

New Tools for Assessing Financial Decision Making Abilities in Older Adults

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Dong's Maxwell Pollack Award Lecture

- “Decision making capacity is the cornerstone assessment for many cases of elder abuse while balancing autonomy, beneficence and paternalism.”



The Gerontologist, 2014; vol. 54, p. 156



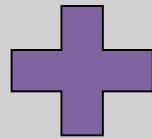
Plassman Prevalence Estimates of Minor and Major Neurocognitive Impairment

CIND (n=241)	
Age 71-79	16%
Age 80-89	29%
Age 90+	39%
Total	22%

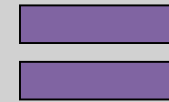
AD (n=98)	
Age 71-79	3.5%
Age 80-89	10.2%
Age 90+	22.4%
Total	8%

Dangerous Combination

Early
Cognitive
Decline



Impaired
Financial
Decisional Skills



**Vulnerability to Financial
Exploitation**

(1) the potential loss of financial skills and financial judgment;
and (2) the inability to detect and therefore prevent financial exploitation.

Stiegal 2012 (3) Susceptibility to undue influence

What Our Data Show: Financial Exploitation Within Past 2 Years

- Cognitively intact (n=157): **13.7% FE victims**
- Cognitively impaired (n=43)
- Intact decision making: **4/31 (13%) FE**
- Impaired decision making: **9/12 (75%) FE**

Impaired decision making and cognitive impairment most at risk for FE

Financial Awareness as Contextual Factor (n=200)

- **58%** somewhat or very worried about having enough money to pay for things
- **29%** unsure or not confident about making big financial decisions
- **28.5%** worried about financial decisions they recently made
- **45%** financially helping someone

Psychological Vulnerability as Contextual Factor (n=200)

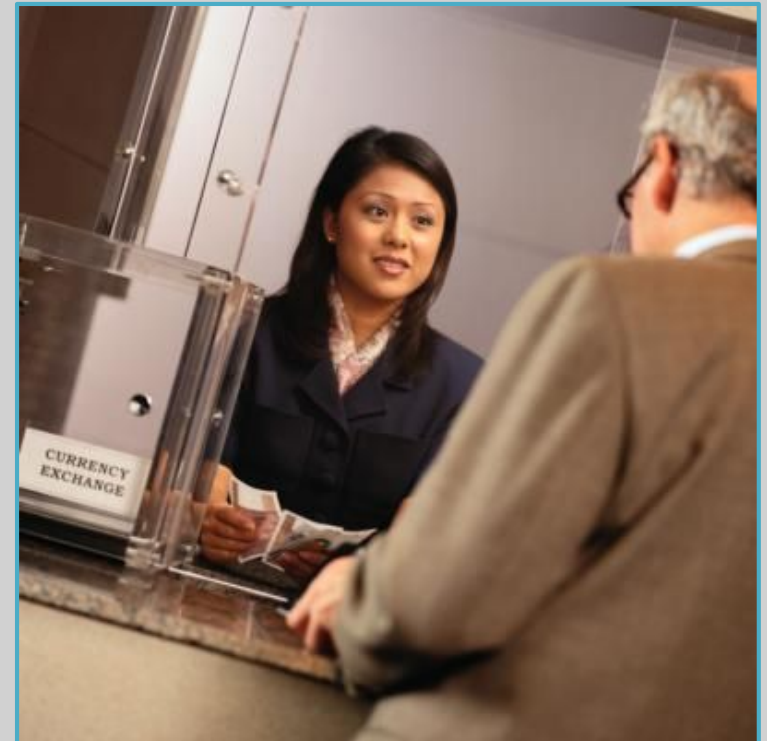
- **41%** wish they had someone to talk to about finances
- **38.5%** anxious about own finances
- **35%** lost confidante in past 2 years
- **42.5%** downhearted or blue about finances
- **35%** state treated with less respect around financial transactions
- **14.5%** rate self as having poorer memory, thinking skills than 1 year ago

Model: **Financial Decisional Abilities**

- Formed 2 New Scales:

**Lichtenberg Financial Decision
Making Rating Scale (LFD RS)**

**Lichtenberg Financial Decision
Screening Scale (LFD SS)**



Overall Goal:
Assessment at Point of
Decision

Using Person-Centered Principles for Financial Capacity

- People are more than the sum of their cognitive abilities: ***Context and psychological vulnerability are key aspects too***
- Traditional approaches overemphasize deficits and under-emphasize strengths: ***Hypothetical Vignettes over-emphasize deficits***
- Subjective experience of PWD remains important: ***Analyzing the actual decision is critical***



Groundbreaking Work of **Appelbaum and Grisso 1988**

- Originally for capacity for psychiatric treatment and guardianship, then health decisions
- ID 4 aspects of decision making:
Communicating
 1. Choice
 2. Understanding
 3. Appreciation
 4. Reasoning

Lichtenberg Financial Decision Screening Scale (**LFDSS**)

- 10 items: To be administered in an interview format
- Multiple choice
- Focuses on the 4 intellectual factors and potential for undue influence
- Professional does the rating on each item and does not just record older adult's responses.
- Overall judgment score based in part on don't know or inaccurate responses.

Lichtenberg Financial Decision Screening Scale (LFDSS)

Lichtenberg Financial Decision Screening Scale (LFDSS)®
Peter A. Lichtenberg, Ph. D., ABPP

Age: _____
Gender: _____ Date: _____
Education: _____

Older Person Should be Able to Communicate
• Choice • Appreciation
• Understanding • Rationale

- What is the financial decision you are making/have made?
☐ Giving a gift / loan (e.g., paying bills or tuition for grandchild, purchase of home for son to live in)
☐ Major purchase or sale for self (home, car, renovations, services, invest in LTC or NH)
☐ Investment Planning (retirement, insurance, portfolio balancing)
☐ Estate planning (Will, beneficiary, DPOA, add/remove someone from bank account)
☐ Turn over bill paying to someone else
☐ Scam, Fraud, Theft (suspected)
☐ Other: _____
☐ Don't know or inaccurate
- Was this your idea or did someone suggest it or accompany you?
☐ My idea
☐ Someone else suggested/drove me here
☐ Don't know/inaccurate
- What is the purpose of your decision?
☐ Benefit self (meet a need, peace of mind)
☐ Benefit family (whom?)
☐ Benefit friends (whom?)
☐ Benefit organization/charity (which?)
☐ Please or satisfy someone else (whom?)
☐ Don't know/inaccurate
- What is the primary financial goal?
☐ Earn money (or retain value of investment)
☐ Reduce tax burden
☐ Reduce debt
☐ Affordability of item(s) or service(s)
☐ Share my wealth after my death
☐ Allow someone else to access my money or finances / accounts (now)
☐ Gift someone or a charity (which?)
☐ Lifestyle (no \$\$ goal; meet a need/desire)
☐ Other (describe) _____
☐ Don't know/inaccurate
- How will this decision impact you now & over time?
☐ Improve financial position
☐ No impact
☐ Negative impact/debt
☐ Don't know/inaccurate
- How much risk to your financial well-being is involved?
☐ Low risk or none
☐ Moderate risk
☐ High risk
☐ Don't know/inaccurate
- How may someone else be negatively affected?
☐ No one will be negatively affected
☐ Family members (who and why?)
☐ Someone else (who and why?)
☐ Charity (which and why?)
☐ Don't know/inaccurate
- Who benefits most from this financial decision?
☐ I do
☐ Family
☐ Friend
☐ Caregiver
☐ Charity/organization
☐ Don't know/inaccurate
- Does this decision change previous planned gifts or bequests to family, friends, or organizations?
☐ No
☐ Yes (who and why?)
☐ Don't know/inaccurate
- To what extent did you talk with anyone regarding this decision?
☐ Not at all
☐ Mentioned it (to whom?)
☐ Discussed in depth (with whom?)
☐ Don't know/inaccurate

Note: If consumer is not sure, PROBE before marking DK.

Note: If consumer is not sure, PROBE before marking DK.

LFDSS Decisional Ability Score:
 Major Concerns ☐
 Some Concerns ☐
 No Concerns ☐

APS Case Outcome:
 Case Substantiated ☐
 Case Unsubstantiated ☐



Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: 0894-6566 (Print) 1540-4129 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/wean20>

The Lichtenberg Financial Decision Screening Scale (LFDSS): A new tool for assessing financial decision making and preventing financial exploitation

Peter A. Lichtenberg PhD, ABPP, Lisa Ficker PhD, Analise Rahman-Filipiak MA, Ron Tatro BA, Cynthia Farrell MSW, James J. Speir MSW, Sanford J. Mall JD, Patrick Simasko JD, Howard H. Collens JD & John Daniel Jackman Jr., MD

Table 1: Demographic Percentages for Elders Screened at APS

Table 1. Demographic percentages for elders screened at APS (substantiated cases vs. not) and by professionals (decision making concerns vs. ok).

Demographic values	APS* cases (n = 29) financial exploitation vs. not		Professional** cases (n = 79) decision-making concerns vs. ok		Total sample (n = 108)
	Case substantiated	Case unsubstantiated	Decisional concerns	No decisional concerns	(Mean or %)
Age (mean/SD)	71.1 (10.3)	74.6 (14.8)	75.5 (10.1)	80.8 (9.8)	75.3 (10.7)
Gender (%)					
Female	61.1	38.9	58.3	61.2	58.3
Male	38.9	63.6	41.7	38.8	41.7
Education (mean/SD)					
Years of education	12.4 (2.2)	12.8 (2.0)	14.2 (2.9)	14.2 (3.0)	13.8 (2.9)

APS* = Adult Protective Services; Professionals ** = Lawyers, financial planners, MD/medical professionals, law enforcement.

Note: No significant differences in age, gender, or education within the APS cases (substantiated vs. not) or professional cases (decision-making concerns vs. OK).

Table 3: Independent Samples *t*-Tests for the LFDSS Total Risk Score for Current Financial Decision

Table 3. Independent samples *t*-tests for the LFDSS total risk score for current financial decision.

		<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
LFDSS total risk score	APS case substantiated	14.50 (6.3)	3.06	26	.005
	APS case not substantiated	8.20 (2.0)			
LFDSS total risk score	Professional case:	17.42 (6.8)	-4.41	77	.001
	Decisional concerns				
	Professional case:	8.63 (2.1)			
	No decisional concerns				

Reliability and Validity Estimates

- LFDSS administered to consecutive clients by APS workers, Attorneys, Financial Planners, Social Workers, CPAs and Physicians
- Professionals make final rating of decision making abilities and we compared their ratings to two risk scoring systems

Table 1: Demographics and Characteristics Table

		N	%	Mean	Standard Deviation
Referral Source	Adult Protective Services	80	37.6		
	Professionals	133	62.4		
Age (years)		213		76.93	(10.10)
Age Categories (4)	Below 65	26	12.2		
	65-74 yrs	56	26.3		
	75 - 84 yrs	74	34.7		
	85+ years	57	26.8		
Gender	female	121	56.8		
	male	92	43.2		
Highest Grade of Education (years)		183		13.66	(2.87)
Category Education	Less than High School	19	10.3		
	High School	80	43.5		
	Some college +	85	46.2		
	Missing Education	29	.0		
Lichtenberg Financial Decision Screening Scale (<i>dichotomous variables</i>)		213		.98	(1.81)
Lichtenberg Financial Decision Screening Scale (<i>ordinal variables</i>)		213		4.50	(3.91)

Key Points

- Large sample size 213
- Good distribution of age and education
- Able to be used by Professionals of all backgrounds (APS, Financial, Legal)

Table 2:
Internal Consistency Estimates for the 7-Item Lichtenberg Financial Decision Screening Scale Using Different Coding Methods

	N	Dichotomous Variables ^a			Ordinal Variables ^b		
		Alpha	McDonald's Omega Total	Explained Common Variance (ECV)	Alpha	McDonald's Omega Total	Explained Common Variance (ECV)
Total Sample	213	0.958	0.958	85.052	0.904	0.906	75.339
Male	92	0.973	0.977	78.605	0.929	0.941	54.747
Female	121	0.940	0.949	71.446	0.873	0.875	69.208
College and above	85	0.918	0.932	39.731	0.874	0.879	62.550
High school and below	99	0.944	0.950	72.605	0.858	0.863	55.205
Less than 75 years old	82	0.968	0.973	71.592	0.918	0.926	64.622
75 years old or greater	131	0.949	0.950	82.819	0.886	0.888	76.418
Adult Protective Services	80	0.942	0.943	70.302	0.912	0.914	73.326
Professionals	133	0.947	0.956	58.786	0.846	0.855	62.620

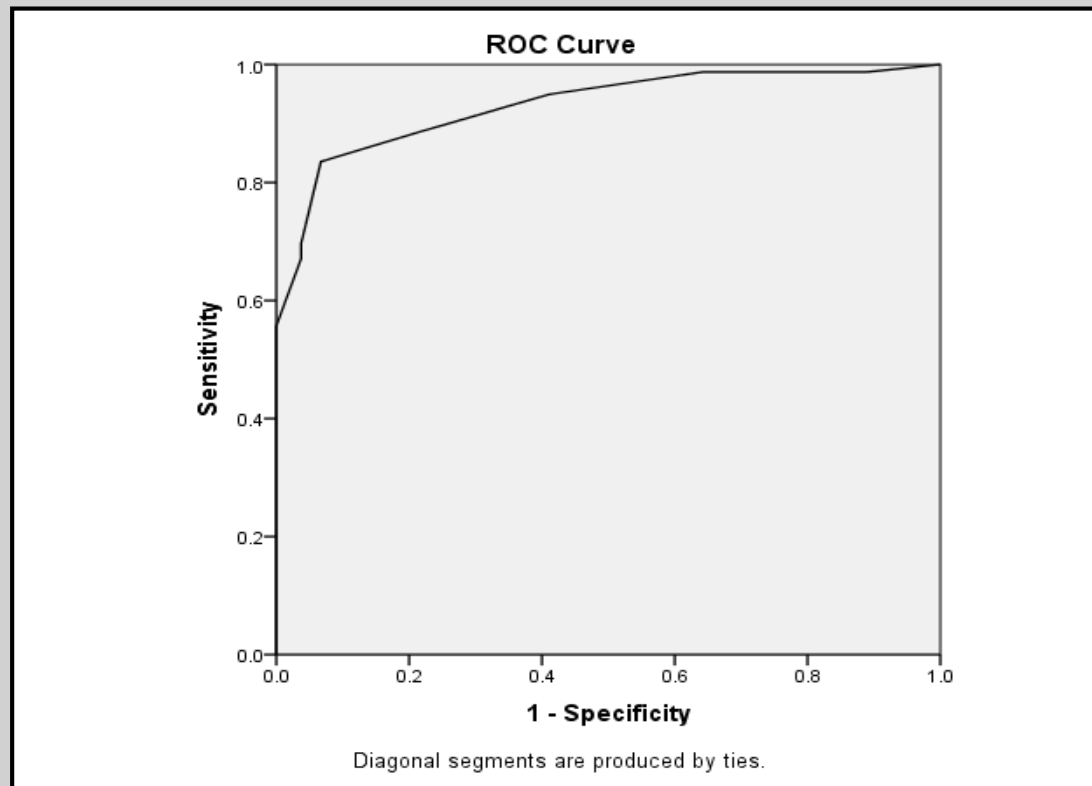
^a**Alpha**, McDonald's Omega Total and Explained Common Variance all calculated using tetrachoric correlations. Explained Common Variance was obtained from a bi-factor model.

^b**Alpha**, McDonald's Omega Total and Explained Common Variance all calculated using polychoric correlations. Explained Common Variance was obtained from a bi-factor model.

Key Points

- Excellent Internal Consistency of items
- One factor structure and holds across ages, education, gender

Figure 2:
ROC Curve for the LFDSS Score Using
Ordinal Variables



Cutoff Score: Ordinal Risk Scoring

- Cutoff score of 5 or greater

Sensitivity	Specificity	PPV	NPV
.88	.91	.84	.93

LFDSS Questions 1-5

Lichtenberg, 2013©

Decisional Ability Questions 1-2

1. What is the financial decision you are making?
 - a) Investment planning (retirement, insurance, portfolio balancing)
 - b) Estate planning (will, beneficiary, gifts)
 - c) Major purchase (home, car, renovations)
 - d) Don't know/inaccurate
2. Was this your idea or did someone suggest it or accompany you?
 - a) My idea
 - b) Someone else suggested/drove me here
 - c) Don't know/inaccurate



*Scale cannot be used without
permission of Dr. Lichtenberg*

Questions 3-5

3. What is the purpose of your decision?
 - a) Benefit self, plan, peace of mind
 - b) Benefit family (whom?)
 - c) Benefit charity (which?)
 - d) Benefit someone else (whom?)
 - e) Don't know/inaccurate
4. What is the primary financial goal?
 - a) Earn money through investment
 - b) Share wealth
 - c) Give someone access to my money
 - d) Gift someone or a charity (Which?)
 - e) Don't know/inaccurate
5. How will this decision impact you now and over time?
 - a) Improve financial position
 - b) No impact
 - c) Negative impact/debt
 - d) Don't know/inaccurate



LFDSS Questions 6-10

Lichtenberg, 2013©

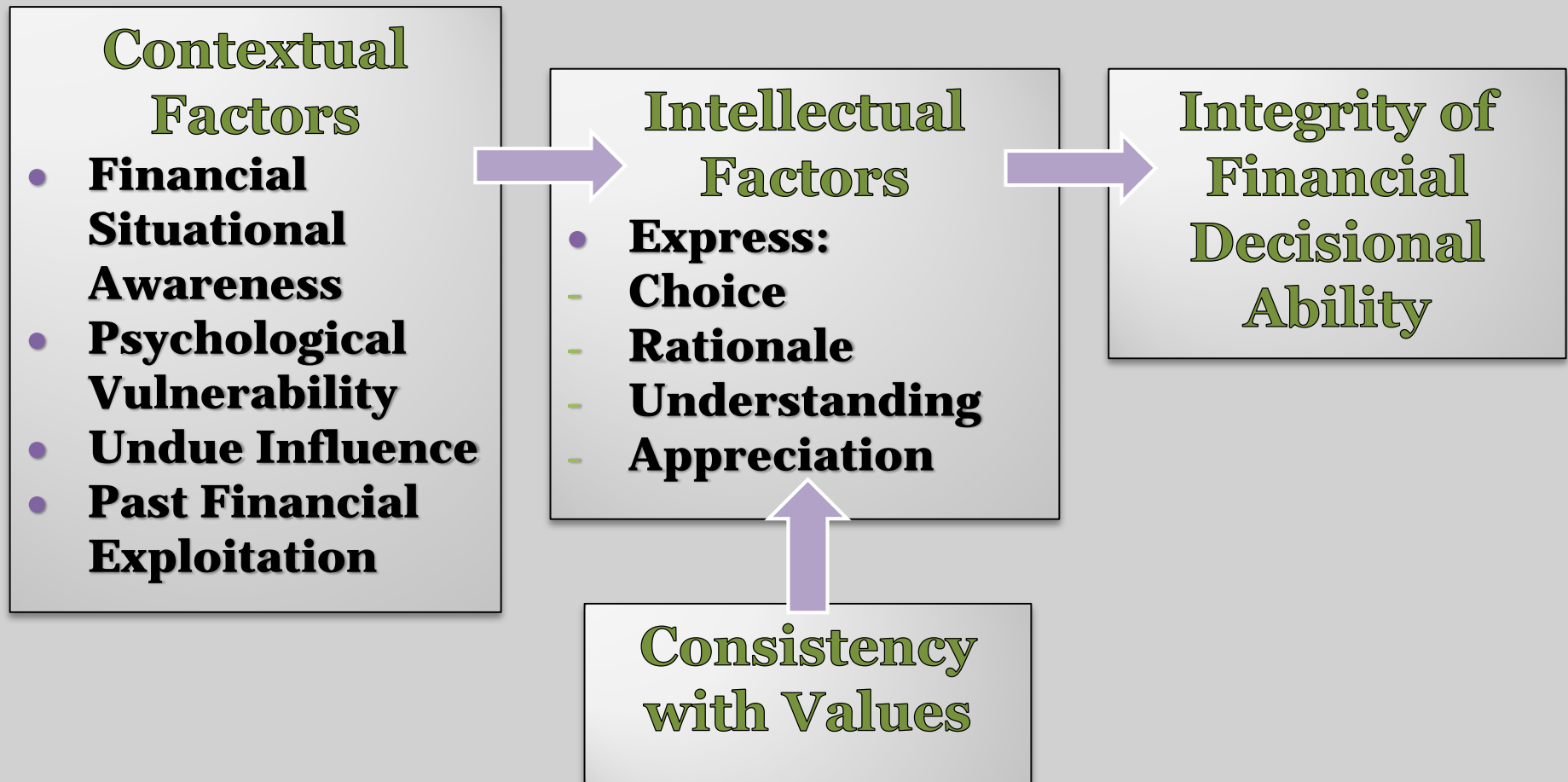
Questions 6-7

6. How much risk is involved?
 - a) Low risk or none
 - b) Moderate risk
 - c) High risk
 - d) Don't know/inaccurate
7. How may someone else be negatively affected?
 - a) No one will be negatively affected
 - b) Family members (who and why?)
 - c) Someone else (who and why?)
 - d) Charity (which and why?)
 - e) Don't know/inaccurate

Questions 8-10

8. Who benefits most from this financial decision?
 - a) I do
 - b) Family
 - c) Friend
 - d) Caregiver
 - e) Charity/organization
 - f) Don't know/inaccurate
9. Does this decision change previous planned gifts or bequests to family, friends, or organizations?
 - a) No
 - b) Yes (who and why?)
 - c) Don't know/inaccurate
10. To what extent did you talk with anyone regarding this decision?
 - a) Not at all
 - b) Mentioned it (to whom?)
 - c) Discussed in depth (with whom?)
 - d) Don't know/inaccurate

Conceptual Model for LFDERS



A Person-Centered Approach to Financial Capacity Assessment

TABLE 1 Sample Items From the Lichtenberg Financial Decision Making Rating Scale

Financial Situational Awareness

- What are your current sources of income?
- How worried are you about having enough money to pay for things?
- Who manages your money day to day?
- Do you regret or worry about financial decisions you have made recently?
- Are you helping anyone financially on a regular basis?
- Have you gifted or lent money to someone in the past couple of years?

Psychological Vulnerability

- How often do you wish you had someone to talk to about financial decisions or plans?
- Have you recently lost someone who was a confidante?
- How often do you feel downhearted or blue about your financial situation or decisions?
- Is your memory, thinking skills, or ability to reason with regard to finances worse than a year ago?
- When it comes to making financial decisions, how often are you treated with less courtesy and respect than other people?



A Person-Centered Approach to Financial Capacity Assessment

TABLE 1 Sample Items From the Lichtenberg Financial Decision Making Rating Scale

Sentinel Financial Decision/Transaction

- What current major financial decisions or transactions are you intending to make?
- What are your personal (financial) goals with this transaction?
- Now and over time, how will this decision and/or transaction impact you financially?
- How much risk is there that this transaction could result in a loss of funds?
- Who will be adversely affected by the current decision/transaction? How will they react?
- To what extent did you consult with anyone before making the financial decision?
- Who did you discuss this with?
- Would someone who knows you well say this decision was unusual for you?

Financial Exploitation

- Have you ever had checks missing from or out of sequence in your checkbook?
- Do you have a credit or debit card that you allow someone else to use?
- Has anyone ever signed your name to a check?
- How often in the past few months has someone asked you for money?

Undue Influence

- Have you had any conflicts with anyone about the way you spend money or to whom you give money?
- Has anyone asked you to change your will?
- Has anyone recently told you to stop getting financial advice from someone?
- Was this transaction your idea or did someone else suggest it?
- Did this person drive or accompany you to carry out this financial transaction?



Lichtenberg et al. 2015
Clinical Gerontologist
LFDERS Reliability Study

- Five videotaped interviews were rated by five experts from each of the two expert groups for a total of 10 raters
- Used Marson's inter-rater agreement metric
- 94% agreement: 47/50 ratings among raters





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ISSN: 0894-6566 (Print) 1540-4129 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/wean20>

Financial decision-making abilities and financial exploitation in older African Americans: Preliminary validity evidence for the Lichtenberg Financial Decision Rating Scale (LFDRS)

Peter A. Lichtenberg PhD, ABPP, Lisa J. Ficker PhD & Annalise Rahman-Filipiak MA

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Sample Characteristics (n=69)

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for sample characteristics ($n = 69$).

	% (n)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Age		69.59 (5.99)
Gender		
Female	89.9 (62)	
Male	10.1 (7)	
Education		14.75 (2.48)
WRAT-R reading grade level		10.40 (3.00)

Table 2: Financial Exploitation and Decisional Ability Concern Frequencies (n=69)

Table 2. Financial exploitation and decisional ability concern frequencies ($n = 69$).

	% (n)
Financial exploitation	
Yes	18.81 (13)
No	81.2 (56)
Decisional ability concerns	
Major concerns	4.3 (3)
Some concerns	7.2 (5)
No concerns	88.4 (61)

Table 3: Financial Decision and Financial Exploitation Descriptions for Participants with Both FE and Decisional Ability Concerns

Table 3. Financial decision and financial exploitation descriptions for participants with both financial exploitation and decisional ability concerns ($n = 5$).

	Demographics	Current financial decision	Financial exploitation description
H008	66-year-old female, 13 years of education	Whether to raise and invest funds to start a group home for individuals with head injuries	Daughter is given money to pay participant's bills, but pays them irregularly and keeps extra cash
H026	76-year-old female, 13 years of education	Decision to let a trailer property go to foreclosure; home renovations	Cable co. charged her for a service that was advertised as free; daughter uses her car without a license or insurance, though the participant is liable
H048	72-year-old female, 12 years of education	Decision to file for bankruptcy	Daughter stole money for drug use
H049	79-year-old female, 12 years of education	Decision to file for bankruptcy	Bank alerted her of "suspicious withdrawals" from her checking account that have still not been refunded
H056	67-year-old female, 12 years of education	Opening an education account for great-niece	Bought a house for a niece and her family with the agreement that the niece would pay the mortgage; niece did not pay and moved out, leaving participant with the mortgage, insurance, and tax payments

Table 6: Validity Table

Table 6. Validity table: Correlations between LFDRS decisional ability and subscale scores, demographic, cognitive, and functional variables ($n = 69$).

		Age	Education	MMSE	ILS money mgmt.
Decisional ability	<i>r</i>	.126	.235*	.327**	.254*
	<i>p</i>	.209	.026	.002	.013
Financial situational awareness	<i>r</i>	-.053	-.124	-.084	.043
	<i>p</i>	.542	.168	.363	.623
Psychological vulnerability	<i>r</i>	-.024	-.098	.004	-.001
	<i>p</i>	.789	.285	.965	.987
Current decision total	<i>r</i>	.163	-.011	-.226*	-.204*
	<i>p</i>	.071	.905	.020	.026
Past decision total	<i>r</i>	-.019	-.062	-.061	-.037
	<i>p</i>	.842	.524	.539	.696
Undue influence	<i>r</i>	.040	-.028	.026	-.054
	<i>p</i>	.649	.762	.783	.545
Age	<i>r</i>			-.101	-.080
	<i>p</i>			.275	.360
Education	<i>r</i>			.254*	.240**
	<i>p</i>			.009	.009

Note. ** = significant at $\alpha = .005$ level.

* = significant at $\alpha = .05$ level.

Table 7: Independent Samples *t*-Tests: No FE (n=56) vs. FE (n=13)

Table 7. Independent samples *t*-tests: No financial exploitation ($n = 56$) vs. financial exploitation ($n = 13$).

		<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	No financial exploitation	69.14 (5.81)	-1.31	67	.196
	Financial exploitation	71.54 (6.60)			
Education	No financial exploitation	14.91 (2.53)	-1.09	67	.277
	Financial exploitation	14.08 (2.18)			
MMSE	No financial exploitation	28.84 (1.23)	2.27	12.76	.041*
	Financial exploitation	26.69 (3.35)			
ILS money management subscale	No financial exploitation	28.91 (3.95)	1.57	67	.133
	Financial exploitation	27.08 (3.75)			
Decisional ability score	No financial exploitation	1.95 (.227)	2.31	12.38	.039*
	Financial exploitation	1.38 (.870)			
Financial situational awareness score	No financial exploitation	19.79 (4.52)	-3.98	67	.00017**
	Financial exploitation	25.46 (5.11)			
Psychological vulnerability score	No financial exploitation	11.16 (2.76)	-2.94	67	.005**
	Financial exploitation	13.85 (3.81)			
Current decision total score	No financial exploitation	7.54 (2.04)	-3.83	67	.000282**
	Financial exploitation	11.62 (6.91)			
Past decision total score	No financial exploitation	4.21 (1.84)	-1.39	67	.171
	Financial exploitation	5.00 (1.87)			
Undue influence score	No financial exploitation	9.39 (3.22)	-2.47	12.69	.028*
	Financial exploitation	15.77 (9.18)			
Total LFDRS score	No financial exploitation	52.08 (9.00)	-4.23	13.78	.001**
	Financial exploitation	71.69 (16.12)			

Note. ** = significant at $\alpha = .005$ level.

* = significant at $\alpha = .05$ level.

Table 8: Independent Samples *t*-Tests: No Decisional Ability Concerns (n=56) vs. Decisional Ability Concerns (n=8)

Table 8. Independent samples *t*-tests: No decisional ability concerns (*n* = 56) vs. decisional ability concerns (*n* = 8).

		<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	No concerns	69.27 (6.04)	1.15	66	.254
	Concerns	71.88 (5.84)			
Education	No concerns	15.03 (2.50)	-3.82	16.903	.001**
	Concerns	13.00 (1.20)			
MMSE	No concerns	28.80 (1.25)	-2.32	7.20	.053
	Concerns	25.63 (3.85)			
ILS managing money subscale	No concerns	29.02 (3.86)	-2.53	66	.014**
	Concerns	25.38 (3.50)			
Financial situational awareness score	No concerns	20.15 (4.33)	4.19	66	<.001**
	Concerns	27.25 (5.80)			
Psychological vulnerability score	No concerns	11.38 (2.84)	2.40	66	.019*
	Concerns	14.13 (4.32)			
Current decision total score	No concerns	7.40 (1.68)	3.15	7.104	.016*
	Concerns	15.38 (7.13)			
Past decision total score	No concerns	4.45 (1.89)	-.996	66	.323
	Concerns	3.75 (1.67)			
Undue influence score	No concerns	10.03 (4.91)	2.58	66	.012*
	Concerns	15.13 (7.55)			
Total LFDRS score	No concerns	53.42 (10.27)	5.41	66	<.001**
	Concerns	75.63 (15.29)			

Note. ** = significant at $\alpha = .005$ level.

* = significant at $\alpha = .05$ level.

Key Points

- Good convergent validity for full scale and screening scale ratings—with MMSE and ILS money management
- Good divergent validity for financial awareness, psychological vulnerability, susceptibility to undue influence

A Look Inside:
<https://OlderAdultNestEgg.com>

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Welcome	▶
Getting Started	
Research and Publications	
About Dr. Lichtenberg	
Get Trained	
Comprehensive Scale Overview	
Administering the Scales	
Screener Training Videos	
Take Action	
Screener	
Informant (not yet available)	
Comprehensive	

Welcome to the Lichtenberg Financial Decision Rating and Screening Scales

The Problem We are Addressing:

The assessment of decision making abilities (i.e. the ability to make an informed choice) is at the heart of our laws. Our research has shown that some older adults have decision making incapacity when it comes to specific major financial decisions or transactions. Financial service, social service, elder law and criminal justice professionals all cite the lack of tools to help assess decision making abilities.

Our Solution:

We created and empirically validated both a comprehensive and screening decision making rating scale. The screening scale is 10 items and takes approximately 5-7 minutes to complete while the comprehensive scale takes approximately 25-40 mins

Access our research [HERE](#)

What we offer:

1. Use of our rating scales: You will need to register with us but there is no charge for using our scales or for using our training materials at your organization ([login link](#))
2. In person or webinar training: [Dr. Peter Lichtenberg](#), creator of the scales, is available to present to you or your group.
3. Consultation: Dr. Lichtenberg, a clinical psychologist and a leader in the areas of geriatrics and capacity assessment is available to provide case consultation to you or your group.

[Get Started](#)

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[Biography](#)

Welcome

Susan MacNeill Lichtenberg

Ph.D., ABPP (1963-2014)



**Lichtenberg
Scales:** The last
collaboration
with my late wife
and colleague

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Join Me in Work on This Scale

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