

was very active in the church through her church group. The social worker said she'd never thought of any of those things, because it wasn't spousal assault, it was elder abuse."²⁹

The question was frequently asked: Why does a person abuse and why does a person tolerate such abuse? The answers from witnesses revealed that the reasons underlying either situation reflect the multi-factorial nature of abuse of the elderly. No single cause has been isolated; no single theory has provided the explanation for all or even a majority of elder abuse cases. Instead, witnesses talked about predisposing factors, about causal indicators, about the interaction of several contributing factors.

Berdie Darrah of One Voice included several factors. She suggested: "the cycle of family violence" that does not end after a certain age. Thus, a family that has solved problems through aggressive behaviour will continue this behaviour as a lifelong pattern. She mentioned "aging dependent children" and the fact that "the pathological behaviour of the problem child has far more reaching consequences on a frail elderly parent, usually a mother. She also pointed to the "negative attitudes of society" toward the elderly.³⁰

Podnieks of the Ryerson School of Nursing told the Committee of three basic theories of abuse: the **environmental framework** that views present situations and social conditions as being the main causes of abusive behaviour; the **pathological framework** that views abusive behaviour as being determined solely by the personal or pathological problems of the abuser; and the **developmental framework** that views domestic violence as a learned behaviour which is passed on from generation to generation through established behaviour patterns.³¹

Some witnesses talked about what are sometimes referred to in the literature as "motivating" factors, the most common one being "the abuse of power based on the relative strengths of offender and victim - strengths that may reflect differences in

²⁹ Wahl, 5:20

³⁰ Darrah, 2:8.

³¹ Podnieks, Presentation to Sub-Committee, Overhead IIIg, February 16, 1993.