known as a line of best fit.

Multiple regression calculates the slope of one independent variable while holding other independent variables constant. This should be visualized as being multidimensional and the point on Y which is crossed when all X's are zero is the plane of best fit.

When regression is in a standardized form (i.e., standard score), the intercept of Y will always be zero standard deviations. Therefore, standard scores are not only meaningful, but also extremely useful in that they allow us to visualize the slope (e.g., slopes will run from -1 to +1). This is relevant because if the researcher were to simply use raw data, visualization may be difficult because of the incompatibility of measurement. Consequently, multiple regression analysis is extremely useful in the social sciences. This technique allows researchers to make predictions on certain variables based on the existence or occurrence of other variables. For example, the occurrence of substantiated cases of elder abuse may be predicted by the presence of anxiety of the social worker, the presence of certain diffuse status characteristics (e.g., age, sex, race), or specific performance information such as irregular behavior.

### Hypothesis Evaluation

Experimental research within the parameters of expectation states and status characteristic theory has produced consistent results. However, given certain methodological modifications and the subsequent lack of control, the measurements are less than perfect.

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations: All APS Evaluations, Arkansas, 1994, N=1,959.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Male	0.33	0.47
Female	0.66	0.47
Race 1 (White)	0.69	0.45
Race 2 (Black)	0.28	0.45
Age 1 (<60)	0.15	0.35
Age 2 (>59<70)	0.13	0.33
Age 3 (>69<80)	0.29	0.45
Age 4 (>79)	0.42	0.49
Abuse	0.16	0.36
Exploit	0.05	0.23
Neglect	0.77	0.41
Const 1	0.02	0.15
Const 2	0.04	0.20
Const 3	0.02	0.16
Const 4	0.04	0.21
Const 5	0.01	0.12
Const 6	0.04	0.19
Const 7	0.01	0.12
Const 8	0.05	0.23
Const 9	0.02	0.14
Const 10	0.06	0.25
Const 11	0.05	0.22
Const 12	0.14	0.35
Const 13	0.03	0.18
Const 14	0.08	0.27
Const 15	0.08	0.28
Const 16	0.21	0.41
Emer 2 (yes)	0.02	0.15
Val T	0.37	0.48
DYSELSP	1.58	1.53

Considering the theoretical model and the argument that typologies of the abused elder have been haphazardly constructed from averages and percentages, attention is focused on those variables which constitute the accepted typology and thus the core of the research. First, females are more likely to be referred as abused with a mean of 0.66 and a standard deviation of 0.47. In comparison, males have a mean of 0.33 and a standard deviation of 0.47. Second, whites have a mean of 0.69 and a standard deviation of 0.45, while blacks have a mean of 0.28 and a standard deviation of 0.45. Thus, whites tend to be referred more frequently. Third, observe the age category variables. There is also noticeable association between increased age and initial referral. For those 60-69 years of age, the mean is 0.13 and the standard deviation is 0.33. Those 70-79 years of age have a mean of 0.29 and a standard deviation of 0.45. Those in the 80 plus years of age category appear to be the most likely to be referred, with a mean of 0.42 and a standard deviation of 0.49. This categorization by age, as does the rest of the analysis, excludes those adults 18-59 years of age. Although they are served by the same agency, an offense against or by them does not constitute elder abuse.

Fourth, abuse has a mean of 0.16 and a standard deviation of 0.36, and the variable neglect has a mean of 0.77 and a standard deviation of 0.41. The variable neglect also encompasses self neglect. Therefore, it is not surprising that cases of neglect and self neglect (e.g., often an unpopular lifestyle) constitute the majority of Adult Protective Services referrals.

Fifth, are the variables noted as status constellations one through sixteen. Of particular interest are constellations twelve and sixteen. These are interesting because of



what the constellations represent. Constellation twelve represents a white female 70-79 years of age. These are of interest because constellation twelve has a mean of 0.14 and a standard deviation of 0.35, while constellation sixteen which represents white female 80 or over has a mean of 0.21 and standard deviation of 0.41. This indicates that persons who possess the status characteristics associated with the constellations, especially the latter constellation, are more likely to be referred.

Sixth, it is also of interest to note the number of days elapsed between the time of the initial referral and the time the evaluation and recommendations are made. The variable day elapsed has a mean of 1.58 and a standard deviation of 1.53. This means that on the average, evaluations and recommendations are made within one and a half days from the time of the initial referral.

This presentation of means and standard deviations is of relevance for at least one reason in particular. It is this type of data that many social services agencies use to construct typologies of the abused. This in turn leads to the use of stereotypes in the assessment process as well as for research purposes. Further, it may tend to cloud the issues, however counterintuitive, surrounding the variables which are in fact significantly related to abuse.

#### Variables Correlated with Substantiated Cases of Abuse

Each of the 30 variables that have been presented are tied in one way or another to the theoretical model and corresponding hypothesis. These 30 variables have been correlated using zero order correlation analysis with substantiated cases of abuse.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Coefficients: Variables correlated with substantiated cases of abuse, all APS Evaluations, Arkansas 1994, N=1,959.

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Male	0.01	(0.52)
Female	-0.01	(0.60)
Race 1 (White)	0.03	(0.14)
Race 2 (Black)	-0.02	(0.22)
Age 1 (<60)	-0.02	(0.31)
Age 2 (>59 <70)	-0.03	(0.15)
Age 3 (>69 <80)	-0.01	(0.52)
Age 4 (>79)	0.05	(0.02)*
Abuse	0.00	(0.80)
Exploit	-0.05	(0.01)
Neglect	0.02	(0.18)
Const 1	-0.00	(0.90)
Const 2	-0.00	(0.76)
Const 3	-0.02	(0.31)
Const 4	-0.01	(0.58)
Const 5	-0.01	(0.45)
Const 6	0.00	(0.74)
Const 7	-0.00	(0.92)
Const 8	-0.04	(0.07)
Const 9	-0.03	(0.08)
Const 10	-0.00	(0.97)
Const 11	-0.00	(0.77)
Const 12	0.00	(0.80)
Const 13	0.02	(0.22)
Const 14	0.04	(0.06)
Const 15	-0.01	(0.60)
Const 16	0.03	(0.12)
Emer 2 (yes)	0.33	(0.00)*
Val T	0.33	(0.00)*
DYSELSP	-0.02	(0.23)

Note: See text for a complete definition of each variable. Significance level in parenthesis  
 \* significance at the .05 level.

While the elder abuse literature in general supports the association of certain characteristics with elder abuse and this research proposes a theoretical model to evaluate the use of such status characteristics, the results reported in Table 3 are not generally supportive. Only the variable 80+ years of age, emergency (i.e., anxiety), and report validated (i.e., status constellation) appear to be significantly correlated with substantiated cases of abuse. More specifically, age 80 plus years, cases reported as emergencies (i.e., anxiety producing events), and cases where the allegations were perceived to be true (i.e., confirmation of status characteristics and constellations, meaning the report was validated) were significantly correlated. The variable 80 plus years is consistent with hypothesis one as is the variable report validated which is also consistent with hypothesis two. Further, the variable cases reported as emergencies is operationalized as an indicator of anxiety and consequently is consistent with hypothesis three.

These three variables are positively correlated with substantiated cases of abuse. This means that as the client's age increases and as anxiety increases, the likelihood of the allegations being substantiated also increases. Since these indicators co-vary, multivariate analysis is presented next in order to examine the net effect of each indicator on substantiated cases of abuse.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis of dummy coded variables significantly correlated with substantiated cases, all 1994 Adult Protective Services Cases, Arkansas. N=1959.

Variable	Standard Score
Age	0.02
Emergency	0.47*
Validated	0.14*
R <sup>2</sup> =0.19	F value=79.51*
Adj. R <sup>2</sup> =0.19	

\*Significance at the 0.05 level

Only two variables remain significantly associated with substantiated cases of abuse. Evidently the variable 80 plus years of age is a spurious effect of emergency situations and validated reports. In particular, the standard regression coefficients for emergency and validated reports are significant at the .05 level. Again, to re-emphasize, the two strongest predictors of substantiated cases of abuse are emergency and validated reports. Notably, these two variables alone account for nearly one-fifth, or about twenty percent (R<sup>2</sup>=.19) of the variation in substantiated cases of abuse.

#### Evaluation of Hypothesis One

Hypothesis one states that those individuals who possess certain diffuse status characteristics (as defined by pre-existing elder abuse typologies) are more likely to experience status validation. In general, the findings in Table 3 are not supportive. As such, these variables were eliminated from further analysis.

### Evaluation of Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two states that those possessing a combination of certain diffuse status characteristics are the most likely to experience status validation. The findings in Table 3 are not supportive. More specifically, the hypothesis suggested the construction and evaluation of a number of sets of status constellations (i.e., categories which consisted of a number of variables which were associated with pre-existing typologies). Table 3 indicates that none of these constructed variables are significantly correlated with substantiated cases of abuse. As such, these variables (i.e., status constellations 1-16) were eliminated from further analysis. The exception here is the variable validated report which has a standard score of .14. What this means is that when there is a validated report (i.e., an evaluation where the consultant perceives a set of status characteristics which are consistent with the typology and the initial referral) the consultant is more likely to determine that the individual may be in need of being taken into state custody.

### Evaluation of Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis three states that in any status validation situation if P' experiences anxiety then the strength of the differential evaluation will be increased resulting in status validation. The findings in Table 4 are supportive. The variable emergency (which was operationalized as the indicator of anxiety for reasons delineated in the methodology) remained significant. The standard score for emergency was .47 and was significant. Further, when combined with the status constellation variable of validated report, these two variables alone account for nearly 20% of the variation in substantiated cases of

abuse.

#### Evaluation of Hypothesis Four

Hypothesis four states that in S, P' will reward negatively evaluated status characteristics by reducing the length of the interaction. The findings in Table 3 are not supportive. It was presumed that there would be a negative relationship between the number of days elapsed and substantiated cases of abuse. While the relationship was negative, Pearson Correlation Coefficient  $r = -.03$  it was not significant at the .05 level. Therefore, this variable was eliminated from further analysis.

#### Evaluation of Hypothesis Five

Hypothesis five states that if a recurrent validation process occurs in S, there will be aggregate effects in the institutional setting which corresponds to S. It is important to note that hypothesis five was introduced to the text primarily as a theoretical point. As such, once the data were obtained from Adult Protective Services in Arkansas, there could be definition, operationalization, and measurement of this hypothesis. Unfortunately, these data were not made available in a usable form to the researcher. As such, hypothesis five was beyond the parameters of the data and an evaluation was not possible. However, until a proper assessment of this hypothesis can be made, this researcher would suggest that it should still be asserted as a theoretical point to illustrate the possible macro level effects of the interpersonal (i.e., micro level) interaction.

## Summary

The evaluation of the hypotheses in terms of the quantifiable data collected (i.e., made available by Adult Protective Services) for this research indicated that all predicted relationships between the variables, except for two, failed to be confirmed. In general, only the second and third hypotheses, which dealt with status constellations and anxiety, were confirmed. Again, according to the findings in Table 4 of  $R^2=0.1964$  one can see that these hypotheses account for a substantive amount of the variation. In contrast, both hypothesis one and four were not supported by the quantifiable data. The fifth hypothesis was not tested due to lack of data.

In conclusion, the evaluation of these hypotheses in terms of quantifiable data did not support the hypotheses. However, there were two notable exceptions. The interpretations and implications of the findings presented in this chapter will be discussed in Chapter VIII when the theoretical model, which has served as the focal point of this research, is reformulated.

## Chapter VIII

### Final Considerations

#### Introduction

The catalyst for this research has been the belief that who we are and our relative position to others in the social structure is the product of a complex process which subsumes culture, structure, and interaction--the most important of which is interaction. As such, the primary goal of this research has been what Hall (1995) refers to as "the transformation of understandings of social realities into theoretical language(s)." Further, an attempt has been made to overcome the major criticism of past research in EST and status characteristics theory (i.e., artificiality). In so doing, methodological limitations such as the standard experimental situation and the accompanying artificiality were overcome, but others emerged (e.g., the operationalization of secondary data and the reliance on subjective interpretations made in the field).

Regardless of these limitations and the inevitable criticisms they will undoubtedly invite, this approach is significant for a number of reasons. First, it brings the application of the theoretical approach known as status characteristics out of the laboratory and confronts to some degree a limited number of the methodological limitations of the approach as outlined by Molseed and Maines (1987). Second, it offers a different version of one aspect of social reality (i.e., context based interaction) illustrated through the Adult Protective Services Evaluation than does other research. Third, it asserts that the aggregation assumption typically associated with this approach is fundamentally flawed.



Instead, this research suggests that while humans have the capacity to be rational, we do not necessarily live that way. Rather, the decision making process is inherently social, being influenced by the background expectancies of the actors, cultural context, the status of actors relative to one another, biases, anxiety, accounts, kinesics, interpretational strategies, and inferences concerning social status.<sup>6</sup> Fourth, rather than isolating itself as simply a micro level theory (although this is where the strengths of the approaches obviously lie), this research suggests that this approach has multilevel characteristics which should be developed more fully in future research. This assertion is, as previously noted, consistent with the thesis of Coleman (1986, 1987) that sociological analysis must demonstrate how the actions of actors mediate structural-level effects if it is to be explanatory without attributing a purposiveness to social systems. Fifth and finally, this research has resulted in the development of a formal theoretical model which attempts to explain how status characteristics are evaluated within the parameters of context based interaction and how that interaction is not only affected by but also has potential effects for the larger social structure. Perhaps then, this research has been successful to some degree in answering the question raised by Prendergast and Knottnerus (1993), "How does social organization emerge out of interaction?"

### The Theoretical Model Revisited

It seems that it would be appropriate to note here that because of numerous reasons (e.g., economic, time restrictions, personal ideology, or past divisions within the discipline) researchers often do not have, or do not take the opportunity to collect data

which can be quantified for statistical analysis while simultaneously confronting the data on a personal, intuitive level. However, given that this was not the case for this particular study, perhaps some added insights are possible concerning the reformulation of the theoretical model. This section will present what this research has produced as a revised theory of recurrent status validation processes. As a result, possibly this research has produced a theoretical explanation which will better help other social scientists overcome the obstacles they may face as they attempt to understand and produce explanations regarding the nature of social reality.

The model presented is based on the empirical assessment of the proposed theoretical model as well as the previous discussion which advocated the elimination of the aggregation assumption. Two assumptions should be added. These assumptions should replace the aggregation assumption as the fourth and the fifth assumptions. The basic expectation assumption should be moved to number six. The revised fourth assumption should be referred to as the social context assumption. This assumption states that the decision making process occurs within a delimited arena of the social world and is influenced by biases, stereotypes, accounts, and various interpretational strategies which give form to the social context. The fifth assumption should be referred to as the mutuality of cognition assumption. This assumption states that both interactants are active participants in interaction, both trying to interpret as well as present a set of characteristics which they believe will situate them most positively given the social context.

Beyond this, there are other more substantial theoretical developments. Of note is

the fact that the theoretical developments of Knottnerus and Greenstein (1981) as well as Martin and Knottnerus (1994) have remained largely intact. The primary changes in these have been sequencing changes which allow the theory to flow, or to be more representational of the time order of the social world. Therefore, the revised theory of status validation processes is composed of the following definitions, assumptions, and propositions.

The first extension of the theory offered by Martin and Knottnerus (1994) remains intact, and like the other extensions to this theory, this idea has not been formally dealt with in Expectations States Theory literature and is presented here as a formal proposition.

**Proposition 1: Cultural Context.**

Status validation occurs within specific cultural contexts which determine the degree to which evaluated beliefs, i.e., stereotypes, are associated with characteristics.

What is being stated is that beliefs specific to cultural or subcultural environments influence the desirability or undesirability of D or multiple D's. The existence of D is not a universal occurrence which exhibits an invariant form in all cultural settings. Rather, the value of D is a function of the social context which gives it meaning and strength in terms of the evaluated beliefs which may be associated with it. For example, in the United States certain diffuse status characteristics such as old age or physical disability have generally been negatively evaluated in relation to youth and physical ability, while in other cultures these characteristics or certain other combinations might have very different values relative to each other. It was also previously noted in Chapter IV that

similar differences may also exist within a society.

**Definition 1: Anxiety.**

A sense of apprehension, uneasiness of mind or fear resulting from an anticipated interaction, or being produced by an interaction gone awry.

The next proposition is also an extension of Martin and Knottnerus (1994).

However, it appears here in a variant form as the results of the study dictate.

**Proposition 2: Anxiety Effect.**

If P' experiences anxiety in the presence of or by anticipating interaction with a stigmatized O, then C and D are more likely to be activated in S, the number and consistency of differentially evaluated beliefs associated with the stereotype of D increases.

This proposition addresses the impact of anxiety (A) on the strength of the beliefs associated with both C and D in S. As a result, the concept of anxiety as a mediator in the expectancy confirmation (i.e., status validation) process is consistent with the arguments of Harris, et al. (1994) and Jones, et al. (1984) as predicted. However, this research suggests that not only does interaction with a stigmatized individual raise one's anxiety level, but also that anticipating interaction in a stigmatized situation (e.g., an Adult Protective Services Evaluation deemed as an "emergency," interacting with drug dealers, or an orgy) may also serve as a sufficient stimulus to increase one's anxiety level, even if only temporarily. This in turn increases the strength of the beliefs associated with both C and D and subsequently enhances the likelihood that both C and D will be activated in S.

**Proposition 3: Activation.**

If C and D are available in S, and C and D are not specifically associated nor dissociated, then C and D are activated in S.

This proposition remains from the original formulation and what is being assumed here is that in S being reported as "abused" serves as a specific status characteristic within the

social context of the evaluation. Of course, actors are also usually clearly identified by D whether they are young, old, white, black, male, or female. Therefore, the knowledge that an actor has been reported (e.g., abused or neglects self) may serve to strengthen the beliefs associated with D unless the actor O can produce an acceptable account (A) of his/her behavior.

Definition 2: Account. (From Scott and Lyman, 1968)

An account is a linguistic device employed whenever an action is subjected to valuative inquiry.

What is assumed here is that in S, O offers an account (A) for C to P' in an attempt to reduce the strength of, or neutralize the beliefs associated with D. Accounts may take many forms (Scott and Lyman, 1968) and are almost always contextually based, meaning, of course, that few if any accounts are universal. This assumption is further elaborated in the form of a new proposition.

Proposition 3.1: Neutralization.

In S, C may be neutralized by (A) provided (A) is appropriately situated with regard to the interactant's statuses, background expectancies, and the social context.

What is assumed here is that in S, both C and D are activated. While D (e.g., being male or black) cannot be changed or explained away, the impact of C (e.g., performance information or untowards behavior) on the evaluation can be reduced if a proper account is given. It is argued that if an appropriate account is given, then a negative evaluation will be neutralized and the interaction will proceed as if the actors are of approximately equal status, thus limiting the impact of future evaluations. If then, in S, C is not neutralized (i.e., the account is rejected) then the beliefs associated with D or

multiple D's is strengthened, thus increasing the likelihood that multiple characteristics will be evaluated. For example, the beliefs about C may become associated with D to form a stereotype.

Definition 3: Stereotype.

Status validation occurs if the evaluated beliefs associated with C become part of the collection of evaluated beliefs associated with D.

As previously noted, this occurs when either negative or positive specific and diffuse information is consistently evaluated; for example, learning in a test situation that an actor is a male (high ranked D) who possesses high verbal ability (high state of C) or learning in an evaluation that a white (low ranked D based on elder abuse typologies) has been reported for self neglect (low state of C). This results in the strengthening of the beliefs associated with D and the exacerbation of protective service workers' expectations concerning the person who is being evaluated. Such processes, it is argued, lead to more initial allegations being substantiated for low status group members (i.e., those fitting the "abuse" typology). To explain this process, Martin and Knottnerus (1994) introduced the notion of a status constellation effect. While similar to the stereotype, it is significantly different in that status constellations consist of a number of beliefs and therefore when validated, result in stronger evaluations. For example, it is possible that actors (i.e., those reported as abused) are identified by multiple diffuse status characteristics (D's) which form a "typical" or meaningful social stereotype within a social setting (e.g., young, black, male, police record). This coupled with an account which doesn't "fit" results in a more "powerful" evaluation of the actor than does the more simplistic stereotype associated with one D (e.g., being young). More precisely, if a combination or

configuration of two or more D's form a typical social stereotype for O who is evaluated by P in S, then there will be a status constellation effect in which the negative (or positive) differential evaluation will be greater than that associated with just one D.

**Proposition 4: Status Constellation Effect.**

The strength of a differential evaluation generated by a stereotype associated with a meaningful configuration of a consistently evaluated multiple D's will be greater than the differential evaluation generated by a stereotype associated with a single D.

For example, during the Adult Protective Services Evaluation it is possible that the protective services worker will identify the person being evaluated in terms of several D's which typify a particular status group or category (e.g., very old, white or female). When such a validating strategy is used, the result of the status validation will be greater in this case than in one where a weaker differential evaluation associated with a single D (e.g., white) were confirmed. Therefore, it would be expected that such a situation would be more likely to generate a substantiated case of elder abuse. It should be noted that there may be extenuating circumstances which influence this process (e.g., accounts or anxiety). These, however, have been addressed by Martin and Knottnerus (1994) as well as through the present theoretical formulation.

**Proposition 5: Status Validation.**

Status validation occurs if a single C and a D or D's, which are consistently evaluated and neither associated nor dissociated from each other or the task, are activated in S.

This proposition has been altered slightly as will subsequent propositions from the original formulation to allow for the evaluation and/or consideration of multiple D's. Nevertheless, through this process information about an actor is filtered through the

cognitive construct (i.e., stereotype) confirming the status typification. In saying this it is of course assumed that the validity of status evaluations are routinely accepted by people as symbolic referents for the valued worth of actors within a given social context. Because of the significance such evaluative distinctions hold for people, they will use other information to substantiate these status designations unless specifically shown otherwise (i.e., burden of proof). Such an interpretive bias is further enhanced because it provides actors with a set of standards with which they can structure an ambiguous social reality. That is, the status typification provides a collection of "typical" traits which can be used to understand the social world. For these reasons actors, including those in positions of authority or in positions where they are directed or legislated to make objective decisions, cannot avoid the utilization of a validating strategy for interpreting consistently evaluated status characteristics. The problem here, empirically speaking, is determining which characteristics are meaningful given the background expectancies of the interactants and the social context. Regardless of these methodological inhibitors, such a strategy has direct consequences for the status stereotype and judgements concerning substantiated cases of abuse.

**Proposition 5.1: Status Validation Effect.**

If a consistently evaluated C and D or D's are activated in S, the number and consistency of differentially evaluated beliefs associated with the stereotype of D increases.

This effect is highly relevant because it has a direct effect on the actors' expectations and behaviors. Why this is so is due to the differential evaluation accompanying the characteristic.



Definition 4: Differential Evaluation.

A differential evaluation is the affective response generated by the collection of evaluated beliefs of the stereotype associated with a specific state of D.

Determining the variation in the affective intensity of the differential evaluation are differences in the evaluated beliefs connected to the status characteristic(s). It is argued that this difference in strength is due to the number and consistency of evaluated beliefs contained in the stereotypes. This of course assumes that the account given was not plausible and therefore not accepted.

Proposition 6: Strength of Differential Evaluation.

The strength of the differential evaluation associated with a specific state of D or D's is a positive function of the number and consistency of evaluated beliefs of the stereotype associated with that state of D or D's.

The logic here is straightforward. If an account fails to neutralize the beliefs associated with C and D in S resulting in status validation, and if status validation leads to an increase in the number and consistency of evaluated beliefs associated with a status stereotype, then the strength of the characteristic's differential evaluation should be enhanced.

Proposition 6.1: Effects of Status Validation.

If status validation occurs in S, the differential evaluation associated with D or D's will increase in strength.

Since differential evaluations are necessary for the emergence of inequalities in group interaction and the strength of differential evaluations may vary, what must be explained is the relationship between the strength of the differential evaluation and the development of expectation states. It is assumed that the former has a corresponding effect on the latter.

Proposition 7: Formation of Expectation States.

Following status validation in S, P will develop expectation states for P' and O consistent with the states and strength of the states of D or D's possessed by P' and O.

Consistent with the argument of Berger, et al. (1977) and Knottnerus and Greenstein (1981) suggest that P's power and prestige in the group or in this case, dyadic interaction reflects the expectation advantage P holds over O.

Proposition 8: Basic Expectation Assumption (from Berger, et al., 1977)

Given that P has formed expectation states for P' and O, P's power and prestige position relative to O will be a direct function of P's expectation advantage over O.

This formulation predicts that the inequalities of influence created by performance and status differences (if not neutralized by an account) will be magnified when actors are perceived to possess consistently high or low evaluations on both characteristics. Results consistent with the predictions of the theory have been obtained in an experimental test (Knottnerus and Greenstein, 1981). What is being suggested, then, is that the context of the Protective Services Evaluation (i.e., both office and field work) is roughly analogous to the task group setting examined in the laboratory. Although less controlled, it is argued that the evaluation is characterized by a status validation effect. The Protective Services Evaluation, like the laboratory, represents a microcosm of the social world. As such, diffuse and specific status characteristics, stereotypes, heuristics, and accounts all enter into and influence the predominant decision making process occurring in this setting. The processes assumed to occur during the Adult Protective Services Evaluation are represented in the following diagram.

# Adult Protective Services Evaluation

## Activation of Status Characteristics

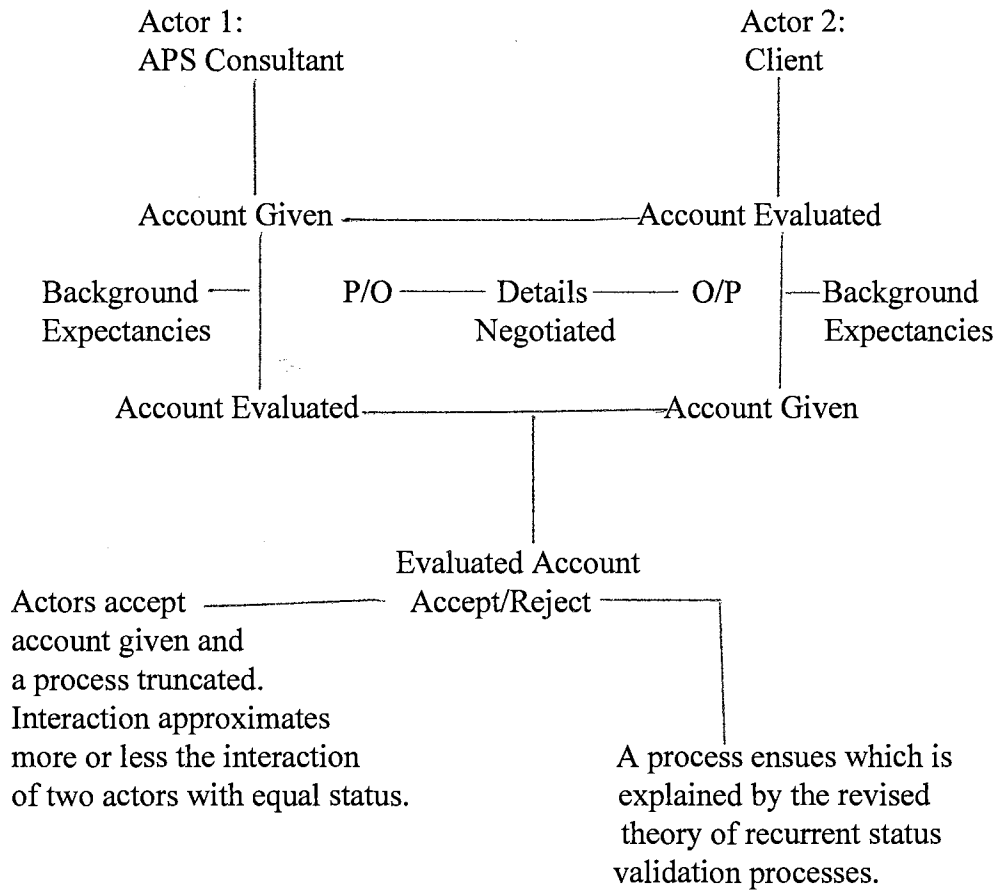


Figure 2: Processes assumed to occur during the Adult Protective Services Evaluation.

Beyond this micro-level interaction dynamic, the theory suggests that when these types of judgements are repeated hundreds or thousands of times, patterns of discrimination with respect to preexisting elder abuse typologies should be evident at the macro level.

The next extension to the theory developed by Martin and Knottnerus (1994) is designed to answer the questions posed by Prendergast and Knottnerus (1993). Namely, how does social organization emerge out of interaction? How do units and levels fit together? And how do networks of social relationships extend across space and time? Although this theoretical model only provides a cursory answer to these questions, this extension begins to broaden the focus of the theory to address what are assumed to be the multilevel aspects of the validation process.

**Proposition 9: Recurrent Validation Process.**

A recurrent validation process occurs if status validation involving C and a single D or multiple D's repeatedly takes place in a specific S.

The most relevant example is the fact that Protective Services workers are repeatedly subject to a status validation process in their decision making (i.e., Adult Protective Services Evaluation). The key idea here is that the validation process may occur not as an occasional, random, or periodic occurrence, but as a regular event among actors who meet in a specific setting or settings. It is a patterned behavior which occurs within a delimited arena within the social world. The potential effects of such a process are quite profound, not just for the individual but for more distant levels of the social order. Thus, it is assumed that when this process is engaged in on a regular basis within a specific S, which is embedded in and directly linked to a clearly defined institutional setting, the outcomes of this process have outcomes for the entire system. To be more specific, it is

argued that recurrent validation processes can have an aggregate effect which becomes evident at a more macro level within the institution.

**Proposition 10: Aggregate Effect of Recurrent Validation Process.**

If a recurrent validation process occurs in S, P will make decisions concerning P' and/or O which have corresponding aggregate effects in the institutional setting S is located in.

When this process is repeated within the context of the evaluation, corresponding group differences will gradually emerge among those who have been taken into custody by Adult Protective Services (i.e., those who populate long-term care facilities). This process is a macro level consequence of a micro level process. An elaboration of the micro to macro transition is contained in Chapter IV and since it has yet to be assessed empirically, that discussion remains sufficient.

The theoretical model presented in this section has been guided by Expectation States Theory, status characteristics theory, and more specifically, the work of Martin and Knottnerus (1994). The theory proposes that the decisions of actors in the social world (in this case, Adult Protective Services Consultants) are influenced by a number of variables including status characteristics, stereotypes, and accounts. This is significant for a number of reasons. First, it suggests that the aggregation assumption which is often associated with this perspective is inadequate. Second, it further develops the work of Knottnerus and Greenstein (1981) and Martin and Knottnerus (1994) through the development and assessment of new theoretical extensions. Third, this model suggests a different version of one aspect of social reality (i.e., Adult Protective Services Evaluations) than any other research. These contributions have been expressed in the new assumptions and definitions

presented in this section.

### Interpretations of Findings

Research requires an additional assessment of the information gathered to define the meanings and implications of the data and to provide insight regarding what the researcher can assume to be known about the hypotheses generated for the study. Here each hypothesis will be briefly reconsidered individually and conclusions which are believed to reflect the nature of the relationship between the theoretical model and substantiated cases of abuse will be drawn.

#### Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis of this study specified a positive relationship between certain diffuse status characteristics and status validation (i.e., substantiated cases of abuse). Although this relationship was not substantiated statistically, the impressions gained while in the field seemed to support this postulated relationship. This was especially true when consultants received the initial referral which consists of a number of diffuse and specific status characteristics. Further, all of the consultants independently agreed that initially that is all of the information that they have to go by and that they can make some tentative decisions based on this information. They also noted that who (naming specific agencies) makes the referral is important. The general relationship as hypothesized is most likely accurate. However, all consultants also stated that there is more to making an evaluation. Specifically, they discussed their interaction with the client and suggested that what a client tells them is of the utmost importance. Here is where the central role of

accounts becomes evident. They suggest that they are trying to determine the client's competency, not whether or not their lifestyle is unpopular. Thus, the initial contact with a client is typically in the office through the initial referral. This situation is somewhat analogous to the standard experimental situation or laboratory setting where the basic propositions have already been confirmed. These personal impressions when viewed in reference to the quantifiable data may help explain the apparent contradictions that exist. The statistical implications would suggest that the expected relationships are not significant. However, this may be less than accurate. What is being suggested is that by offering an appropriate account the client can, through this infusion of positive performance information into the interaction, effectively neutralize the negative effects of being reported. This alone may serve as a reasonable explanation for the limited quantitative support of the hypotheses. While the variables may not express a cause and effect relationship between status characteristics and abuse, the impressions gathered from the field do suggest that they influence the consultant prior to their actual interaction with the client. Thus, status characteristics structure the consultants perception and shape the evaluation of the information which is available during an assessment.

In conclusion, had the hypothesis been evaluated in terms of a questionnaire or more formal interviews with the consultants rather than relying on secondary data, then the quantifiable data may have been more consistent with the impressions received by this researcher. More specifically, the hypothesized relationship quite possibly would have held.

## Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two differs from hypothesis one by suggesting that the addition of other diffuse characteristics will increase the likelihood of status validation. The results here are similar to hypothesis one. Here the quantifiable data do support to some degree the hypothesis. The problem, however, is that there is no specification of what combination of characteristics are meaningful. Further, consultants would only respond, "it depends on what they say." Again, the problems and solutions noted in hypothesis one are equally applicable to hypothesis two.

## Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis three specifies that during the evaluation if the consultant experiences anxiety then it is more likely that the client will be evaluated as a substantiated case of abuse. Here anxiety was operationalized as cases which were deemed as an "emergency" by the initial referral. This was suggested by the Adult Protective Services Administrator and confirmed by the consultants. This variable alone (i.e., anxiety) became the strongest quantifiable predictor of substantiated cases of elder abuse. In conclusion, it is believed that the positive relationship between anxiety and substantiated cases of abuse is accurate. It is perhaps also important to note that some of the observable anxiety on the part of the consultants may have been due to the presence of the researcher. Although this is possible, the researcher does not believe that it is probable given that the statistical analysis of the secondary data reveals the same relationship.



#### Hypothesis Four

Hypothesis four states that there will be an inverse relationship between the amount of effort put forward by a consultant and the likelihood of the client's case being labeled as substantiated. This hypothesis was to be evaluated qualitatively. There was no evidence found to support this hypothesis; however, limited quantitative analysis was also possible and suggested the same results.

In conclusion, this hypothesis was not supported. The consultants seemed to be so overworked that they were only able to devote a minimum amount of time to each assessment, thus increasing their reliance on the evaluation of status characteristics and accounts.

#### Hypothesis Five

Hypothesis five suggests that if this process occurs numerous times within a delimited arena of the social world, then there will be multilevel consequences, namely status differences within the further reaches (i.e., macro level) of the social system. Unfortunately, data were not available to assess this hypothesis. For future research on this topic, if any should be done, it would be suggested that data will be needed from several sources, namely all long-term care facilities within the given state. Also, the data will need to be coded in terms of those cases which were the result of an Adult Protective Services Assessment and those that were not. The researcher should be forewarned that this type of data will be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain.

In conclusion, although hypothesis five was not confirmed, it was not falsified

either. As a result, this researcher would suggest that the theoretical formulations (i.e., extensions) which generated the hypothesis be left intact until further analysis can be completed.

### Limitations

In retrospect, the limitations of any particular research generally seem quite clear. This research is, of course, no exception. The most obvious and therefore notable limitation would be the reliance on secondary data as the primary data source. Although secondary data analysis has merit, as mentioned in Chapter V it is often difficult to generalize concepts associated with micro level processes to data which were not collected for that purpose. To remedy this problem in future research one might consider creating a research instrument of some type which would enable the researcher to collect data which would be directly related to the phenomena in question. Another option, and the one this researcher believes to be the most appropriate at this stage, would be to engage in additional field work. This method, it would seem, would more adequately address the criticisms of artificiality which are often leveled at this approach.

The other limitation which this researcher perceives to be worth noting is in the area of meaning structures. This research has established that race, age, gender, and other status characteristics have meaning within a given context. Perhaps future research should focus on delineating the parameters of certain delimited arenas of the social world to better clarify how meaning is produced. While this research has addressed the larger question of how inequalities arise through interaction (i.e., micro level) and how this

process may lead to institutional inequality (i.e., macro level), a richer understanding may be gained by addressing how meaning is produced and attached to certain status characteristics.

### Areas of Future Research

In the preceding paragraphs this researcher has presented status validation as a process. Throughout the research this researcher has also tried to show how status validation is defined, not only by those scholars who think about it, but also by those who participate in it; the final result being the generation of a formal theory of context based decision making. In essence, formal theory construction. As such, this researcher would argue that the starting point for any theoretical model is to conceptualize the phenomena to be studied in terms of activity. Once preliminary models are constructed and proposed as explanations of social behavior, the model should be examined and if possible falsified and reformulated within the delimited social arena it attempts to explain. When this occurs, the focus is again on activity and through the process of interacting with others, the meaning of this activity is altered. Therefore, by observing actors engaged in interaction it becomes possible to see accounts given and accepted or rejected, how this in turn influences the meanings attached to status characteristics, and the influence this process exerts on status validation. This research has served as a starting point for that study. What is still needed is more involved study focusing on replication and the validation of the proposed multilevel characteristics of this process. Certain sub-areas of the interaction between P and O would be particularly interesting, especially the area of

semiotics. Here a focus on the linguistic devices employed as well as the variant forms of nonverbal communication and their meaning would be useful. This would be especially true if this nonverbal communication (i.e., body language) could be codified in terms of the larger meaning structure (e.g., dominant metaphors or iconic code) within a society.

Another interesting and needed area of research is to establish the meanings of certain status characteristics in terms of the impressions of the interactants. The question still remains, are researchers who develop typologies of the abused or drug users imposing their belief systems onto the data that are available?

Also of interest is further examination of the multilevel characteristics proposed in the model. Questions such as, which variables are important and how to operationalize them should be pursued. This alone would be a significant contribution to the field.

In conclusion, this researcher believes that the revised theoretical model presented here lends itself well to a number of varying methodological approaches. This research has only been a beginning and it is hoped that the approach taken by this researcher has aided in the understanding of elder abuse as a socially constructed reality based in the validation process of the evaluation. Also it is hoped that this research has aided in theoretical development consistent with this tradition.

### Final Conclusions

The primary focus of this research has been two-fold. First is the emphasis on formal theory development. Second, to provide a perspective on elder abuse which to date has not been considered. While various limitations and complications of the data

have left the exact nature of the relationship between status validation and substantiated abuse somewhat undefined, the overall study is believed to be successful in that it confirmed a number of propositions, introduced an extension to the theory, and provided the foundation on which future research may build. What was attempted here was the first research of its kind in the area of elder abuse and is also somewhat of a pioneer venture in the area of status characteristics theory. As such, there was very little previous research to guide this investigation. Hopefully it stands on its own merit and will be acceptable for what it is, a beginning. It is not perfect, nor is it the definitive answer to all the questions associated with elder abuse, status validation, or the larger question of social order. Rather, it is a starting point and a way of making that which we believe we already understand a little bit more understandable.

## Endnotes

1. Various scholars and research traditions support this view. For example, Nisbett and Ross (1980) suggest there are two types of errors associated with inferences. First, people over utilize certain intuitive inferential strategies including, for example, using pre-existing "knowledge structures" - schemas, beliefs, and theories - to make decisions. Second, people underutilize certain formal, logical, and statistical strategies. The present theory would help us understand phenomena associated with interpretational errors such as these.
2. The volume of literature addressing such issues is too great to list here. Early theorists include Simmel (1950), Park (1925; Park and Burgess 1921), and Hughes (1945).
3. This example is for the purpose of illustration. I am not suggesting that this example is correct in respect to attitudinal differences by region of the country.
4. Although a limited amount of time was spent in the field during this study (approximately 80 hours), this researcher has personally logged thousands of hours in the field conducting or assisting with the evaluation and assessment of over 500 cases of alleged abuse. This experience allowed for a structuring of the observations prior to entering the field and allowed for the maximization of time during this phase of the research. Also, it is assumed that the probability of misinterpretation of the observations is also greatly reduced based on this experience.
5. Gresham M. Sykes and David Matza. 1957. "Techniques of Neutralization." American Sociological Review, 22: December, p.667-669.  
Sykes and Matza also suggest another neutralization technique, "denial of responsibility" which is subsumed in Scott and Lyman's schema under appeal to defeasibility.
6. This example is meant to be illustrative rather than exhaustive.

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## APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A  
LETTER FROM ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES  
ADMINISTRATOR TO RESEARCHER



# Arkansas Department of Human Services

## Division of Aging and Adult Services

1417 Donaghey Plaza South  
P.O. Box 1437, Slot 1412  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72203-1437  
Telephone (501) 682-2441 FAX (501) 682-8155

Jim Guy Tucker  
Governor

Tom Dalton  
Director

Herb Sanderson  
Division Director

June 9, 1994

Mr. Daniel Martin  
121 South Arrington  
Stillwater, OK 74074

Dear Mr. Martin:

Reference our telephone conversation this morning regarding information about the Adult Protective Services provided in Arkansas.

I have enclosed: our APS Annual Statistics which gives a pretty good overview of what the APS Unit does over the year and what type of clients we serve, a copy of our Policy and Procedures which gives you an idea of how we accomplish our mission of providing APS support to the referrals we get, the Arkansas Statute on Abuse of Adults which is the driver for our APS Unit, a brochure put out by AoA and AARP that has some interesting national statistics, a copy of our 1990 Census which gives you statistics about Arkansas, and two pamphlets about "Taking Care of your Elderly Relatives" and "About Elder Abuse" which we give out in training classes. I hope you find this material of some value as you prepare for your doctorate.

As I mentioned, my APS Unit has 10 APS Consultants, grade 18, to cover the state. The consultants currently do only the referrals between the ages of 18 and 59. We have an Area Plan which brings the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) into our system to do the initial investigation for adults age 60 and older. This is 87% of our cases as you will see in the annual report. I currently have a test going that has three APS Consultants doing all the initial referrals. So far it is working out very well and I am budgeting to increase the number of APS Consultants and reduce the area size for each consultant so they will average 10 to 15 cases per month. This may not seem like a lot, but consider they also have custody cases, on average of 10 per consultant, which takes more time than the initial investigations. We are only one of three states that takes full custody of clients. We can talk more about this and other things when you get here in the fall.

I look forward to your visit and hope to be able to

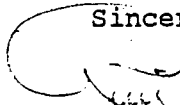
### *Caring People . . . Quality Services*

"The Arkansas Department of Human Services is in compliance with Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act and is operated, managed and delivers services without regard to age, religion, disability, political affiliation, veteran status, sex, race, color or national origin."

Daniel Martin Ltr  
(405) 624-8734  
June 9, 1994  
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exchange information with you. Your task regarding the abuse of elderly adults is a big one and grows bigger as you read this letter. Please do not hesitate to call me if you need additional information. If it is available and we have the authority to release it I will send it to you. If you have not checked with other states you may want to do so to find out their system and problems.

Sincerely,



Arnie Habig  
Adult Protective Services  
Administrator  
(501) 682-8495

APPENDIX B  
CONTRACT BETWEEN RESEARCHER AND  
ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

## CONTRACT

An agreement entered into between William Daniel Martin and The Adult Protective Services Unit of the Division of Aging and Adult Services, Arkansas Department of Human Services (hereinafter AAS).

AAS agrees to allow William Daniel Martin (hereinafter Martin) to accompany the Adult Protective Services Consultants on their investigations into abuse and neglect and to allow Martin access to case files and intake studies. In consideration thereof Martin agrees to the following:

1. To Follow the confidentiality requirements set out in Ark. Code Ann §5-2S-213.
2. That all data taken from the Adult Protective Services files, the Central Registry, and Martin's field notes will be coded in such a manner that the individual's names are not used, nor are specific facts or circumstances used which would identify an individual. All coding will be done at the Adult Protective Services office. No Adult Protective Services files are to be removed from the Adult Protective Services office. Martin will destroy his field notes and other data he has collected after the data is coded. Martin will destroy the coded data after the study is done and the coded data is no longer needed.

3. Martin will furnish AAS with a copy of his accepted doctoral dissertation. Martin will also furnish AAS with a report based on his research setting out any recommendations he may have to improve Adult Protective Services services.

In Witness Whereof we have signed this agreement this \_\_\_\_\_ day of December, 1994.

\_\_\_\_\_  
William Daniel Martin

Adult Protective Services

by \_\_\_\_\_, Administrator



APPENDIX C  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX C  
Informed Consent

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize or direct Wm. Daniel Martin, Graduate Student in Sociology, or associates or assistants of his choosing, to perform the following procedure or procedures:

Collect and analyze information from me with regard to my perception of the cause(s) of elder abuse and to collect and analyze data on my perception and performance of assigned duties as they relate to the determination of the presence and extent of elder abuse.

I understand that I will be observed periodically in the course of my daily activities through the Spring of 1995. The observations may vary in length.

I understand that the data will be kept confidential and any reporting of data will be done in such a way that my data cannot be identified.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that there is no penalty for refusal to participate and that I am free to withdraw from this study at anytime without penalty after notifying the researcher.

I may contact Wm. Daniel Martin by phone at 405-744-6105 or in person in Classroom Building 006, should I wish further information about the research. I may also contact Jennifer Moore, University Research Services, 001 Life Sciences East, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078; Telephone 405-744-5700.

The purpose of this study is to examine what effects, if any, status characteristics have on the Adult Protective Services Evaluation. The primary benefit of this research for the subject is that it will potentially increase understanding of the Adult Protective Services Evaluation and thus provide guidelines for its improvement.

I understand that the researcher might be required to share information where the intent to commit a future crime is disclosed.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ (a.m./p.m.)

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Subject)

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subjects.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 12-19-94

IRB#: AS-95-008

**Proposal Title:** A THEORY OF RECURRENT STATUS VALIDATION PROCESSES: AN EXTENSION AND ASSESSMENT WITH EMPHASIS ON THE ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES EVALUATION AND THE ROLE OF STATUS CHARACTERISTICS IN THE CREATION OF THE ABUSED ELDER

**Principal Investigator(s):** Richard Dodder, Wm. Daniel Martin

**Reviewed and Processed as:** Expedited

**Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s):** Approved

APPROVAL STATUS SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING.

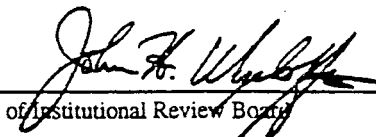
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL. ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

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Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Revisions received and approved.

Signature:

  
Chair of Institutional Review Board

Date: December 19, 1994

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VITA

William Daniel Martin

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: A THEORY OF RECURRENT STATUS VALIDATION PROCESSES:  
AN EXTENSION AND ASSESSMENT WITH EMPHASIS ON THE  
ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES EVALUATION AND THE ROLE  
OF STATUS CHARACTERISTICS IN THE CREATION OF THE  
ABUSED ELDER

Major Field: Sociology

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, On July 15, 1967, the son of  
J. F. and Millicent Martin.

Education: Graduated from Mt. Vernon High School, Mt. Vernon, Arkansas in  
May, 1985; received Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology from the  
University of Central Arkansas, Conway, Arkansas in August, 1989.  
Received a Master of Science degree in Sociology from University of  
Central Arkansas, Conway, Arkansas in August, 1992. Completed the  
requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Sociology at  
Oklahoma State University in May 1996.

Experience: Previously employed as an Adult Protective Services Evaluator and  
Case Manager for the Area Agency on Aging, North Little Rock, Arkansas.  
Department of Sociology graduate teaching associate, Oklahoma State  
University, Department of Sociology, 1992 to present.

Professional Memberships: American Sociological Association, American Society  
of Criminology, Society for the Study of Social Problems, Southwestern  
Social Science Association, Alpha Kappa Delta, Sigma Phi Omega.