How Case Characteristics Differ across Four Types of Elder Maltreatment: Implications for Tailoring Interventions to Increase Victim Safety

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to determine whether case characteristics are differentially associated with four forms of elder maltreatment. Method: Triangulated interviews were conducted with 71 APS caseworkers, 55 victims of substantiated abuse whose cases they managed, and 35 third party persons. Results: Pure financial exploitation (PFE) was characterized by victim unawareness of financial exploitation and living alone. Physical abuse (PA) was characterized by victim’s desire to protect the abusive individual. Neglect was characterized by isolation and victim’s residing with the abusive individual. Hybrid financial exploitation (HFE) was characterized by mutual dependency. Implications: These differences indicate the need for tailoring interventions to increase victim safety. PFE requires victims to maintain financial security and independence. PA requires services to meet the needs of abusive individuals. Neglect requires greater monitoring when elderly persons...
reside with another person. HFE requires the provision of services to both members of the dyad.

**Keywords**
adult protective services, elder maltreatment, interventions

The pervasiveness of elder maltreatment is gradually being recognized (Acierno et al., 2010; Lachs & Berman, 2011; Laumann, Leitsch, & Waite, 2008). However, the field has tended to focus on identifying the intrapersonal characteristics of elderly victims and their abusive individuals. For example, Jackson and Hafemeister (2011) recently reported that elderly victims’ and abusive individuals’ risk factors were differentially associated with four relatively pervasive forms of elder maltreatment: financial exploitation, physical abuse, neglect, and hybrid financial exploitation (i.e., financial exploitation co-occurring with physical abuse and/or neglect). Far less, however, is known about the various case characteristics associated with elder maltreatment and whether and how those characteristics differ by the type of elder maltreatment involved. Based on a review of the literature, eight case characteristics relevant to elder maltreatment were identified for inclusion in this study: relationship of the elderly victim and abusive individual, their living arrangement, whether the victim was aware they were being abused, whether the abuse was recurring, whether the victim had a previous APS report, the duration of the abuse, explanations for the abuse continuing, and whether the abusive person acted alone or in collaboration with others. If case characteristics are differentially associated with each type of abuse, then tailoring interventions to address the unique characteristics associated with each type of abuse is warranted.

Although it has been determined that family members are frequently responsible for elder maltreatment, the literature varies on whether spouses or adult children are more likely to commit this abuse. Although some research finds that the abusive individual is more likely to be a spouse than an adult offspring (Lachs & Berman, 2011; Pillemer & Finkelhor, 1988), other studies indicate that the abusive individual is more frequently an adult offspring (Clancy, McDaid, O’Neill, & O’Brien, 2011; Laumann et al., 2008; National Center on Elder Abuse [NCEA], 1998; Teaster et al., 2006). However, elderly persons also are victims of crime committed by nonrelatives (Rand & Cantalano, 2007).

Cohabitation has been identified as an empirically validated risk factor for abuse (Bonnie & Wallace, 2003). However, McCreadie (2002) argues that the type of living arrangement that is a risk factor varies with the type of maltreatment involved, with the risk of physical violence greater when an elderly person cohabitates, while the risk of financial exploitation is greater when they live alone. Relatedly, the research of Aquilino (1990) determined that when adult
offspring live with a parent the parent is providing care and assistance to their offspring. However, when an elderly parent moves in with an adult child, it is likely because the parent is in need of care and assistance. Elderly persons living alone may be vulnerable to financial exploitation in part because they have no one overseeing their welfare (Wilber & Reynolds, 1996), while elderly persons providing support and assistance to a cohabitating adult offspring may be subject to the violent outbursts of the dependent offspring (Pillemer, 1985).

Whether victims of elder maltreatment are aware of their abusive situation has received little attention in the literature. With regard to financial exploitation specifically, it has been noted that while some elderly persons are completely unaware of this abuse as it occurs, others have some awareness of it and may even be partially complicit in its occurrence (Gordon & Brill, 2001; Johnson, 2003). In contrast, victims of physical abuse are likely always aware they are being abused. The field of victimology posits a continuum of victim culpability, ranging from victims who are without blame to victims who are arguably responsible for or significantly contributed to the events and circumstances that led to their victimization (Doerner & Lab, 2008; Wallace, 2007).

Whether someone has previously tried to intervene in the abusive situation has received scant attention in the literature (e.g., someone, including the elderly victim, attempted to stop the abuse by threatening to contact APS or evict the abusive individual from the elderly person’s home). Comijs, Pot, Smit, Bouter, and Jonker (1998) found that although 70% of victims of elder maltreatment did try to prevent the reoccurrence of abuse by a variety of means, their efforts were effective only 47% of the time.

Whether the maltreatment tends to recur or involves a single incident likewise has received little attention. Some research indicates that a small percentage of adult protective services (APS) clients have had a previous APS report filed on their behalf (Libes Simon, 1992; Peake, Oelschlager, & Kearns, 2000), suggesting that these victims experienced repeated abuse.

A related characteristic of elder maltreatment is the duration of the abuse. Pillemer (1985) was one of the first scholars to identify the long-term nature of abusive relationships, reporting that for many cases abuse had been occurring for as long as two decades. These relationships have been found to often involve entwined parent–adult offspring relationships (Anetzberger, 1987; Greenberg, McKibben, & Raymond, 1990).

Scholars have grappled with why elder maltreatment is often long term. One explanation is that elderly victims frequently fear institutional placement (Greenberg, 1995; Wright, 2010). Elderly victims may tolerate maltreatment if they believe their only alternative is institutionalization. Another possible explanation is a parent’s (frequently a mother’s) fierce protection of her adult offspring, which may enhance her tolerance for abuse (Greenberg, McKibben, & Raymond, 1990). Isolation is another possible explanation for continuing abuse
(Bernatz, Aziz, & Mosqueda, 2001; Choi & Mayer, 2000; Podnieks, 1992; Wilber & Reynolds, 1996), where no outsiders sufficiently interact with the elderly victim to become aware of the abuse and the elderly victim is unable or unwilling to report the abuse (Acierno, 2003).

Finally, little is known about whether an abusive individual is more likely to act alone or in collaboration with others. Victimization in general is more likely to involve a single offender than multiple offenders (Bachman, Dillaway, & Lachs, 1998; Klaus, 2000). Klaus (2000), for example, has shown that both murder and nonlethal violence more often involve a single victim and a single offender. Lachs and Berman (2011) recently reported that there was a single abuser in 74% of the elder abuse cases in their study.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether and how eight case characteristics associated with abusive situations differ across four relatively pervasive forms of elder maltreatment (Acierno et al., 2010; Lachs & Berman, 2011; NCEA, 1999; Teaster et al., 2006). Based on Jackson and Hafemeister (2011a), we hypothesized that these eight case characteristics would be differentially associated with the type of maltreatment involved. Such differences have important implications for the development of interventions.

**Method**

**Sample**

The participants in this study were 71 APS caseworkers responsible for investigating and responding to reports, 55 elderly victims of abuse that were the corresponding focus of the caseworkers’ response, and 35 third party persons (someone other than the abusive individual who was familiar with the case; see Jackson & Hafemeister, 2010, for a full description of the methodology). There are fewer elderly victims than APS caseworkers because in some cases the elderly victim was unavailable for an interview (e.g., because the elderly person had a significant cognitive impairment).

**Sample Statistics.** The elderly victims participating in this study were on average 76 years of age (range: 60-94 years), female (74%), White (81%), 56% had not graduated from high school, 53% were a widow(er), and 23% were diagnosed with dementia. The APS caseworkers were on average 43 years of age (range: 22-70 years) and had worked on average 9 years as an APS caseworker (range: 3 months-32 years). Most were female (92%), 54% held a college degree, and 42% had a master’s degree. Finally, third party persons were on average 55 years of age (range: 28-72 years), about half were female (44%), and most
were relatives (64%), although 36% were nonrelatives (conservator, guardian, nanny when the adult was a child, psychiatric nurse, professional caretaker), and on average had known the elderly person for 43 years (range: 1-72 years).

Of the 71 cases of substantiated elder maltreatment studied, 38 were pure financial exploitation (PFE), 8 were physical abuse (PA), 9 were neglect by another individual (neglect), and 16 were hybrid financial exploitation (HFE), that is, financial exploitation co-occurring with physical abuse ($N = 6$), neglect ($N = 9$), or both ($N = 1$). Categorization of a case was based on the disposition of the case identified by the APS caseworker.

**Semistructured Interview**

Derived from a review of the literature, a semistructured interview was developed specifically for this study and was comprised of six sections. The person interviewed was initially asked to provide a narrative that described what had happened, followed by questions that probed the characteristics of the abuse (e.g., the elderly victim’s awareness of the abuse), risk factors associated with the elderly victim, and with the abuser, the APS and criminal justice system response, and case outcomes. Twelve iterations of the interview were created (4 types of abuse × 3 categories of respondents). Only the case characteristics are presented here. Response options for all variables in this study were categorical with the exception of explanations for abuse continuing, which is described in the results section below.

**Procedure**

After obtaining approval to conduct the study from the Virginia Department of Social Services (DSS) Director and the APS supervisor within the agency (31% response rate), APS supervisors invited caseworkers within their agency to volunteer to participate (state law prohibits APS caseworkers from receiving compensation for their participation in research). Caseworkers who agreed to participate were asked to identify a case that met the following criteria: (a) The case involved PFE, PA, Neglect, or HFE; (b) the elderly victim was above the age of 59 at the time of the incident (Va. Code § 63.2-1603); (c) at the time of the incident, the elderly victim was living in a domestic setting, although the elderly person could be living in an institutional setting at the time of the interview; and (d) the APS caseworker had issued a disposition (i.e., at the conclusion of an investigation, the investigator reached a decision as to whether there was credible evidence that the reported abuse had occurred), although the elderly victim could still be receiving services at the time of the interview.
Because research staff were prohibited from making the initial contact with the elderly victim, it was agreed that APS caseworkers would initially contact the elderly victim and ask their permission for a researcher from the University to contact them regarding participation in a research project. Verbal consent for research purposes was deemed acceptable for this initial contact. If the elderly victim agreed to be contacted, the APS caseworker called the researcher to provide the elderly victim’s contact information and schedule an interview with the APS caseworker. The researcher would then call the elderly person within 2 days, and if the elderly person agreed, schedule an in-person interview.

Three interviews were initially conducted jointly by the two authors to enhance consistency, with all remaining interviews conducted separately. Interviews with APS caseworkers took place via telephone. An informed consent form was faxed to the caseworker and returned signed via fax to the researcher prior to the interview. Interviews lasted on average 71 min (range: 30-180 min) and did not differ in length by type of maltreatment. In two thirds (68%) of the cases, the APS caseworker was interviewed prior to the elderly victim being interviewed, which simply reflected who was available first for an interview.

The interview with the elderly victims generally took place in their home, with the exception of three interviews that took place at a local DSS. Interviews with the elderly victims began by reading and signing the consent form. Payment of US$75 for their time was then made to assure the elderly persons that they would be paid even if they decided later to withdraw from the interview. An agreement was reached with the Virginia Department of Social Services that if an elderly victim experienced distress as a result of being interviewed, the interviewer would have with them the phone number of the APS caseworker and would offer to call the caseworker for the elderly person. This contingency plan never had to be used. Interviews with the elderly persons lasted on average 99 min (range: 10-180 min) and did not vary significantly by type of maltreatment. There was no statistical difference in length of time between the close of the case and the subsequent interview by type of maltreatment (PFE = 11 months, PA = 5 months, Neglect = 7 months, and HFE = 13 months).

Interviews with third-party persons took place either in a home, office, or via telephone. However, these interviews were always conducted privately and separately from the interview with the elderly victim. Procedures were similar to those described for elderly victim participants, including payment of US$75 for their time. Interviews lasted on average 92 min (range: 45-180 min) and did not differ significantly in length by type of maltreatment.

The research protocol was approved by the University’s (No. 2005-0258-00) and the Virginia Department of Social Services’ Institutional Review Boards. Interviews were recorded by the interviewer by writing responses on the paper interview form and later transcribing them. Triangulation was achieved by means of interviews of up to three respondents per case of substantiated abuse that had
been reported to an APS agency in the Commonwealth of Virginia. When discrepancies in responses arose, deference was typically given to the elderly victim’s response. Descriptive, chi-square, and ANOVA statistics were used to analyze the data.

**Results**

Each case characteristic presented below was compared to a four-level type of maltreatment variable. Descriptive statistics for the eight case characteristics are presented in Table 1 for the entire sample, and separately by type of maltreatment.

**Nature of the Relationship between the Abusive Individual and the Elderly Victim.** Abusive individuals were categorized as either a relative (a son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter, spouse, or other relative) or a nonrelative (a professional caretaker, friend, neighbor, handyman, or stranger) of the victim. The majority (68%) of abusive individuals were related to the elderly victim. The nature of the relationship was associated with type of maltreatment, $\chi^2(3) = 13.60, p < .01$. PFE was more likely to be committed by a nonrelative (47%), PA was less likely to be committed by a nonrelative (12%), while HFE was more likely to be committed by a relative (100%).

**Living Arrangements.** At the time of the abuse, elderly victims were either living alone in their own home (41%), cohabitating with the abusive individual in the elderly victim’s home (34%), living with the abusive individual in that person’s home (15%), or living with someone other than the abusive individual (such as a spouse) in their own home (10%). Living arrangement was associated with type of maltreatment, $\chi^2(3) = 19.63, p < .01$. PFE victims were more likely to be living alone (58%), and less likely to be living with the abusive individual (3%). Neglect victims were more likely to be living with the abusive individual (33%). HFE victims were more likely to have the abusive individual living with them (63%).

**Elderly Victim’s Awareness of the Abuse.** Roughly half (49%) of the elderly victims indicated that they were aware of the abuse, while the other half (51%) were unaware that this behavior was occurring. The elderly victims’ awareness was associated with type of maltreatment, $\chi^2(3) = 20.63, p < .001$. PFE victims were less likely to be aware that they were being financially exploited (26%), while PA and HFE victims were more likely to be aware that they were being abused (100% and 75%, respectively).

**Multiple Occurrences.** In 84% of the cases, the elderly person had been abused/neglected by the abusive individual on more than one occasion. The likelihood of a prior occurrence was associated with type of maltreatment, $\chi^2(3) = 15.44,$
Jackson and Hafemeister

Table 1. Case Characteristics for the Total Sample and by Type of Maltreatment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case characteristics</th>
<th>Total sample (%) (N = 71)</th>
<th>Pure financial exploitation (%) (N = 38)</th>
<th>Physical abuse (%) (N = 8)</th>
<th>Neglect (%) (N = 9)</th>
<th>Hybrid financial exploitation (%) (N = 16)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship of abuser to victim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>100*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonrelative</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>47*</td>
<td>12*</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living arrangements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuser lives with victim</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>63*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim lives with abuser</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33*</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim lives with nonabusive other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim lives alone</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>58*</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly victim is aware of the maltreatment</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>26*</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>75*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single occurrence of maltreatment</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>56*</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of maltreatment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M = 59 months</td>
<td>M = 32 months</td>
<td>M = 152* months</td>
<td>M = 28 months 0*</td>
<td>M = 122* months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone attempted to intervene</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0*</td>
<td>63*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation for abuse continuing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly victim wanted to protect the abuser</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abusive situation is preferable to alternative</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly victim benefits</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly victim was unaware of the maltreatment</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly victim was isolated</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50*</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuser acted alone</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

$p < .01$. Neglect victims were less likely to have experienced abuse multiple times (44%), while HFE victims were more likely to have experienced abuse multiple times (100%).
Duration of the Abuse. On average, the duration of elder maltreatment was 59 months (range 1-648 months). Using ANOVA, the duration of the abuse differed significantly by type of maltreatment, $F(3) = 4.39, p < .01$. The mean length of time was 32 months ($SD = 70.16$) for PFE, 152 months ($SD = 142.70$) for PA, 28 months ($SD = 46.63$) for Neglect, and 122 months ($SD = 182.63$) for HFE. PA and HFE victims experienced abuse for a significantly longer period of time than did victims of PFE and Neglect.

Prior Interventions. Interviewees were also asked whether anyone, including the elderly victim, had tried to intervene prior to the current APS investigation. In 38% of the cases, someone had previously tried to intervene to stop the abuse. A prior attempt to intervene was associated with type of maltreatment, $\chi^2(3) = 9.61, p < .05$. A prior intervention was less likely to have occurred in Neglect cases (0%), whereas it was more likely to have occurred in HFE cases (63%). When asked whether the intervention was successful in stopping the abuse, there was only one PFE case in which the intervention was successful.

Explanations for Continued Abusive Situation. Explanations for why the abuse continued as long as it did were obtained by employing a post hoc content analysis of the narratives, which resulted in the creation of six categories. The nature of the explanation was associated with type of maltreatment, $\chi^2(18) = 48.29, p = .001$. PFE was more likely to continue because the victims were unaware they were being abused. PA was more likely to continue because victims wanted to protect their abuser. Neglect victims were more likely to have the abuse continue because they were isolated. And HFE victims were more likely to perceive the status quo as constituting a beneficial exchange in that the current situation was preferable to being placed in an institution.

Abusive Individual Acting Alone or in Conjunction With Someone Else. In 78% of the cases the abusive individual acted alone rather than in conjunction with another individual. This case characteristic was not associated with type of maltreatment.

Discussion

Significant and meaningful associations with the type of maltreatment emerged for seven of the eight characteristics investigated. Profiles and the intervention implications that are derived from the profiles are described below for each type of maltreatment.

Pure Financial Exploitation (PFE). Among the characteristics unique to PFE, its victims were more likely to be victimized by a nonrelative (although even for PFE about half of the abusers were relatives) and more likely to live alone (McCreadie, 2002). Furthermore, they were more likely to be unaware they were being abused, also an
explanation provided by respondents for the abuse continuing as long as it did. The duration of the abuse was shorter in length (32 months) than abuse experienced by PA and HFE victims. This shorter duration may be attributed to the fact that the abusive individuals were more frequently a nonrelative such as professional caretaker; that the elderly persons were not as likely to be living with the abusive individual, which would make it easier to disentangle the two; and because the elderly victims tended to be unaware of the abuse as it occurred and may have taken steps to end the abuse once they discovered its occurrence. Indeed, someone had tried to intervene in only 37% of the cases, a percentage considerably lower than for PA (50%) and HFE (69%) cases, suggesting that the victims and/or other individuals were less likely to know when PFE was occurring. PFE was not associated with whether the abuse occurred more than once.

**Intervention implications.** In these cases, intervention efforts might consist of encouraging elderly persons to maintain their own financial security and independence (Jackson & Hafemeister, 2012a; Johnson, 2003; National District Attorneys Association [NDAA], 2003; Rabiner, O’Keefe, & Brown, 2004). This can be accomplished by encouraging elderly persons to maintain valuable documents such as check books and checking account statements in locked drawers, to monitor their financial statements monthly, and by teaching them how to obtain free annual credit reports. In addition, public service announcements could warn elderly persons never to disclose personal information over the telephone and to obtain background checks on individuals offering to provide financial assistance or other services. Finally, in cases in which an elderly person is relatively isolated, it may be useful to facilitate a relationship with a trustworthy person to provide oversight of the elderly victim’s financial situation (Wilber & Reynolds, 1996).

**Physical Abuse (PA).** The picture that emerges for PA is markedly different. The PA victims were more likely to be abused by a relative, to be more aware that they were being abused (see also Doerner & Lab, 2008; Wallace, 2007), and for the abuse to have occurred for a longer period of time than PFE and Neglect, with the duration of abuse averaging 152 months. This is consistent with the more predominant explanation given for the continuation of PA, which was to protect the abusive individual (Greenberg, McKibben, & Raymond, 1990) who was frequently a loved one. Although not statistically significant, consistent with the long duration of PA was the finding that there were no cases of PA that involved a single incident (see also Libes Simon, 1992; Peake et al., 2000). Whether someone had previously tried to intervene also was not statistically associated with PA.

**Intervention implications.** Research has found that victims of PA are the most likely to refuse services (Jackson & Hafemeister, 2012a) which may result from their concern for the abusive individual. This is consistent with the finding that the primary reason the abuse continued in PA cases involved protection of the abusive
individual by the elderly victim. Therefore, intervention in these cases may require responding to the needs of the abusive individuals (Hwalek, Neale, Goodrich, & Quinn, 1996; Jackson & Hafemeister, 2011a; McCreadie, 2000; Nordstrom, 2005; Vinton, 1991), a substantial proportion of which have some impairment (Brownell, Berman, & Salamone, 1999; Jackson & Hafemeister, 2011a; Wolf, 1990).

**Neglect.** The occurrence of Neglect appears to reflect a very different scenario than found for PFE and PA. Neglect victims were more likely to live with the abusive individual which, according to Aquilino (1990), typically indicates some form of vulnerability on the part of the elderly person. Neglect cases were significantly more likely to involve a single incident and for a relatively shorter period of time (28 months) compared to PA and HFE. However, no one had tried to intervene in the past, perhaps reflecting the isolation of these victims, which is consistent with the explanation for the continuance of the neglectful situation, which was attributed to isolation. Neglect was not associated with the abusive individual being a relative or the victim’s awareness of the abuse.

**Intervention implications.** Intervention in neglect cases will require identifying relatively isolated individuals. Situations in which an elderly person resides with a caregiver may warrant greater monitoring by APS as these elderly individuals are unlikely to be able to request assistance due to their own physical vulnerability or isolation.

**Hybrid Financial Exploitation (HFE).** The profile of HFE cases differed substantially from the other three types of elder maltreatment. HFE victims were more likely to be victimized by a relative (100%), and were more likely to have the abusive individual living with them. According to Aquilino (1990), when adult offspring (i.e., relatives) are living with their parents, the elderly parents are providing care to their adult offspring. Furthermore, victims of HFE were relatively likely to be aware that they were being abused (see also Doerner & Lab, 2008; Gordon & Brill, 2001; Johnson, 2003; Wallace, 2007) and in all cases the abuse occurred multiple times (see also Libes Simon, 1992; Peake et al., 2000). Like PA, these cases tended to be longer in duration (122 months). The lengthy, recurring abuse is likely a reflection of how deeply entangled the victims and the abusers—typically cohabitating relatives—are in these cases (Pillemer, 1985). Perhaps because of the extended nature of this abuse, these were the cases where it was most likely that someone had previously tried to intervene, although apparently with little long-term success. Finally, these victims explained the abusive situation lasting as long as it did because this abusive situation was preferable to a nursing home placement, a sentiment indicating that these victims were in need of some physical assistance.

**Intervention implications.** Intervention in HFE cases requires the provision of extensive assistance to these elderly victims to help them address their own health
needs and eschew relying on the abusive individual for assistance. However, for intervention to be successful it may be necessary also to decrease the interdependency between the two (Wolf & Pillemer, 2000) in part by addressing the needs of the abusive individual (Hwalek et al., 1996; Jackson & Hafemeister, 2011a; McCreadie, 2000; Nordstrom, 2005; Vinton, 1991), which for many elderly victims takes precedence over their own needs (Jackson & Hafemeister, in press).

There was one variable that was not associated with any type of maltreatment. There was likely insufficient variability for the number of abusive individuals to be associated with the type of maltreatment involved because in 78% of all cases there was a single actor, a finding consistent with Lachs and Berman (2011).

**Limitations**

The challenges associated with accessing elderly victims of abuse through the APS system likely contributed to obtaining a smaller than desired sample, despite vigorous efforts to recruit a larger sample. However, this study is unique in that it accessed abused elderly persons’ and APS caseworkers’ perceptions and captured their views firsthand. Nonetheless, the study is in need of replication. In addition, the sample consisted of elderly victims who experienced maltreatment in domestic settings and did not address maltreatment in institutional settings. However, this was a reasonable focus for this study given that the majority of elder maltreatment takes place in domestic settings (Teaster et al., 2006; Virginia Department of Social Services, 2008).

**Conclusions**

This study demonstrates that the profiles and manifestations of elder maltreatment differ depending on the type of elder maltreatment involved and underscore the importance of differentiating among the various types of maltreatment when seeking to better understand this maltreatment. In addition, the different profiles resulting in this study indicate the need for interventions tailored to meet the unique characteristics associated with each type of abuse, which may lead to greater victim safety. However, such interventions require careful evaluation. Finally, the design of this study should form a template for identifying unique case characteristics associated with other forms of elder maltreatment, such as psychological abuse, not addressed in this study.
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Author Biographies

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