

# Communicative parameters of elder abuse

Mei-Chen Lin, Ph.D.

*Kent State University , USA*

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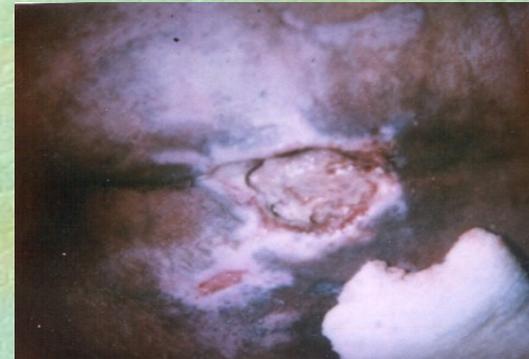
Howie Giles, Ph.D.

*University of California, Santa Barbara, USA*

Clearly the physical parameters of elder abuse are *visible* (below courtesy of Det. David Case, Fresno PD)



Right arm



coccyx



Right heel



Left hand



## And also elder neglect







## NEWS RELEASE

City of Santa Barbara  
Police Department

Lt. D. Paul McCaffrey  
Phone: 805-897-2332  
Fax: 805-897-2350  
[dmccaffrey@sbpd.com](mailto:dmccaffrey@sbpd.com)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### SCAM ARTISTS TARGET ELDERLY

#### *Use Ruse to Enter Homes, Then Steal Valuables*

**SANTA BARBARA, CA – 7/7/2005** – The Santa Barbara Police Department is warning the public to beware a team of scam artists operating in residential neighborhoods. Three times in the last three weeks thieves took valuables from the homes of elderly residents living in Upper State St. areas. In the first case reported June 14<sup>th</sup>, two women accompanied by a small boy knocked at the door of a 76 year-old-woman residing on Grove Lane. They claimed to be looking for a lost cat. The woman allowed them inside as a shortcut to her back yard. Once inside, the suspects split up and distracted the victim. Ten minutes later the suspects left in a rush. The victim then discovered \$360 cash stolen from a cabinet in her den. In the second incident on June 28<sup>th</sup>, two women again accompanied by a small boy knocked at the door of a 91-year-old woman residing on Foxen Dr. They gained her trust by pretending to know her. The victim let the suspects into her residence. The suspects distracted her and split up. Minutes later they were joined by a man. Several minutes later the suspects quickly left. The victim then discovered a small safe was stolen from a bedroom closet. The safe contained valuable jewelry, mementos, and documents. In the third case on July

The social creativity of scams

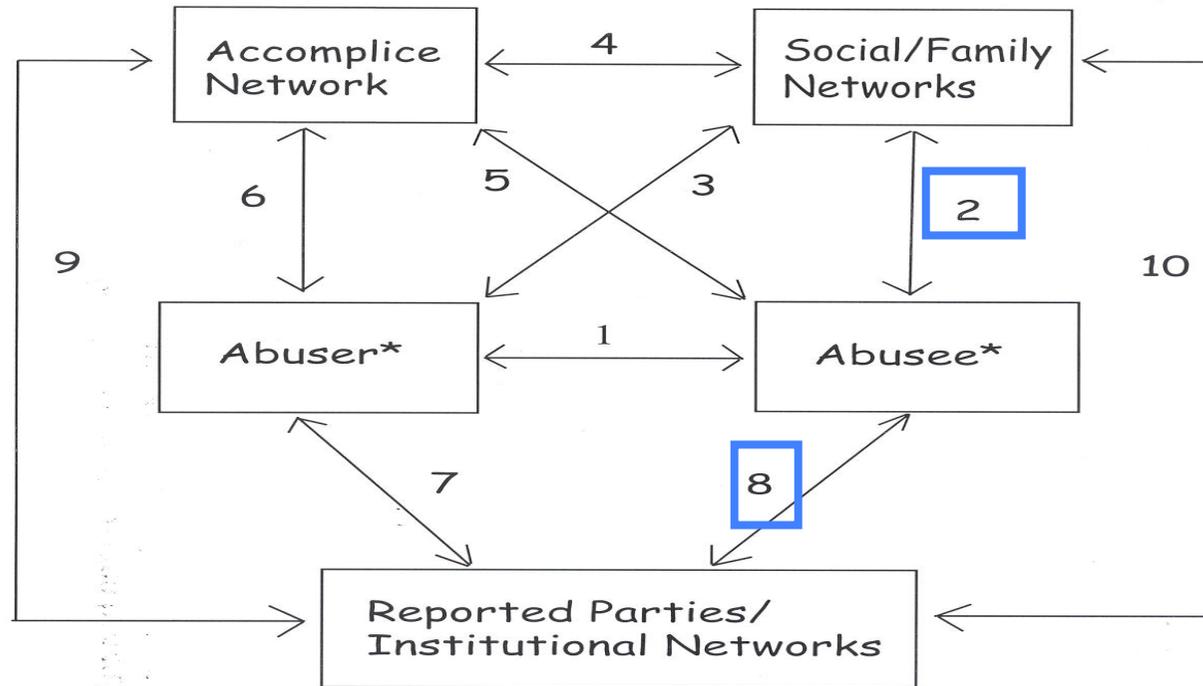
- Victim was 72, frugal, & had \$1.5M estate
- Suspect had “chance encounter” with victim in a public place
- Suspect, 38, wore nurse’s uniform
- Suspect followed victim home and made him a meal
- Timeline!
  - January 1994: meets suspect
  - July 1994: marries suspect
  - Dec 1994: ***dies of neglect***

**A case study: Orville Scott** - a “Sweetheart scam” with potentially *dire* consequences

## Estimates then of up to 84% unreported! Why, then, does it remain “hidden” or *non-* *communicated?*

- Physical and emotional Abuse occurs in private dwelling
- Felt to be a civil or social services problem rather than a crime
- Signs of abuse can be confused – by *some* – as mere signs of aging
- Abuse is forgiven as “caretaker stress” or lack of training
  - Fear of abandonment/being alone
- Fear of further abuse from associates (LINK #5 model)
- Generation that trusts
  - Couldn't imagine someone being dishonest to “them”
- Victims **proud** & hence embarrassed, ashamed and/or self-blame
  - Want to protect family from upset
- Victims fear institutionalization/loss of autonomy
- If AD victim (& very dependent on caregiver):
  - Unable to recognize, report it, or even be believed
- Estimates here are that only 1 in 25 of financial abuses are reported
  - 5 million are not reported in the USA (Wasik, 2000)

Our focus is on the **communicative** parameters which give rise to these outcomes.....& hence a focus on the relationships between entitles involved rather than on abuser and abusee psychological profiles



\* schemas (e.g., criminal, relational, age, & cognitive)

Figure 1. The communication pathways model of elder abuse and neglect

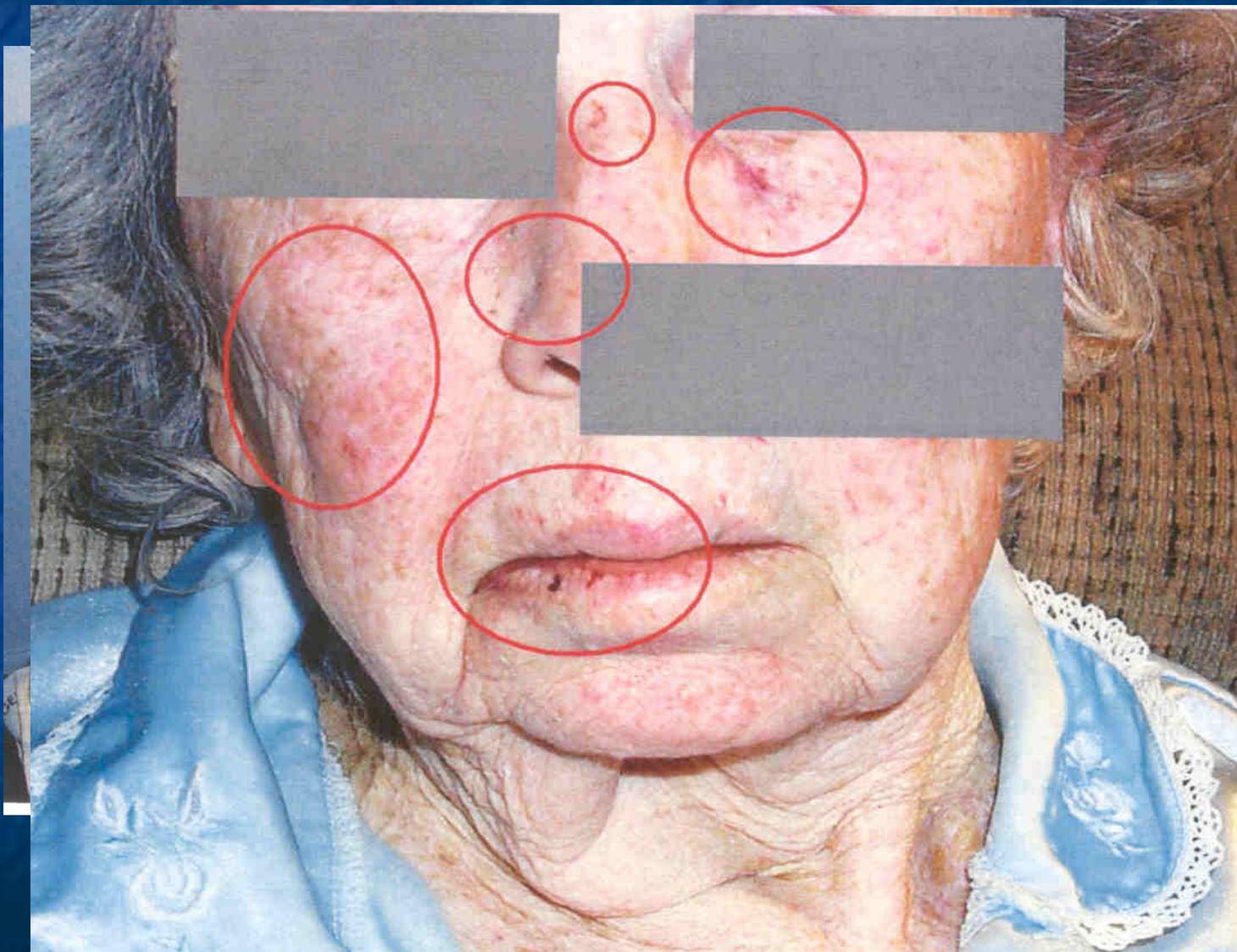
## Communication issues between reported parties

- First, different entities have different perceptions of elder abuse severity
  - Payne et al. (2001) had different parties report on different forms of abuses
    - Police chiefs saw robbery (\$48) as most serious abuse followed by slap
    - All other groups, however, saw the slap as most serious
    - Interestingly the nursing home people (but not the students) saw aide stealing as > serious than robbery

# Second...

- Different entities might well have social identities that can get in the way of assistance
  - Hewett and colleagues (2009) recently showed in an Australian medical arena that time-sensitive operations were not a function of the severity of the particular condition but, rather, how the different sub-specialties communicated or did not communicate with each other
    - That is, turf wars and intergroup dynamics
    - Suggests hidden and alarming possible barriers to our context
    - Need to “unpack” more of this box at bottom of the communication pathways model!

A Santa Barbara case: Alleged 187PC when  
abuse ***IS*** communicated

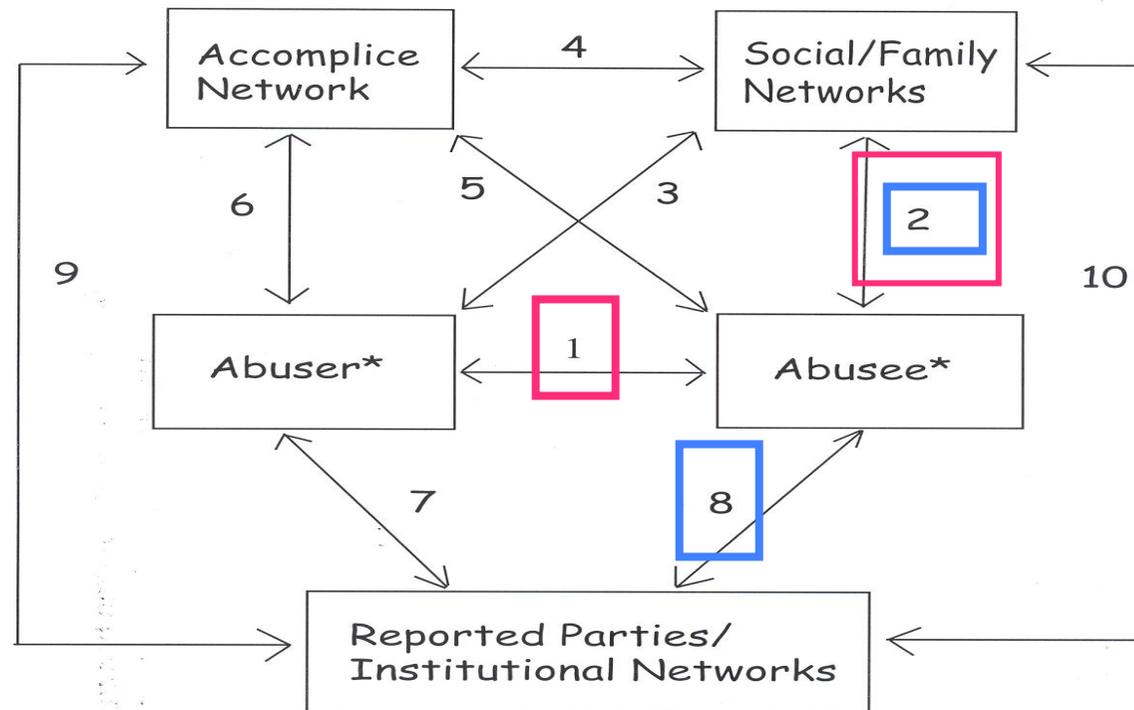


## Calling 911 for assistance....



- “I am sorry, but someone is trying to kill me and I don’t know what to do”
- “Nobody is going to listen to me”
- “This is real”
- “Really, I’ m not kidding”
- “I am not just making this up”
- “I am not kidding this is real”
- “They are not going to believe me when they come out”
- “They are not going to find anything; they are going to think I am crazy”

Our focus is on the *communicative* parameters which give rise to these outcomes



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Figure 1. The communication pathways model of elder abuse and neglect

## Future research needs to discover the communicative dynamics leading to such abuses and their consequences

- Research into intergenerational communication may help untangle some of the processes involved and also help uncover communicative role of the abusee
- **Model of over- and under-accommodations in intergenerational communication (Giles & Gasiorek, 2011)**

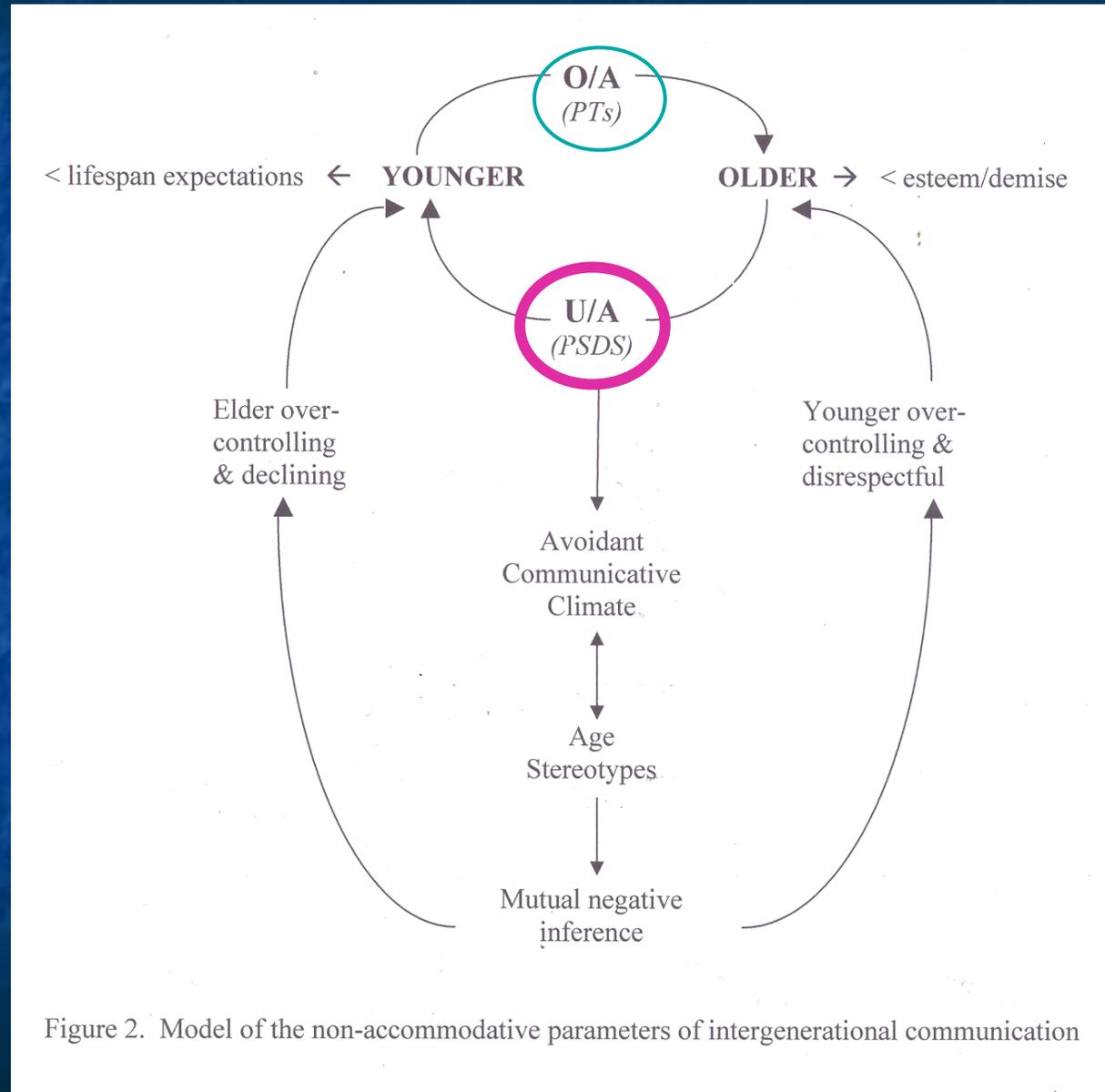


Figure 2. Model of the non-accommodative parameters of intergenerational communication

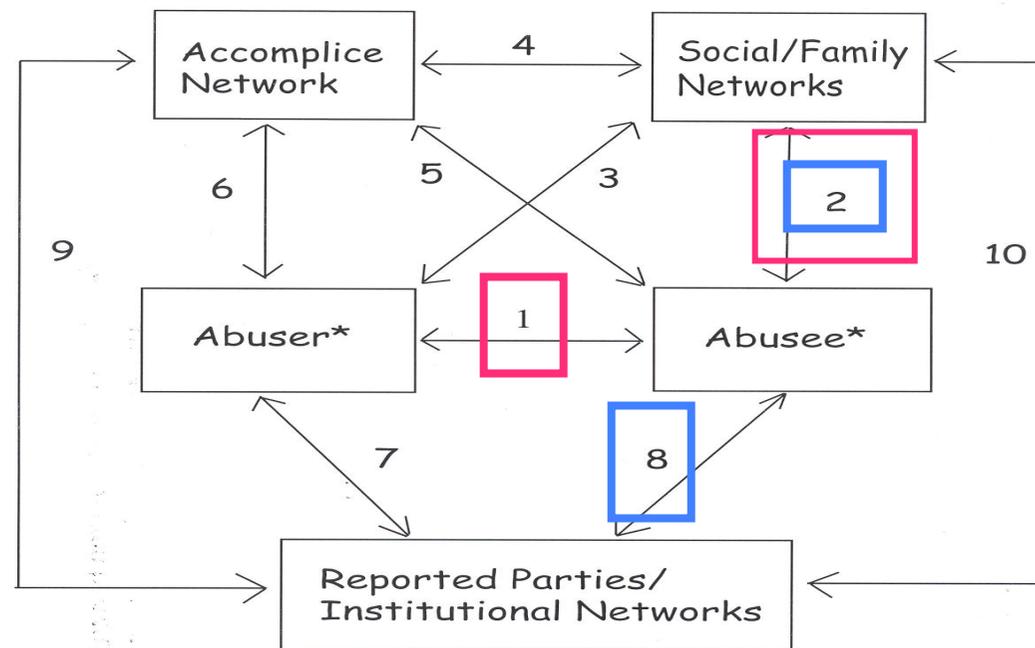
**While this model charts the impacts of U- & O/A on each age group separately, it doesn't indicate the effects on the other. For instance, elders' assertiveness and nonaccommodativeness...**



# THE CYCLE OF CONFRONTATION AND ABUSE *(after Bugental's research on child abuse)*

- **CAREGIVER' S PERCEPTIONS OF ELDER**  
***NONACCOMMODATIVENESS***  
(e.g., complaining, not listening, anti-youth, egocentric)
  - +
- **CAREGIVER RECEIVES ELDER VERBAL ABUSE**
  - +
- **ELDER APPEARS OVERLY-DEMANDING OF ATTENTION & CARE**
  -
- **CAREGIVER FEELINGS OF ANXIETY, RESENTMENT, &**  
***POWERLESSNESS***  
(esp. if already ageist, highly dependent, and substance-abuser)
  -
- **NONFLUENT, AMBIGUOUS, PATRONIZING MESSAGES**
  -
- **ELDER BECOMES NONRESPONSIVE AND SELF-ATTRIBUTES INCOMPETENCE**
  -
- **CAREGIVER' S COERCIVE & ABUSIVE RESPONSE STYLE**

Besides testing the prior model, talking to other links below time today has not permitted, as well as specifying other communication pathways, our aim has been to stimulate interest in the **communicative** dynamics of elder abuse and neglect



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