

# Developing a profile of disablist hate crime offenders

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- Exploring the profile of perpetrators and victims
- Understanding the situated actions and reactions of perpetrators and their victims and identifying patterns
- Constructions of exploitation and dehumanisation in disablist hate crime
- Patterns of escalation of harm and abuse
- Processes involved in targeting disabled people and offender motivations
- Criminal justice responses: opportunities for recognising, preventing, and interrupting disablist hate crimes

- Combined data sets from PhD studies (n=156)
- Grounded Theory analysis of disablist hate incidents and crimes-cases from police files, safeguarding practitioner accounts, Serious Case Reviews, Independent Office for Police Conduct Inquiries, and media reports (see Houghton & Muller, 2025)
- Mixed methods study analysing victim data-survey self reports, focus groups, interviews with disabled people and key informants. (see Healy, 2018)
- Focused on victim and perpetrator characteristics, relationship, location of offence/s, repetition or incidental event, police involvement, potential alignment to McDevitt et al.'s (2002) typology, and any other relevant evidence from the case itself

## Four dominant themes identified:

- i) the situated actions and reactions occurring between victims and perpetrators;
- ii) constructions of exploitation and dehumanisation explicit in disablist offending;
- iii) distinctive patterns of escalation of harm and abuse;
- iv) the processes involved in the targeting of disabled people, and potential underlying motivations

(see Houghton & Healy, 2025)

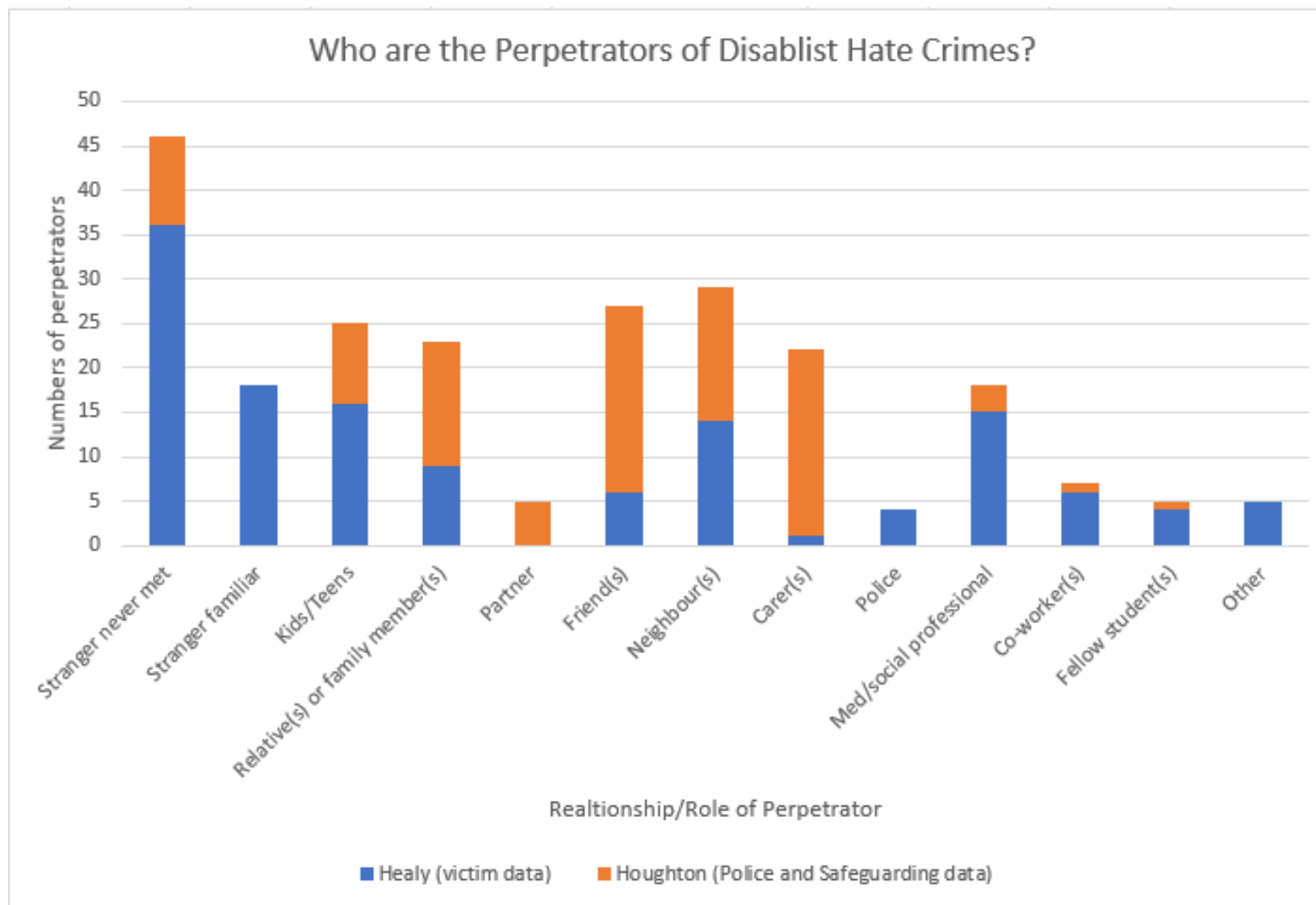


Table 1: Combined Disablist Hate Crime Data  
(n=156)

# Perpetrator-victim relationships

Relationship	Role	Police/safeguarding data	Victim data	Combined
No relation	Strangers			19.7%
	Familiar (known) strangers			7.7%
total		10%	64.3%	27.4%
Wider circle	Neighbours			12.4%
	Local youths			10.7%
	Friends	21%	10.7%	11.5%
	Co-workers			3%
	Fellow students			2.1%
total				28.2%
Inner circle/power over	Partners			2.1%
	Relatives/family			9.8%
	Carers	21%	1.8%	9.4%
	Medical/social care professionals	3%	26.8%	7.7%
	Police			1.7%
total				42.2%
Other	Govt./transport employees			2.1%

Table 2: Perpetrator and victim relationships

# Understanding the situated actions and reactions of perpetrators and their victims

Three types of interactions: intimidation, exploitation, brutalisation

- Most incidents of intimidation happen in public spaces
- Exploitation almost always in private spaces (including care facilities)
- Brutalisation almost always in victim's home (cuckooing) but also, rarely, in perpetrators home

Differences in perpetrator profiles across types of interaction

- Most in relationships; but strangers more commonly involved in intimidation

Repeated (structural) victimisation most commonly relational

- Exploitation-mostly male (sexual exploitation)
- Almost all known to victim
- Brutalisation-all known to victim

# Constructions of exploitation and dehumanisation in DHC

Dehumanising behaviour of perpetrators

- Seen in brief isolated incidents and sustained victimisation
- Seen as result of, and precursor to, later stages in process of disablist targeting
- In public (on the streets) and in private (care and private homes)

Dangers of dehumanising behaviour highlighted by Wolfensberger (2002)

- Groups in society are devalued-leads to a series of wounding experiences: segregation, distancing, congregation, scapegoating, othering, being seen as less than human.
- Leads to experiences of “brutalisation, killing thoughts and deathmaking” (2002, p.11)

Disablist hate crime can be seen as part of and consequence of this process

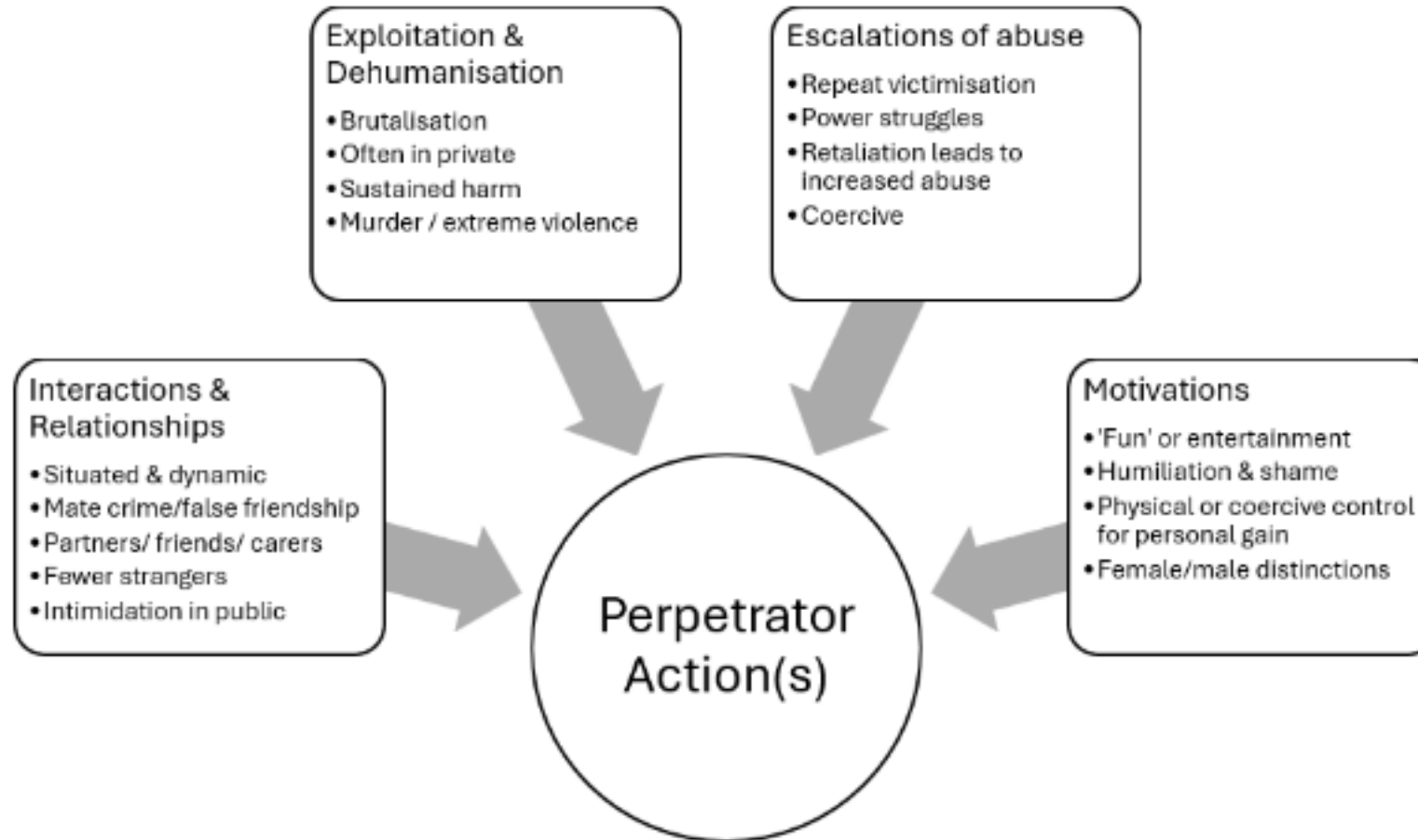
- When perpetrator no longer sees individual as human, more likely to brutalise: imprisonment, rape, torture, assault, neglect
- And justify use of extreme and sustained violence (common in murders of disabled people)



## Escalating abuse

- Victim may retaliate, report-seek help, endure
- Victim may retaliate and/or seek help-but this can increase violence and control
- Power struggles between perpetrator and victim to keep control (in public and private)
- Many victims endure the abuse-value the relationship, feel have no choice, fear making things worse

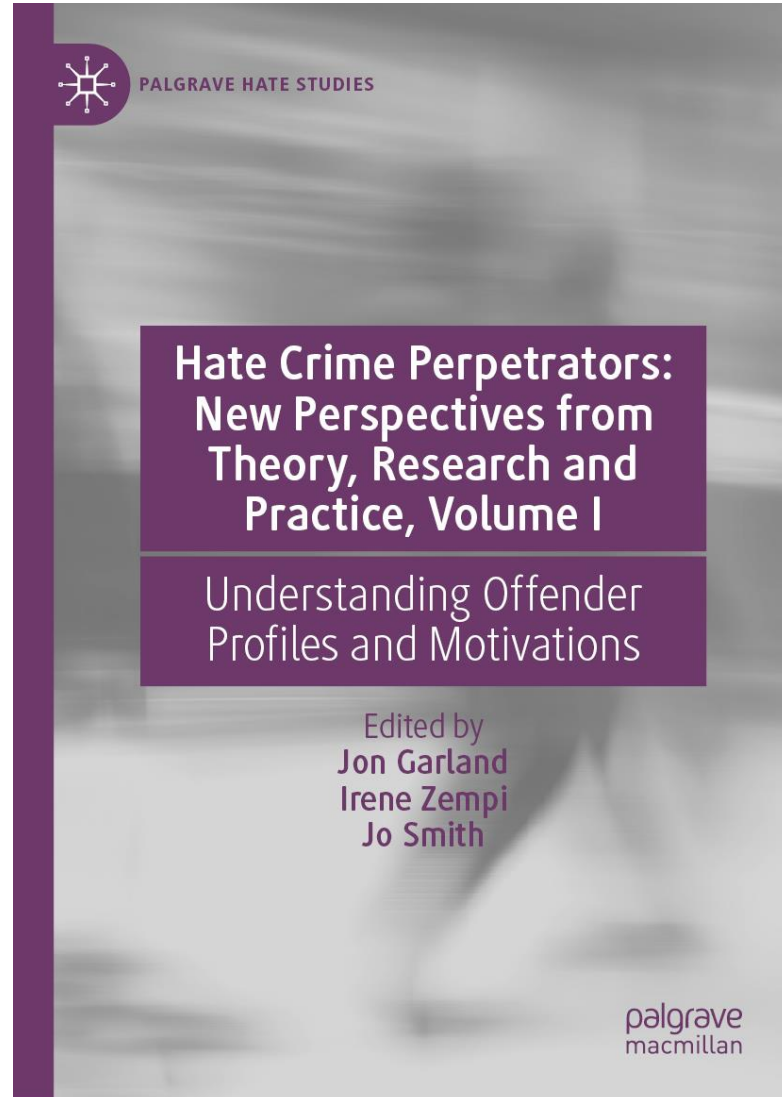
# Framework for conceptualising disablist hate crime



# Criminal justice responses: recognising, preventing, and interrupting

- Patterns identified-most perpetrators known to victims in police and safeguarding data, but self reports by victims describe targeting by strangers or family members
- Disablist hate crime is a dynamic process-othering, a target for intimidation, exploitation, and brutalisation
- Targeting may involve direct subjugation, grooming and gaslighting of victim
- Victim may resist which often leads to increased threat, coercion, or violence.
- Overlapping categories-leads to complex map of process
- Dehumanisation starts with intimidation and exploitation; exploitation starts with intimidation; sexual violence and abuse can happen at same time as other forms of targeted violence.
- Important to acknowledge diversity within groups and intersectionality of victims
- Different perpetrators carry out different types of abuse. Often motivated by more than one impulse
- These motivations are difficult to identify
- But suggest all cases motivated because person was (or was perceived to be) disabled

## Read more about it...



- Coming in August 2025:
- Houghton, V. & Healy, J.C. 2025. Towards a new typology of disablist hate crime offenders; a contextual analysis, in Garland, J., Zempi, I. & Smith, J. (Eds) *Hate Crime Perpetrators: New Perspectives from Theory, Research and Practice*. London: Palgrave

Healy, J. (2018) On the periphery of hate crime: disability at the intersections of marginalisation, vulnerability and difference. PhD thesis, Middlesex University.

Houghton, V. & Healy, J. (2025), in Hate Crime Perpetrators: New Perspectives from Theory, Research and Practice". Editors: Professor Jon Garland, Associate Professor Irene Zempi and Dr Jo Smith. Publisher: Palgrave, Volume I.

Houghton, V. & Muller, T. (2025), 'I Feel Persecuted. It's So Distressing and Upsetting, It Is All Too Much'. A Disablist Hate Crime Typology: Intimidation, Exploitation and Brutalization, *The British Journal of Criminology*, azaf014, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azaf014>

McDevitt, J., Levin, J. & Bennett, S. (2002) Hate Crime Offenders: An Expanded Typology. *Journal of Social Issues* 58(2), pp.303-317

Wolfensberger, W. (2002). The new genocide of handicapped and afflicted people (3rd ed.). Syracuse, NY: Author.