

## The power relations based on statutes : a theoretical perspective to study elder abuse

Marie-Ève Bédard, *M.A., Ph. D. student in gerontology, Sherbrooke University. Fellow Research Fund of Quebec, Society and Culture. Research chair on mistreatment of older adults.*

Marie Beaulieu, *Ph.D. Professor Titular, Faculty of Humanities. Titular, Research chair on mistreatment of older adults, Sherbrooke University and Research Center on Aging CSSS-IUGS*

Éric Gagnon, *Ph.D. Researcher of establishment, CSSS de la Vieille-Capitale, Quebec, and Associate Professor, Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, Laval University.*

**Introduction :** To investigate the treatment of elder abuse situations by users committees in social and health care centers in Quebec, the theoretical perspective of power relations based on statutes is relevant, allowing deepening the adequacy of this instance in the protection of elder abuse.

**Purpose:** Presenting power relations based on statutes and their relations to research issues and the indicators to document their influences in the autonomy of users committees.

**Method:** 1) define the theoretical framework based on theories of elder abuse and critical gerontology. 2) Define power relations based on statutes, by using sociology of organizations, which has the formal power. 3) Identify similarities between power relations and elder abuse. 4) Define dimensions of power relations to document them in the treatment of elder abuse situations by the users committees and joint research issues. 5) Define indicators to assess their influence in the autonomy of users committees.

**Results :** Elder abuse in the social and health care centers result from the organization of care and services and the relations of dependance between older adults and professionals, who provide their care and services. However, power relations are unbalanced relational character, the person in a position of power having more resources than the «lower one», which is in a situation of dependency. Power relations are related to elder abuse situations because of their relational dimension, position of power and effects on laying actions or lack thereof. These power relations are documented by: actors and the nature of the relation, the situation and the surrounding context, the stakes valued and objectives of actors, their leeway, their strategies and desired improvements to the actions of users committees for counteract. They are considered in the causes or sources of elder abuse situations brought to the attention of users committees, in what of the users committees do to defend the rights of users and in the improvement of their actions in this defense.

**Conclusion :** The power relations limit users committees in defending the rights of users and influence their autonomy, such as ability to hear the voices of users at institutional leaders.