

# R2P

National Adult Protective Services Association  
National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

## Research to Practice Series

NCCD

National Council on  
Crime & Delinquency

NAPSA  
National Adult Protective Services Association



# The Stressed Caregiver Versus the Bad Apple: Classifying Abusers Using APS Data

Marti DeLiema, PhD  
Research Scholar  
Stanford Center on Longevity

Carol Dayton, MSW, LISW  
Consultant in the Field of Aging

Today's 1<sup>st</sup> presenter



**Marti DeLiema, PhD**  
**Research Scholar**



**STANFORD  
CENTER ON  
LONGEVITY**



# Why do people harm older adults?

## Caregiver stress and burden theory



## Abuser pathology theory



# Are there **different “types”** of abusers?

- Variability in types of elder mistreatment, so why not abusers?
- Different motivations for causing harming
- Engage in different forms of elder abuse
- How many sub-types are there?



# Data and Methods



- Older Adult Mistreatment Assessment (OAMA)
- N=337 abusers with 1 or more substantiated abuse types: financial, emotional, physical, sexual and neglect
- Data are from the *Alleged Abuser Information Form*
  - Administered by APS caseworkers
  - 37 questions about positive and negative abuser characteristics and behaviors: history of violence, trouble with the law, tells lies, ignores you, too stressed to help, contributes to well-being of household, etc...
  - Answers provided by victim, collaterals, or completed based on caseworker observation

# Abuser characteristics

	Total % / Mean (SD)
Abuser mean age ( <i>range = 13-96 yrs.</i> )	50.1 (17.0)
Sex (female)	56.2%
Abuser is victim's primary caregiver	43.8%
<b>Abuser's relationship to victim</b>	
Child	52.1%
Spouse/Partner	15.6%
Other relative	16.7%
Friend	7.1%
Paid caregiver	5.7%
Service professional	1.5%
Relationship missing	1.5%
<b>Substantiated abuse types</b>	
Neglect	35.1%
Financial Exploitation	51.5%
Emotional Abuse	48.2%
Physical Abuse	21.1%
Sexual Abuse	1.2%
Total abuse types (1-5)	1.6 (0.72)

# Victim characteristics

	Total N (%) / Mean (SD)
Victim mean age (range= 60-97 yrs.)	76.5 (9.7)
Victim sex (female)	68.5%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
Non-Hispanic White	48.8%
Black	35.7%
Hispanic	14.9%
Other	1.5%
Missing	0.60%

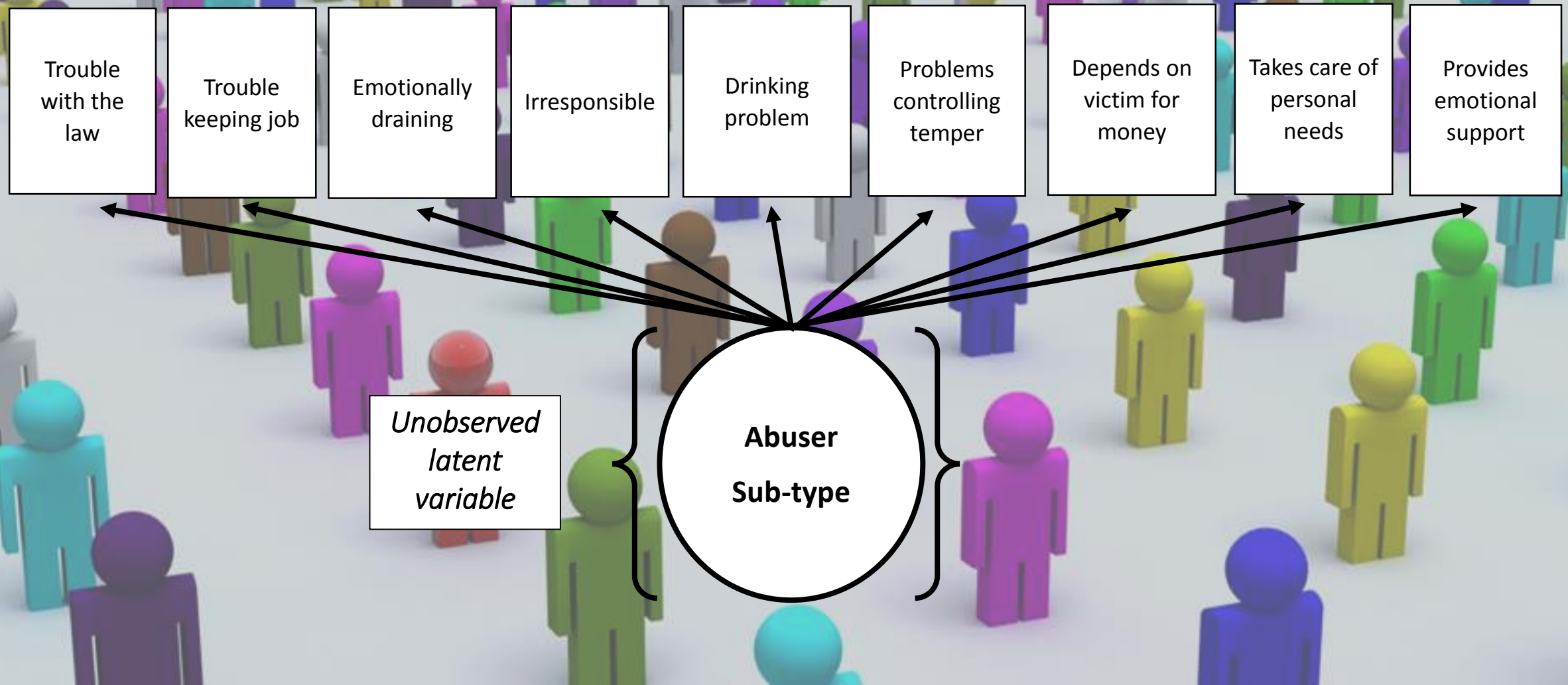
# Latent class analysis



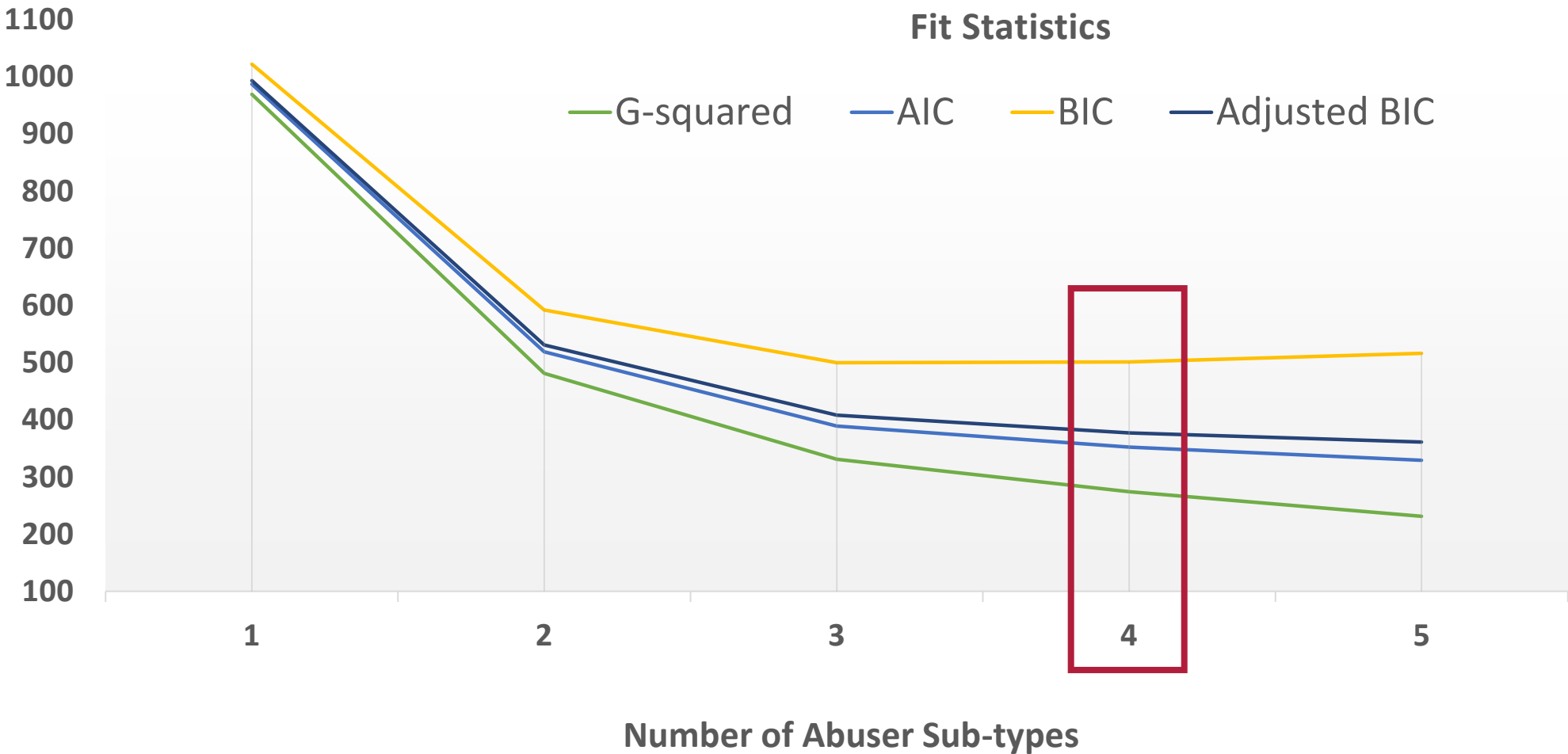
- Uses a maximum likelihood approach to categorize individuals based on their shared characteristics and behaviors
- Abusers within a sub-type are similar to each other, but different from abusers in other sub-types



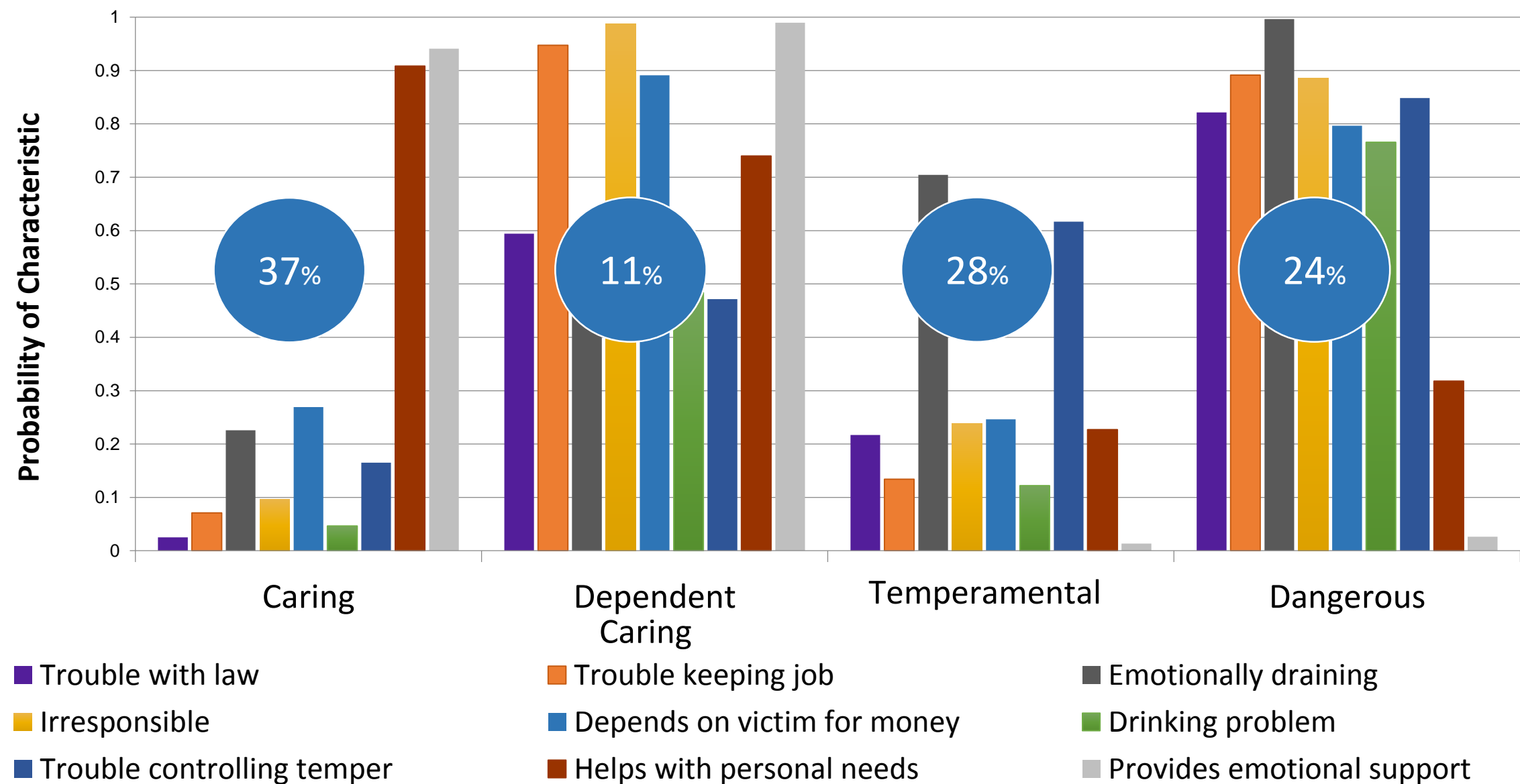
# Latent class model



# Selecting the number of abuser subtypes



# Relative characteristics of each subtype



# Abuser demographics, victim characteristics, and abuse types vary

	Abuser Subtypes				$\chi^2$ / F-test	p-value
	Caring	Dependent Caring	Temper- amental	Dangerous		
<i>Abuser characteristics</i>						
Mean age (SD)	53.5 (16.8)	45.4 (14.8)	52.4 (18.9)	44.8 (14.5)	6.03	0.001 ***
Female	64.3%	51.4%	59.1%	42.9%	10.17	0.017 *
Adult Child	50.4%	71.4%	37.5%	61.9%	16.41	0.001 **
Partner	18.6%	5.7%	19.3%	10.7%	6.14	0.105
Other relative	13.2%	11.4%	25.0%	15.5%	5.91	0.116
Non-relative	14.7%	11.4%	18.2%	10.7%	2.17	0.537
<i>Victim characteristics</i>						
Mean age (SD)	79.2 (9.2)	75.3 (10.9)	76.0 (9.9)	73.3 (8.6)	7.03	<.0001 ***
Female	70.5%	57.1%	73.9%	64.7%	4.13	0.248
Non-Hispanic White	51.9%	65.7%	44.3%	41.7%	7.59	0.055
Black	31.8%	22.9%	39.8%	42.9%	5.68	0.128
Other	16.3%	8.6%	14.8%	15.5%	1.20	0.753
<i>Substantiated abuse type</i>						
Emotional	21.7%	40.0%	65.9%	73.8%	66.39	<.0001 ***
Physical	7.8%	14.3%	28.6%	36.9%	27.94	<.0001 ***
Neglect	51.9%	37.1%	21.6%	22.6%	33.17	<.0001 ***
Financial	48.8%	74.3%	39.8%	58.3%	12.71	0.005 **



# Study conclusions

- Not all abusers are “bad apples”
- Abusers vary according to their behaviors, characteristics, and types of mistreatment committed
- Practitioners need to collect information on perpetrators during investigations
- Different subtypes = different intervention approaches



# Thank you to my collaborators

**Zachary Gassoumis**  
**Jeanine Yonashiro-Cho**  
**Yongjie Yon**  
**Kathleen Wilber**  
**Kendon Conrad**

***Next paper:*** Identifying the differences between abusers who are caregivers and those who are not

**Feedback?**

Email: [deliema@stanford.edu](mailto:deliema@stanford.edu)

# Questions?





Today's 2<sup>nd</sup> presenter



**Carol Dayton, MSW, LISW**

Retired Chief of APS in Cuyahoga County/Greater Cleveland Ohio

National Adult Protective Services Board Member

Co-Chair of NAPSA/NCPEA Research Committee



## Intervention approach: “Caring” abusers

- ✓ May include unintentional abusers, overwhelmed, unprepared and unaware of help. Needed resources may be accepted when honoring the efforts being made by the caregiver.
- ✓ The “promise to always be your caregiver” needs reframing to excellent care being promised.
- ✓ Difficult behaviors by the *care receiver* such as hitting and throwing objects can lead to care giver retaliation and justification.
- ✓ Respite and examining alternative caregiver options are needed.
- ✓ Feeling entitled to a reward for the work of caregiving may lead to exploitation, e.g. stealing jewelry may be the start of an escalating deception and theft.
- ✓ APS can build on the longstanding emotional bonds as a strength.



# Intervention approach: “**Dependent caring**” abusers

- ✓ “Red Flag” characteristics are often present. Adult child or other relative in need of housing may be viewed as the most available care giver.
- ✓ The opportunity to exploit the frail and/or demented victim will be present by those who now have more power and control than in their earlier relationship to the victim.
- ✓ Co-dependency is a major dynamic for this dyad. Parent of dependent adult child may be very reluctant to separate, feeling responsibility and deep attachment.
- ✓ Strengths may be an abuser who is also attentive to direct care and emotional support.



## Intervention approach: “**Temperamental**” abusers

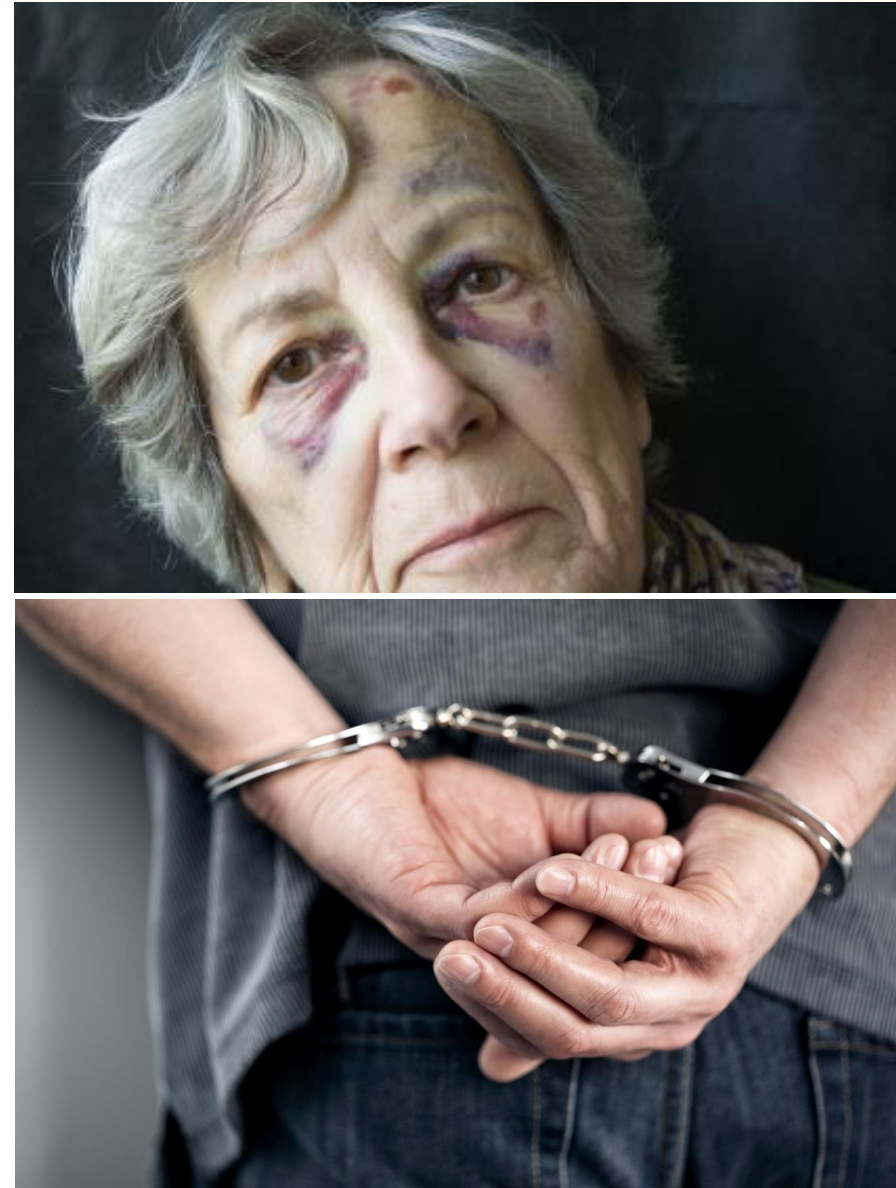
- ✓ Erratic ability to provide care with poor emotional control can become directly threatening to the victim. Concerns for the victim’s personal safety and/or exploitation are heightened. Two workers may be needed to guarantee separate interviews with the victim and the abuser.
- ✓ The manipulations of undue influence may be present, with the initial positive emotional connection to the victim receding when frustrations over time escalate, e.g. living longer than expected.
- ✓ APS focus should include evaluating access to the victim, the assets and victim’s mental status to understand risks.





# Intervention approach: “**Dangerous**” abusers

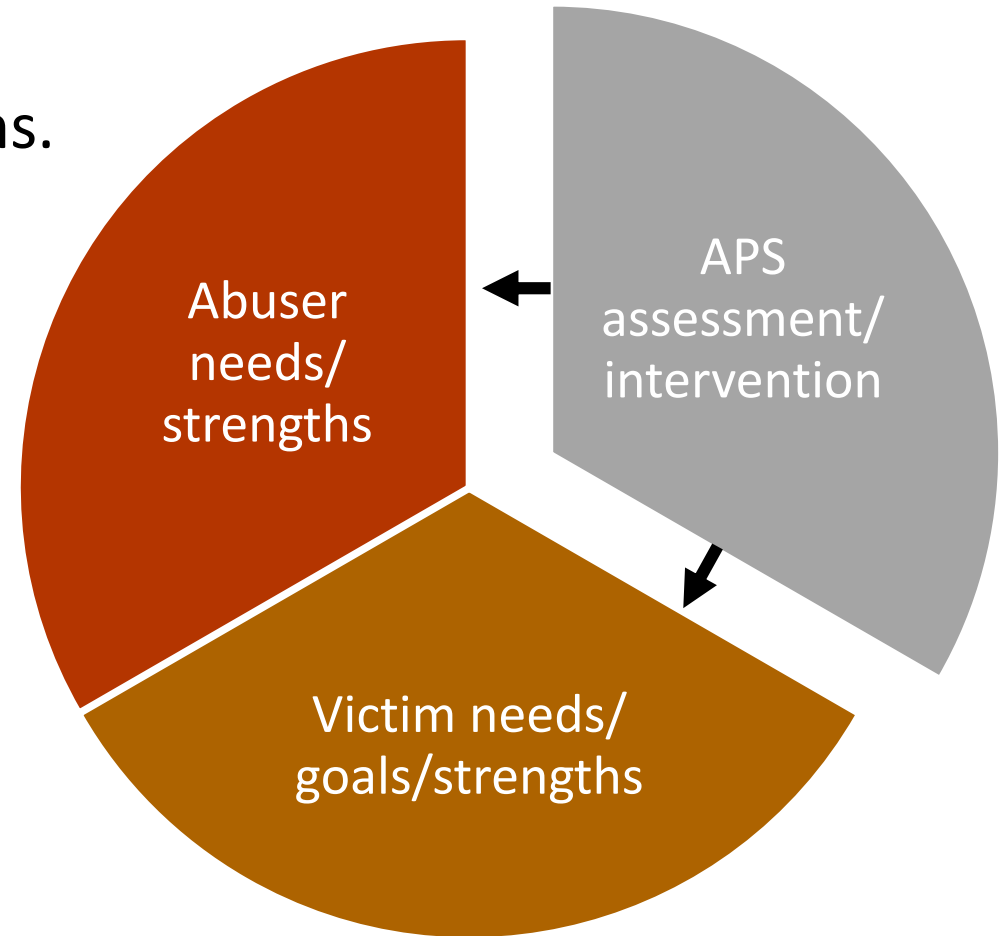
- Domestic violence allegations require careful planning prior to the initial home visit to reduce/remove any risk of adding danger to the victim’s circumstance.
- Creative use of alternative interview locations outside the home may be needed. A hospitalized victim is in a safe place, do not delay interview until after discharge!
- Sending two staff to the home may be needed to conduct separate interviews of victim and abuser, and for back-up safety planning for staff. Law enforcement may be needed.
- Legal interventions and criminal justice actions may be needed. Mental status of victim critical re: interventions initiated by APS through Probate Court.





# Summary

- Assess the victim's needs in relation to the abuser's meaning in the victim's life. Offering narrow options for increased safety can be rejected if the trade-off of losing that relationship is unacceptable.
- Always inform victim of safety risks and options.
- Consider reframing policies to also consider abuser strengths and needs, with referral options for abusers. Smaller caseloads may be needed!
- Value victim's goals in relation to abuser's needs.
- Develop and use MDT's to have resource networks for both victims and abusers.



Questions?

