When referencing this study guide, please use the following citation:

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Introduction

This guide has been developed to assist social work educators and students in using films from the CSWE film festivals in their classrooms. It is one in a series of CSWE curriculum resources designed to enhance the teaching and learning of social work concepts.

We welcome your comments as the library of these resources is refined and expanded.

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Overview: Last Will and Embezzlement

Film Information

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<th>Title: Last Will and Embezzlement</th>
<th>Producer: Starjack Entertainment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date: 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Running Time: 23 minutes</td>
<td>Distributor: Terra Nova Films, terranova.org</td>
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Context: Financial elder abuse is defined and exposed in this film using personal accounts. Experts and advocates also are interviewed to provide a rich education and foundation for discussion.

Themes:
1. Financial Vulnerability of the Elderly
2. Individual Rights vs. Cognitive Capacity
3. Aging Care
4. Policy Practice and Ethics
5. Social Research Methods

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<td>Vulnerabilities, Dementia, Depression, Cognitive Impairment, Language Difficulties</td>
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<td>“Do we … make people vulnerable and frail based simply on a benchmark of age?”</td>
<td>Policy, Retirement Age</td>
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Topics

**Elder Exploitation**

**Central Quote:** “He was taking care of himself.”

**Themes:** Definition of the Problem, Exemplar of Abuse

**Abstract:** Actor Mickey Rooney offers his story and an impassioned case for increased legal protection for elders in America. Elder exploitation is defined with this story as well as information from experts. Both approaches serve as an introduction to the problem of financial abuse of the elderly.

**Learning Objectives**

1. Define financial elder abuse.
2. Explore the characteristic profile of the elder in America.
3. Consider that elders of all economic levels are at risk.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What factors have contributed to the increase in the elderly population?
2. Do you think that increases in the elder population warrant new legislative protections?
3. Identify multiple types of elder abuse. Do you think that some types are more prevalent than other types?

**Suggested Readings**


Exploit Vulnerabilities

Central Quote: “They infuse themselves…”

Themes: Vulnerabilities, Dementia, Depression, Cognitive Impairment, Language Difficulties

Abstract: Growing old exposes some vulnerabilities that may be exploited by less than genuine individuals. Many of these vulnerabilities are highlighted. A solid expression of the variability and assessment of dementia is presented.

Learning Objectives
1. List vulnerabilities that may be experienced by elders as they grow older.
2. Define dementia and identify some assessment challenges associated with dementia.
3. Outline how a person with sinister intent may “infuse” themselves into life of an elder.

Discussion Questions
1. What are the difficulties in assessing and protecting elders based on vulnerabilities? (i.e., difficulty in identifying cognitive impairment and framing the conversation that asks an elder to submit to additional help).
2. Identify vulnerability. Outline how a person with sinister intent may exploit this vulnerability to prey on an elder.
3. Brainstorm ways to distinguish an appropriate relationship between a younger person and an elder.
4. List ways, based on vulnerabilities, that elders and their assets may be protected.

Suggested Readings


Policy Adjustments

Central Quote: “Do we … make people vulnerable and frail based simply on a benchmark of age?”

Themes: Policy, Retirement Age

Abstract: A discussion of policy begins with a general overview of the history of retirement age in the United States. The challenges of elder protection are framed from a policy perspective. This section sets the stage for a discussion of policy options.

Learning Objectives
1. Trace the history of “retirement” and the “senior” designation in the United States.
2. Consider the social context in which the designations of retirement age were made in the United States.

Discussion Questions
1. What social realities support an increase in the retirement age?
2. What biological realities support a rethinking of retirement and the “senior” designation?
3. What legal protections can a family institute to ensure that family assets are protected?

Suggested Readings


Practice: Rights vs. Diminished Capacity

Central Quote: “In this country, we have the right to make bad decisions.”

Themes: Self-Determination, Cognitive Capacity, Undue Influence

Abstract: This section constrains the discussion of policy options by emphasizing elders’ rights. General self-determination is emphasized. Legal considerations of exploitation cases are discussed.

Learning Objectives
1. Identify the legal considerations involved in a determination of wrongdoing in exploitation of an elder.
2. Debate the pros and cons of the rights of elders as they age.
3. Compose policy to ensure the health and well-being of elders.

Discussion Questions
1. If you had to, what would you present as evidence of your cognitive capacity?
2. Pretend that you are a policy maker in a state legislature. Craft a policy that protects the elder from undue influence and includes language that protects the elder’s right to self-determination. What are the difficulties you encounter while attempting to honor self-determination and protect elders?
3. Share your draft policy with other classmates. Attempt to discover ways that the policy may be misused and fail on one of its provisions. Offer suggestions that may make the policy more solid.

Suggested Readings


Underreporting

Central Quote: “We don’t know...”

Themes: Embarrassment, Lack of Awareness, Fear of Losing Connectedness, Ageism

Abstract: This section ponders the reasons why experts consider instances of elder abuse to be underreported. It proposes some reasons and engages hypotheses.

Learning Objectives
1. List possible reasons why elder abuse may go unreported.
2. Brainstorm ways to assess the level of elder abuse in the United States.
3. Create an elder abuse awareness campaign utilizing social media.

Discussion Questions
1. With a group of peers, choose your best idea and work out a research plan for implementing your best idea. How would you maintain the data you collect?
2. Create an elder abuse awareness campaign. How could you encourage elders to report abuse without endangering themselves?
3. How would you monitor abuse of elders who have diminished cognitive capacity?

Suggested Readings
