

# Abuse of older people research symposium: Panel 2 – Inequities and intersectional identities

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New Zealand  
Family Violence  
Clearinghouse

**3 September 2024**



# Abuse of older people symposium



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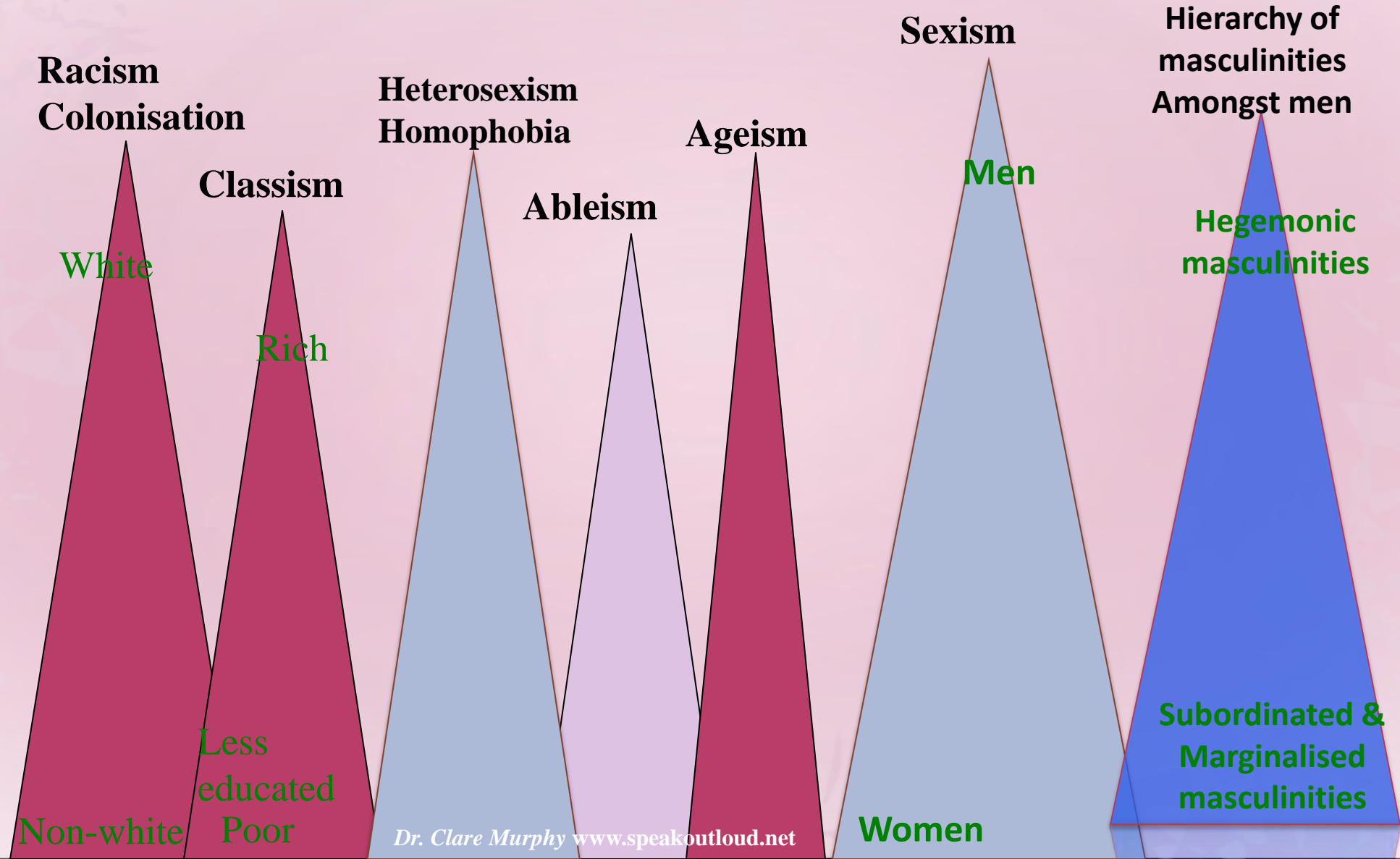


# As you know, family/sexual violence is about power imbalances.

- ☀ Gender inequity. “The predominant pattern is one of male violence directed at a female partner...”\*
- ☀ Colonisation
- ☀ Racism
- ☀ Ableism
- ☀ Ageism
- ☀ Homophobia...



# Multiple Social hierarchies, diversity and difference



# Who abuses disabled people and older people?

- The same people who are identified in the family violence legislation – partners, siblings, parents, wider family
- New legislation – carers – paid or unpaid
- But also – people who work in health, social service and education (social workers, doctors, nurses, therapists, teachers, care takers), landlords, people in residential situations of all kinds (residents and staff), neighbours, employers, employees, civil society, people in faith communities, taxi drivers, janitors, business people, interpreters, random people in the street.....

# Violence is the same – but also different....

- Physical, emotional, financial, sexual and coercive violence
- Bullying and harassment
- Neglect and deliberate abuse
- Threats to withdraw care or institutionalise people
- Abuse of substituted decision making
- Institutional abuse including restraint, exclusion and solitary confinement
- Controlling, including harmful institutional practices
- Isolating
- Harmful discriminatory practices
- Not letting a person be alone with a health or other professional

# ANOMIC ABUSE: A CRITICAL CHALLENGE FOR AGEING MIGRANTS IN AOTEAROA

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## **Objective:**

To discuss the concept of 'anomic abuse', its characteristics, and the policy and practice implications.

## **Conclusion:**

Recognising anomic abuse as a critical, often overlooked form of elder mistreatment in migrant communities is urgent. This phenomenon, shaped by structural inequalities and cultural dissonance, requires a multifaceted, intersectional approach. Addressing it demands innovative, culturally responsive strategies that consider both family dynamics and broader societal factors. Enhanced community engagement and support networks are crucial. Ongoing research, policy development must navigate the complex interplay between intimate family issues and wider societal challenges facing ageing migrants in Aotearoa and beyond.

# DEFINITION AND CAUSES

## **Definition:**

- Anomic abuse refers to elder mistreatment arising from the breakdown of traditional norms, especially filial piety, leading to intergenerational conflict and social instability
- The term draws from the concept of ‘intersectional’ anomie, indicating a state of normlessness that occurs at the intersection of multiple social identities and cultural contexts

## **Causes:**

- Intersecting factors of cultural dissonance, socioeconomic pressures, and individual identities, coupled with complex adaptation processes affected by age, gender, education, and migration history
- Multifaceted social isolation stemming from language barriers, cultural differences, technological gaps, and ageism (lack of respect for older migrants) in the host society
- Shifting family dynamics influenced by intergenerational acculturation/transnationality differences
- Structural inequalities and systemic barriers faced by migrant communities - Lack of community oversight such as absence of extended family and neighbors who traditionally played a role in abuse prevention in the home country



# CHARACTERISTICS, CULTURAL CONTEXT

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## Key Characteristics:

- **Financial exploitation** (pressuring elders to transfer assets, misuse of their resources), **neglect and emotional abuse** (ignoring older adults' material and emotional needs), **social isolation** (disconnection from family, loss of social networks), **lack of community oversight** (absence of extended family and community members who traditionally played a protective role), **intersectional vulnerability** (abuse risk heightened by the intersection of age, ethnicity, gender, and migrant status)

## Cultural Context:

- Particularly evident in migrant communities where traditional values of filial piety clash with the individualistic norms and expectations of the host country
- Exacerbated by the loss of traditional community structures that provided informal social control and support, as well as transnational family arrangements
- Reflects complex interplay between cultural adaptation, economic pressures, and changing family dynamics, along with intersecting factors such as cultural background, migration history, socioeconomic status, and individual circumstances

# POLICY IMPLICATIONS

## Policy Implications:

- Urgently recognise anomic abuse as a **critical, yet often overlooked, form of family-based elder mistreatment** shaped by the broader structural inequalities and cultural dissonance facing migrant communities
- **Intersectional approach** needed to address the complex nature of anomic abuse, requiring **culturally sensitive and community-specific strategies** for prevention and intervention
- Emphasis on **rebuilding community support structures** within migrant populations as **cross-sector collaboration** necessary, involving social services, healthcare, legal systems, and community organisations
- **Targeted policies** needed to address **social isolation** and promote community integration in **multicultural, transnational contexts**

## References

- Park, H.-J. (2023). Enduring Filiality and Anomic Abuse: An Interconnected Analysis of Intergenerational Relationships among Korean Families in New Zealand. Hankyung Publishing.
- Park, H.-J., Morgan, T., Wiles, J., & Gott, M. (2019). Lonely ageing in a foreign land: Social isolation and loneliness among older Asian migrants in New Zealand. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 27(3), 740-747.
- Park, H.-J. (2016). Ageing in anomie: Later-life migration and its implications for anti-anomic social work practice. *International Social Work*, 59(6), 915-921.

# Sandra Dickson

## Hohou te Rongo Kahukura





**2 out of 3**

trans and non-binary elders have been treated badly because they are trans (67%)



**4 out of 5**

elders living with HIV have been treated badly because of their HIV status (83%)

**Uplifting  
Takatāpui  
& Rainbow  
Elder Voices**

Tukua kia tū takitahi ngā  
whetū o te rangi

Hohou Te Rongo  
**Kahukura**  
Outing Violence



**3 out of 4**

Takatāpui and Rainbow elders have been treated badly because of their sexuality (74%)



**Half**

of Māori, Pasifika and ethnic elders have been treated badly because of their race/ethnicity (47%)

**“When persons find themselves at the intersection of older age and being LGBT, they face a compounded situation that leads to an increased risk of heightened discrimination, social exclusion, and violence.”**

*United Nations Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by Older Persons, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and the United Nations Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, 27 October 2023*



**Human rights of older LGBT persons**

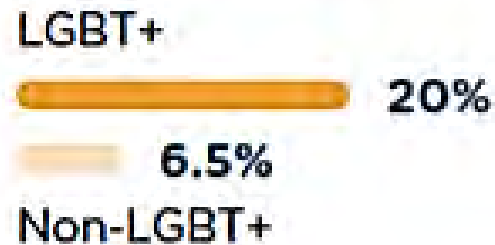
## LGBT+ people are...

↑ much more likely



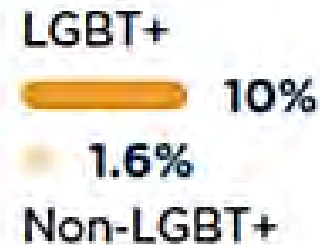
### Interpersonal violence

**3.1 times as likely** to experience interpersonal violence.



### Sexual assault

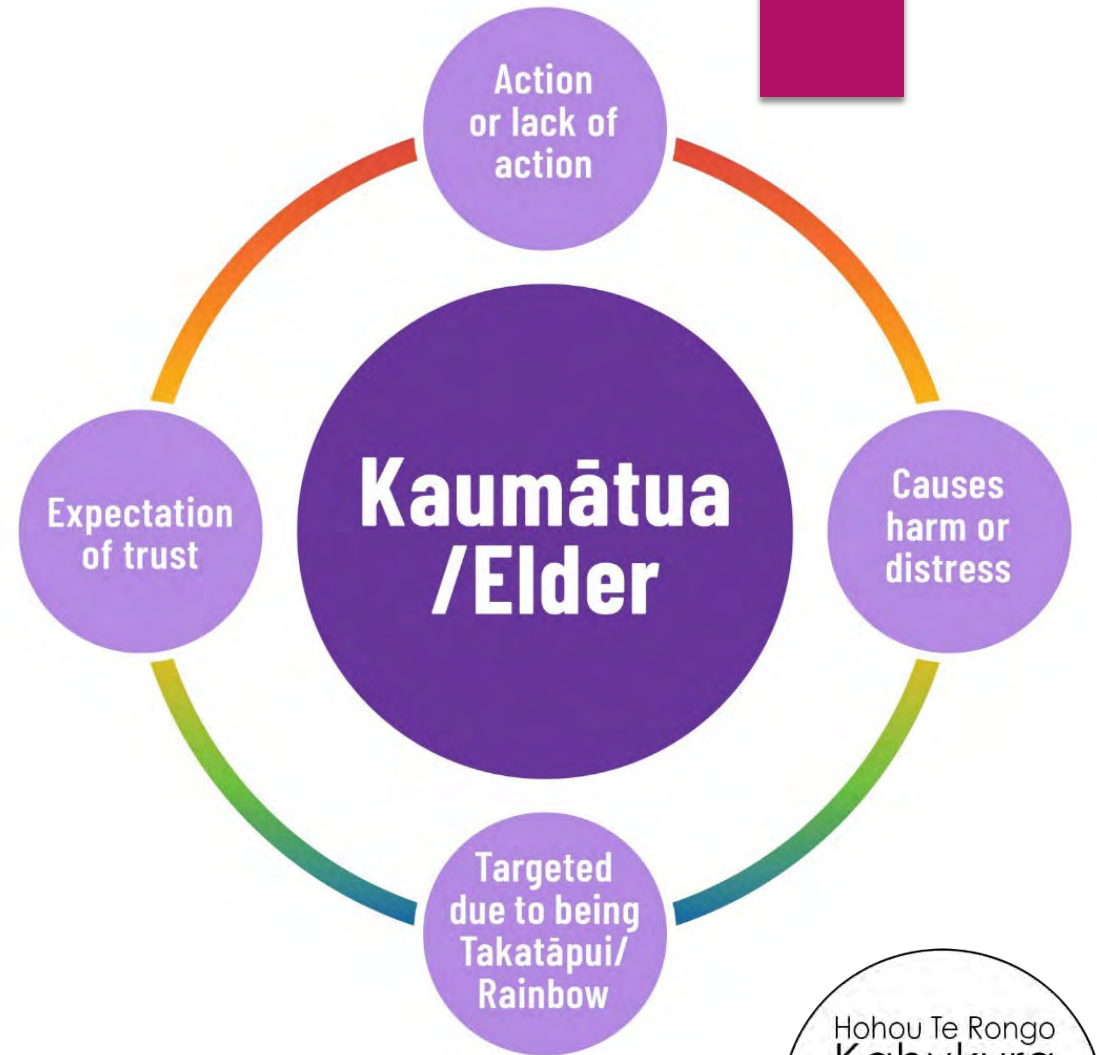
**6.3 times as likely** to experience sexual assault.



# Elder abuse is:

- ▶ a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action
- ▶ occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust
- ▶ which causes harm or distress to an older person.

This includes policies or practices which cause harm or disregard the rights of an older person.



# Workshop 2

- What barriers do you see in the work that you do?
- What changes are needed to address these barriers in systems, services, workforce, programmes?

