

Queer in the Prison?: What Does it Mean to Be 'Out' Inside?

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Abstract

There is growing criminological interest in marginalised genders and sexualities, and a developing literature exploring the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) prisoners. However, these nascent and interconnected fields of study are notably underdeveloped in the UK. Little is known about gender and sexuality orders in British prisons, and the experiences of LGBT people therein.

This thesis seeks to address these gaps through presenting and analysing rich, qualitative data. It draws on formal interviews with 60 prisoners and staff across one men's and one women's establishment, the analysis of relevant documents at these prisons, written correspondence with 67 prisoners, and 7 interviews with related professionals. Methodologically, this thesis provides insights into gathering data and upholding research ethics when researching LGBT inmates, and offers a detailed exploration of LGBT researcher positionality – a topic almost absent from British criminology.

This thesis emphasises the need for British prisons scholars to abandon the idea that men's establishments hold all, and exclusively, male prisoners, while female establishments hold all, and exclusively, female prisoners. Prisoners with minoritised genders are not always easily discernable, sometimes actively concealing their identities, and at other times hidden by cisnormative assumptions. Likewise, some sexual minorities are more visible than others. Examining how prisoners construct and communicate gender and sexuality, this thesis demonstrates that being in prison can lead to shifts in identity through encountering different labels and entering same-sex relationships for the first time. The nature of romantic and/or sexual relationships, and staff responses to them, are explored in depth. Furthermore, this thesis demonstrates how broader horizontal relationships between prisoners, and vertical relationships with staff, affect how prisoners understand and present their gender and sexuality. It documents staff and prisoners' support and subjugation of people who identify as, or are presumed to be, LGBT, and the active responses of prisoners to discrimination. Concluding by presenting its limitations, the thesis suggests avenues for much-needed future research.

Table of Contents

Table of Cases	9
Introduction – Setting the Scene	10
LGBT-Friendly Britain?.....	11
Legal and Social Equality	12
Thesis Overview	22
Chapter 1: Gender and Sexuality in the Prison	27
Introduction	27
Gender and Sexuality	28
Sex and Gender	28
Sexuality	31
Queer Criminology	32
Revisiting the Origins of Criminology	32
Later Inattention Towards Gender and Sexual Minorities	33
Gender and Sexual Minorities as Victims	36
The Scope of Queer Criminology	37
Gender and the Prison	44
Including (Cis) Women	44
The Masculine Turn	45
Prison Masculinities.....	47
Uncoupling Masculinity and Men.....	51
The Punishment of Female Masculinity	52
The Sex/Gender Segregation of Prisons	53
Troubling the Gender Binary	55
Transgender Prisoners – a Risky and At-Risk Population	56
Sexuality and the Prison.....	61
Punishing Sexual Non-Conformity	62
Coercive sex.....	63
Consensual Relationships in Prison	64
Situational and Constitutional Homosexuality	65
LGBT People in Prison	71
Chapter 2: The British Context and Prison Studies.....	72
Introduction.....	72
Literature on Gender and Sexual Minorities in Prison.....	73
Bullying/Discrimination	74
Hiding Identity/Coming out.....	76
Sexual Relationships and Public Displays of Affection	77
Coercive Sex	79
Housing.....	81
Healthcare	83
Access to Appropriate Resources	86
Support.....	88
Prison Studies Literature	91
Pains of Imprisonment and Coping Mechanisms	92

Legitimacy, Power and Resistance	93
Staff Roles and Culture	95
Prisoner Subcultures and Social Relations	97
Prisoners' Identities.....	98
Conclusion	99
Chapter 3: Methods	100
Introduction	100
Access	101
Men's prison.....	104
Women's prison	106
Community Stakeholders	110
Advertising Behind Bars	110
Letters as a Method	113
Data Analysis	122
Data Processing	122
Data Analysis	125
Data Presentation.....	125
Positionality	126
A Bi-directional Influence	128
Identity in the Field	129
Ethics	142
Trying to Avoid Causing Harm	142
Beneficence	156
Relationship Boundaries.....	165
Keeping Safe	171
Reporting Findings.....	178
Conclusion	182
Chapter 4: Being LGBT Behind Bars	184
Introduction	184
Identifying LGBT inmates	184
Number of LGBT prisoners	184
Discerning Sexuality and Gender.....	190
Hiding Identity, Coming Out to Self and Others	212
Coming Out to Self or Others for the First Time.....	212
Difficulties Understanding and Disclosing Identity.....	216
Hiding Identity	225
Degrees of Visibility	229
Difficulties Concealing Identity.....	230
Authenticity and Exaggeration	232
Bullying	235
Fear of bullying	235
Attitudes towards LGBT prisoners.....	239
Bullying	246
Avoidance and Resistance to Bullying	254
Conclusion	263
Chapter 5: Institutional Responses to LGBT inmates.....	265

Healthcare	265
Housing.....	268
Cisnormative/Heteronormative Environment	274
Accusations.....	274
Misgendering.....	276
Access to Appropriate Resources and Treatment	278
Available Support.....	285
Peer Representatives and Support.....	285
Equality groups.....	291
Visible Institutional Support for LGBT Rights	298
Staff	310
Submitting Complaints	322
Tackling Queerphobia	328
Understanding the Institutional Barriers to Support.....	333
Training.....	333
Resources	337
A Lack of Confidentiality.....	339
Healthy Suspicion	341
Balancing Different Groups' Needs	343
Conclusion	344
Chapter 6: Relationships In Prison.....	347
Introduction.....	347
The Nature of Relationships in Prison.....	348
Prevalence	348
Types of Relationship – Sexual and Romantic	349
Gay for the Stay.....	350
Relationship Hierarchies.....	360
Degrees of Visibility.....	366
Problematic Behaviour and Relationships Causing Problems	370
Problematic Behaviour	370
Relationships Causing Problems for Prisoners	378
Conclusion	389
Chapter 7: Responding to Relationships.....	390
Introduction	390
Banning Relationships.....	391
Explaining the Ban.....	392
Attitudes Towards the Prohibition of Relationships	401
Allowing Relationships	410
Permitting Relationships, within Certain Parameters	411
Inconsistency in Practice	418
Relationship Provisions	430
Screening and Prevention	430
Education.....	432
Barriers to Support.....	438
Efforts at Safe Sex.....	441
Conclusion	442

Concluding Thoughts.....	443
Major Themes and Implications	443
Visibility	443
Cisnormativity	445
Relationships	446
Understanding identities	447
Implications for Prison Policies.....	448
Limitations and Avenues for Further Research	450
Concluding Statement	451
Bibliography	452

Table of Cases

R (on the application of Bright) v Secretary of State for Justice. [2015]. 1 WLR 723.
(Bright, 2015)

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Introduction – Setting the Scene

This thesis explores the experiences of LGBT people in prison¹. Academic, media and political interest in this group, particularly in transgender women in prison, is growing, however the criminological literature remains underdeveloped, particularly in the UK. This gap needs to be addressed, particularly given growing evidence that LGBT people are overrepresented in prisons and experience particular difficulties once there (Dennis, 2014, Lambie, 2011, Asquith et al., 2017, Wakefield & Spivak, 2018). This thesis makes a significant contribution through providing much-needed vivid, qualitative data, gained through interviews, letter correspondence, and document analysis.

This thesis provides important insights into how gender and sexuality are conceptualised and experienced in prison. It considers how LGBT prisoners navigate embodying and disclosing their minoritised gender and/or sexuality, and how staff and other inmates respond to them. It also demonstrates the relevance of gender and sexuality to cisgender and heterosexual prisoners, who might, for example, enter sexual relationships, or be victimised for gender non-conformity. This thesis expands the broader prison studies literature, which has overlooked the relevance of non-conforming genders and sexualities to prison life. It also contributes to the emerging field of queer criminology, which, although burgeoning in North America and Australia, is less established in the UK.

¹ I refer to 'prisoners' rather than 'people in prison' throughout the rest of the thesis for brevity.

This introduction summarises the social, political and legal landscape for LGBT people in the UK, including the key policies pertaining to sexuality and gender in prisons. It then provides an overview of the thesis.

LGBT-Friendly Britain?

Recent global gains in LGBT rights have been met with backlash. In the United States, Trump has sought to redefine sex and gender, ban transgender people from military service, and, particularly relevant, roll back gender-affirming housing policies for transgender prisoners. Hungary's president recently banned gender studies, and Brazil elected overtly homophobic Bolsonaro. Britain is one of the most progressive countries for LGBT rights, however, legislative equality is still relatively recent, and the laws of former colonies still reflect Britain's criminalisation of homosexual conduct (Han & O'Mahoney, 2014). Recent British efforts to improve legal recognition for transgender people, and to implement LGBT-inclusive sex and relationships education in schools, have induced vocal hostility. Closed off to public scrutiny, little is known about LGBT prisoners, and, notwithstanding media attention to the suicides and sexual assaults of transgender women in prison, their experiences are largely absent from public conversations on the state of LGBT equality. However, as the cliché goes, the state of our prisons says a great deal about the state of our society, and this thesis demonstrates the importance of considering LGBT experiences behind bars.

Legal and Social Equality

The offence of gross indecency was introduced in 1885, outlawing sexual relationships between men. Growing public concern regarding the imprisonment of people for consensual sex resulted in the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, which, in England and Wales, decriminalised sex between men, in private and for those aged 21 and above. This law did not signify a straightforward shift in the treatment of sexual minorities. In 1971 same-sex marriage was banned in England and Wales, and in 1988, Thatcher introduced 'Section 28', outlawing local authorities from "promoting" homosexuality or teaching 'of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship'. Section 28 was relatively short-lived - repealed in Scotland in 2000, and England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2003.

In recent decades, legislation has benefitted gender and sexual minorities. In 1997 same-sex partners gained legal recognition for immigration purposes, and in 2002 were granted equal adoption rights. In 2004, civil partnerships were introduced, and since 2013 same-sex couples can legally marry. The Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000 equalised the age of consent for same-sex partners, and officially acknowledged sexual relationships between women. In 2003 the privacy stipulation that applied only to same-sex acts was removed from legislation, and since 2012 men convicted of consensual sex have been able to remove this former offence from their criminal records.

Since 2000, sexual minorities have been allowed to serve openly in the army, and since 2003, LGB workers have had legal protections. 2007 legislation extended

protections on the basis of sexuality to the provision of goods and services, and the 2010 Equality Act extended protections to those who are, or are perceived as, transgender. In exceptional circumstances, and on a case-by-case basis, organisations can lawfully treat transgender people differently if needed as ‘a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim’. The Equality Act introduced a positive public sector duty to ‘eliminate discrimination, harassment [and] victimisation’, ‘advance equality of opportunity’, and ‘foster good relationships’ between groups with and without protected characteristics.

Since the 2004 Gender Recognition Act (GRA), transgender people can gain legal recognition of their gender through a gender recognition certificate (GRC). Applicants must be over 18, have a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria, have lived in their ‘acquired gender’ for at least two years, and intend to transition permanently. Transgender people can change their name and the gender marker on their passport, and other forms of identification, without a GRC. While groundbreaking at the time, the GRA is out-of-date, associating being transgender with mental illness, and failing to recognise non-binary and fluid genders (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018c). In 2018, the Government consulted on reforming the GRA.

One of the most significant remaining injustices is the treatment of LGBT asylum seekers. Eligibility for asylum on the grounds of sexuality or gender was introduced in 1999, however, up to 2010 asylum was routinely refused on the basis that LGBT people could hide their identity in their country of origin, and the government now questions the authenticity of asylum-seekers’ identity claims

(Raboin, 2017). Like prisoners, asylum seekers, as a marginalised group, are not central to public debates concerning LGBT equality.

In 2016, 2% of the UK population aged 16 and above identified as LGB - just over 1 million people (ONS, 2017). Young people are particularly likely to identify as LGB - 4.1% doing so, compared with only 0.7% of older people (Ibid.). Public Health England provides higher estimates of between 2.5% and 5.89%, and suggests that the actual rate will be higher still due to tendencies to misreport non-heterosexuality (Kampen, Fornasiero, Lee & Husk, 2017). The government 'tentatively estimate' that between 200,000 and 500,000 transgender people live in Britain (Government Equalities Office, 2018:1).

In recent decades there have been significant steps towards LGBT equality (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018d) and a sharp reduction in intolerance towards same-sex relationships (Clery, Curtice & Harding, 2017). According to the British Social Attitudes survey, the proportion of people believing that same-sex relationships are 'not wrong at all' has increased from 17% in 1983, to 47% in 2012 and 64% in 2017 (Ibid.:88). Attitudes towards transgender people have only recently been surveyed, and while 82% of people describe themselves as 'not prejudiced at all', only 43% and 41% of people respectively completely accept transgender people working as police officers and primary school teachers (Ibid.:97).

The past few years have seen a vocal backlash against transgender rights in the press and on social media platforms, including 'ludicrous claims' of people being

‘turned trans’ (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018c:5). The government’s 2018 GRA consultation served as a focal point for prejudice, and several organisations, including Transgender Trend, Fair Play for Women, Get the L Out, and A Women’s Place, have launched campaigns to roll back transgender rights. These groups present transgender women as men seeking access to single-sex spaces to sexually assault cisgender women. They construct transgender men as butch lesbians in denial, subject to transgender contagion (see, for example, Transgender Trend, 2017).

LGBT people remain underrepresented in several areas of public life. Openly gay and bisexual men are virtually absent from professional sport - Justin Fashanu remains the only openly gay professional footballer, and he died by suicide in 1998 after homophobic abuse. Non-heterosexual people have only served openly in parliament since 1997, though numbers are fast increasing. At the last general election, 45 openly LGB MPs were elected, constituting 6.9% of parliament, although we are yet to elect an openly transgender MP. Stonewall, the UK’s largest LGBT charity, was founded in 1989 but only became transgender-inclusive in 2015.

Although acceptance has increased, less than half of LGBT people are open about their identity with all family members, and bisexual, transgender, and non-binary people are particularly likely not to have ‘come out’ to any family at all (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018a). Roughly half of transgender people have felt compelled to conceal their gender at work and to change their gender presentation in public, and feel unable to use public toilets (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018c).

Discrimination towards bisexual and transgender people is a problem within the LGBT community (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018a).

People who seek gender-related medical interventions face significant barriers to treatment, with GPs often failing to understand their needs, and waiting times for gender identity clinics (GICs) far exceeding legal limits (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018c, WEC, 2016). 21% of LGBT people have experienced a hate crime in the past year – usually in the form of being ‘insulted, pestered, intimidated or harassed’ (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018d:10), and continuing discrimination means LGBT people experience worse physical and mental health (WEC, 2016, Bachmann & Gooch, 2018b). The LGBT community harbours high levels of distress – 31% of cisgender LGB people have considered suicide in the last year, as have 46% of transgender people (Ibid.).

British Prison Policies

Like almost all prison systems worldwide, British prisons are separated into male and female establishments – a cisnormative² arrangement. Female prisoners are not required to wear uniforms, while male inmates must wear them for their first two weeks in custody, and if placed on basic regime. PSI 07/2011 on ‘The Care and Management of Transsexual Prisoners’ enabled transgender women in men’s prisons, who proposed to live permanently as women, access to wear their own clothes, gender-affirming items and make-up, subject to certain provisos. In

² Cisnormativity is the ideological framework that perpetuates the idea that binary genders align neatly with binary sexes (Rodgers, Asquith and Dwyer, 2017).

‘exceptional circumstances’, they could be denied gender-affirming items on security grounds and makeup considered non-vital could be withdrawn as punishment.

PSI 07/2011 brought housing allocation policies in line with the GRA, such that transgender women with GRCs were housed in women’s prisons, unless a cisgender woman with a similar risk profile would also be housed in the male estate – an exceptional, and extremely-rarely used, provision. Transgender men could not be denied housing within the male estate based on their risk profile. ‘In most cases’ transgender people without a GRC were located according to the gender they were assigned at birth, although they could be housed in gender-appropriate prisons if considered ‘sufficiently advanced in the gender reassignment process’ (Ibid:15-16). Staff were prohibited from using searching to determine prisoners’ anatomies for allocation purposes.

PSI 17/2016 ‘The Care and Management of Transgender Offenders’ replaced PSI 07/2011. It is particularly progressive in acknowledging non-binary and gender-fluid prisoners, and extending them the rights to gender-affirming items (albeit, again subject to security restrictions). The new PSI improves housing allocation decisions for transgender men and women. As under the previous PSI, transgender prisoners with a GRC must be housed in the estate matching their legal gender, but there is a ‘more flexible approach’ to prisoners without a GRC, with clear criteria for providing ‘evidence’ of their gender (PSI 17/2016:5). The new PSI insists that prison allocation decisions are made quickly and involve the prisoner in questions.

Alongside the new PSI, the government released statistics documenting 70 transgender prisoners housed across 33 establishments between March and April 2016. The following year they recorded 125 transgender prisoners across 47 establishments. In their 2018 data collection, the government recorded 139 transgender prisoners across 44 establishments (MoJ, 2018a). The government acknowledges these statistics are an underestimate, excluding prisoners who have not declared their gender, not had a transgender case board (which are only intended for transgender men and women) or who held a GRC before imprisonment (MoJ, 2018a).

Until 2018, MoJ's statistics did not reveal how these prisoners identify, or their legal gender. Of the 139 transgender prisoners recorded between March and May 2018, 111 reported their legal gender as male, 23 as female, and 5 did not provide this information. Beyond legal gender, it is reported:

When asked about the gender with which the prisoner identified themselves, 114 identified as female, 19 as male and 6 did not provide a response. In terms of how they self-identified, 89 gave a response. 27 identified as gender-fluid, 10 as intersex, 4 as non-binary and the remaining 48 gave preferred not to say.

The information regarding transgender prisoners was provided by prison Equalities Representatives. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) have begun asking whether prisoners are transgender, and recorded 118 transgender people out of

6,667 questioned, equating to 1461 transgender prisoners across the estate, if proportional (Beckford, 2019). According to the Ministry of Justice's 2018 data, of the 88% of inmates who declared their sexuality, 97.3% identified as heterosexual and 2.7% as LGB or other (MoJ, 2018a). Meaningful comparisons with numbers of LGBT people in the community are difficult given data limitations in and outside prison.

Three policies regulate sexual diversity. PSI 32/2011 'Ensuring Equality' outlines prisons' responsibilities to 'eliminate discrimination' and 'promote equality and good relations'. The Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) scheme stipulates that prisoners must behave 'with decency at all times remembering prisons/cells are not private dwellings (this includes not engaging in sexual activity)' (PSI 30/2013:26). The 'Prisoner Discipline Procedures' further outline approaches to sexual relationships:

There is no Rule specifically prohibiting sexual acts between prisoners, but if they are observed by someone who finds (or could potentially find) their behaviour offensive, a charge...may be appropriate, particularly if the act occurred in a public or semi-public place... or if the prisoners were 'caught in the act' during a cell search. But if two prisoners sharing a cell are in a relationship and engage in sexual activity during the night when they have a reasonable expectation of privacy, a disciplinary charge may not be appropriate.

(PSI 47/2011:18).

PSI 47/2011 has been criticised as 'too vague' (Bright, 2015:para 18). No specific policy dictates whether relationships should be facilitated or restricted, and establishments have local discretion regarding their responses to relationships (Ibid.).

Policies regarding transgender prisoners changed during the course of my research. PSI 17/2016 came into force in January 2017, after the vast majority of my fieldwork. The government is now reviewing its policies in the wake of a transgender woman, Karen White, sexually assaulting two inmates while housed in a women's prison. White had previous rape convictions, which should have been considered in allocation decisions, but went overlooked (Beard, 2018). Following public backlash, several 'high-risk' transgender women have been returned to men's establishments (Gilligan, 2019), and three transgender women with GRCs are being housed on a dedicated unit at a women's establishment (Clifton, 2019).

Attitudes Towards LGBT Prisoners

The public is largely unsympathetic towards prisoners. Britain has become increasingly punitive since the 1990s (Newburn, 2007), and the media emphasises the extremes of prison life, presenting them simultaneously as 'holiday camps' and 'dangerous and violent places' (Marsh, 2009:370). When the first same-sex couple in prison married, a Ministry of Justice spokesperson commented that taxpayers would incur no costs and the couple would have separate cells (Thornton, 2015), indicating expectations of public hostility.

Transgender prisoners first properly entered the public consciousness in 2015 - in October the media reported that Tara Hudson was housed in a men's prison, and in November documented the self-inflicted deaths of Vikki Thompson and Joanne Latham in men's prisons. Over 150,000 people signed a successful

petition to transfer Tara Hudson to a women's prison. She had socially and physically transitioned several years prior to imprisonment, and Emerton (2018) explains that public sympathy is largely restricted to transgender women serving short sentences who transitioned in the community.

Media reports routinely misgender and deadname³ transgender prisoners, showing photos of them pre-transition, for example, see Joseph (2017) Evans (2018) and Davies (2018). Articles are frequent, often sensationalist, and at times, out-right fictitious – The Daily Star published a series of articles claiming that convicted murderer Ian Huntley had transitioned and was seeking transfer to a women's prison, claims now acknowledged as false (Butterworth, 2019).

Transgender women who transition during prison experience particular suspicion regarding their authenticity and motives, with suggestions they are violent and sexually predatory (Emerton, 2018). The website 'Trans Crime UK' (www.transcrimeuk.com) documents the convictions of transgender people, with a focus on transgender women's violence against women. Evidence that 60 out of the 125 transgender prisoners recorded by the MoJ were sex offenders has been used to legitimate the conflation of transgender women and rapists⁴.

³ 'Deadnaming' describes failing to respect a transgender person's declared name, and instead referring to them with the name they used pre-transition (Sinclair-Palm, 2017:5).

⁴ As noted above, the government's statistics record only a fraction of transgender prisoners. Furthermore, as explained in Chapter 4, sex offenders are more likely to come out as transgender due to serving long sentences and being housed in more stable and calm environments.

Alongside vocal campaigns against gender-appropriate housing for transgender women, other groups have criticised the government's recent moves away from allocation decisions that treat transgender women as women. The Trans Liberation Assembly protested outside the Ministry of Justice on International Women's Day, 2019, and the Empty Cages Collective and Community Action on Prison Expansion campaign have agitated against the imprisonment of transgender people. Female transgender prisoners are firmly on the public's radar, however there is very little recognition of transgender men and non-binary prisoners, or LGB inmates.

Thesis Overview

This thesis provides a broad examination of life behind bars for LGBT people in Britain. It considers questions of identity, including how prisoners come to understand, define and communicate their genders and sexualities. It explores LGBT prisoners' horizontal relationships with other inmates, in terms of sexual and romantic relations, bullying and peer support. It also considers institutional responses to LGBT inmates, explaining how they are identified, and their time in prison structured through policies and procedures regarding housing, healthcare, the provision of gender-affirming items, and responses to relationships and bullying. It explores efforts to ensure equality through support mechanisms like LGBT groups and prisoner representative schemes, the celebration of LGBT calendar events, and dedicated equality staff. This thesis highlights how the cisnormative and

heteronormative⁵ nature of British prisons affects how LGBT people understand and express their identities, and how staff respond to them.

Chapter One summarises the theoretical literature on gender and sexuality in prisons. I briefly explain gender and sexuality as concepts, before turning to the emerging discipline of 'queer criminology'. I then consider the prison masculinities literature, emphasising its cisnormative assumptions that men are always assigned male at birth, and that only men are masculine. I explain that prisons (re)produce binary understandings of sex and gender, which transgender and intersex prisoners subvert, and that transgender prisoners are constructed as both risky and at risk. Finally, I turn to the literature on coercive and consensual relationships, and engage with the concept of 'situational homosexuality'.

Chapter Two builds on this literature review by engaging with British publications on LGBT inmates, and considering their relevance to the prison studies literature. It begins by summarising British literature on queerphobic bullying, 'coming out', relationships, and coercive sex, before turning to the management of LGBT inmates in terms of housing, healthcare, gender-affirming items and sources of support. These issues are then contextualised with major themes from prison studies; the pains of imprisonment and coping mechanisms; legitimacy, power and resistance; staff roles and culture; prisoner subcultures and social relations and prisoners' identities.

⁵ Heteronormativity refers to 'formal and informal systems of cultural bias that favour heterosexuality' (Buist & Lenning, 2016:xvii).

The methods chapter comes next. I begin by discussing access, before explaining data collection, processing and analysis. I discuss positionality at length, explaining how being LGBT shaped both my choice of topic and the research process. I then thoroughly explore ethics, in terms of; trying to avoid causing harm and to support participants; maintaining appropriate boundaries; staying safe; and the presentation of findings.

The first data chapter explores the experiences of LGBT prisoners. It begins by considering the number of LGBT prisoners, and how other inmates and staff identify them, and judge their gender and sexuality's authenticity. I then turn to prisoners' experiences of understanding and disclosing and/or concealing their sexuality and gender. Finally, I consider victimisation by other inmates, and how LGBT prisoners avoid and resist such bullying.

Chapter Five focuses upon institutional responses to LGBT prisoners. It begins by considering the fundamental issues of housing and healthcare. I then explain how the heteronormative and cisnormative nature of prisons shapes LGBT prisoners' lives with reference to misgendering and access to appropriate clothes. The next section explores support for LGBT prisoners via prisoner-led initiatives, social groups and the celebration of LGBT calendar events. I then consider the influence of staff, complaints systems and staff responses to queerphobia. Finally, I outline institutional barriers to support, emphasising training, resources, confidentiality, and concerns for equal treatment.

Chapter Six examines the nature of relationships between inmates. I consider their frequency and visibility, and whether they involve sex and romance. I explain that engaging in same-sex relationships may or may not be consistent with prisoners' relationship histories and sexual identities. I present a hierarchy of relationships, with the most-respected couples being long-term, monogamous, discrete and comprised of prisoners seen as 'really gay'. I then consider negative aspects of relationships, including abuse and coercion, and explain that even when largely positive, relationships can cause distress.

Chapter Seven explores institutional responses to relationships. It reveals inconsistencies between and within establishments, and that when relationships are prohibited, staff and inmates explain this in various ways - as a means of ensuring; good order and discipline (GOAD); sentence progression, respect for others, and the denial of pleasure. I explain that prisoners often regard banning relationships as homophobic and counter-productive. I outline the circumstances under which staff allow relationships, and explain that inmates object to the inconsistent treatment of couples. The second part of the chapter explores provisions for healthy relationships, considering the availability of STI tests, medication, contraception, and education. I explain that prisoners face numerous barriers to practicing healthy relationships, and so develop their own means of achieving safe sex.

I conclude by summarising the contributions made within chapters four to seven, and reiterating the significance of understanding LGBT prisoners' experiences. My research reveals how cisnormativity and heteronormativity

structure life for all inmates, the significance of romantic and sexual relationships to prison life, and how imprisonment affects the construction and visibility of identities. Finally, I suggest policy implications, outline the study's limitations, and suggest avenues for future research.

Chapter 1: Gender and Sexuality in the Prison

Introduction

In this chapter I outline the key literature and theories that frame this thesis. Little academic research has been conducted on the experiences of LGBT prisoners, and there is a lack of theoretical criminological studies on minoritised genders and sexualities. The majority of relevant literature originates in North America, and in the next chapter I turn to the limited, but ever-growing, literature on LGBT inmates in the UK.

I begin by providing a brief overview of gender and sexuality. The rest of the chapter explores how gender and sexuality have been conceptualised and studied within criminology, and in relation to prisons in particular. I start by outlining the emerging sub-discipline of queer criminology, before discussing gender and sexuality in prison. In terms of gender, I explore the effect of the masculinity turn, and explain that cisnormative assumptions continue to inform prison masculinities research. I demonstrate that prisons (re)produce men and women, and that transgender and intersex people trouble the sex-segregated nature of prisons. I explain that transgender prisoners are constructed as both at risk and risky, and discuss the implications of this. I then turn to sexuality, exploring how sexual identity and relationships are understood in prison environments. After outlining the literature on coercive sex, I turn to consensual relationships, and engage with the concept of situational homosexuality.

Gender and Sexuality

Although gender and sexuality might appear to be self-evident concepts, they are often misunderstood, and as historically contingent discourses, they are subject to on-going debate. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to offer a nuanced analysis of how sexuality and gender have been historically conceptualised, are understood in contemporary society, and are likely to develop. Instead, I offer a brief explanation to lay the necessary groundwork for the thesis.

Sex and Gender

Until the mid-twentieth century, it was commonly held that men and women were inherently different due to their respective biological compositions. This idea, which still persists to some degree, was employed to justify social and political arrangements that positioned women as inferior to men – for example, the idea that studying would damage women's reproductive systems justified denying them education (Keister & Southgate, 2012). As a strategy for the advancement of equality feminists distinguished sex, a matter of physical anatomy, which they considered natural and innate, from gender, the behaviour and social roles of men and women, which they deemed socially constructed. As Simone de Beauvoir (1949:295) put it, in her oft-cited quote, 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'. The idea that sex did not determine gender meant that women were not confined to certain ways of being and behaving. It also helped explain people being transgender. Stoller (1964) explained that somebody could, for example, be male in terms of sex, and a woman in terms of gender.

Biological sex is socially determined at birth by ‘a cursory glance at the genitals’ (Vincent, 2018a:18). However, sex differentiation is based on numerous factors, including internal reproductive organs, chromosomes, gonads and hormones. These characteristics do not always neatly align, and up to 2% of people are intersex (Blackless, Charuvastra, Derryck, Fausto-Sterling Lauzanne & Lee, 2000)⁶. However, as a society, we continue to presume that genitals are either unequivocally penises or vaginas, and determine sex. People tend to consider sex as fixed at birth, when in fact many sex characteristics are changeable. The taken-for-granted cultural truth that all humans can be neatly distinguished as either male or female is overly simplistic. However, powerful social practices, including the issuing of birth certificates, continue to perpetuate the idea that sex is binary and inherent. Recognising sex as a social construct acknowledges that bodily differences matter because of the social meanings we ascribe to them (Vincent, 2018a).

The formation of gender identity is sometimes considered a biological process (Ibid.:45). Although some research documents differences between the brains of cisgender and transgender people, there is no consistent evidence of a particular biological basis for gender (Smith, Junger, Derntl & Habel, 2015). Butler proposes a contrasting perspective on the origins of gender in her oft-cited assertion, ‘gender is performative’ (1993:314). Butler’s theory of gender performativity has been incorrectly interpreted as suggesting that transgender identities are invalid. Instead, Butler claims that people of all genders fashion

⁶ Intersex prisoners are not the focus of this thesis, however they can experience similar difficulties to transgender prisoners (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018).

themselves in relation to pre-existing social constructs. According to this perspective, nobody is inherently and innately a man or woman, rather gender is the product of actions that are considered masculine or feminine 'in relation to norms that precede us and exceed us' (Butler, 2009:xi). Our self-understanding is rooted in existing discourses, such that 'we are transformed and acted upon prior to any action we might take' (Ibid.:xii), however new norms can emerge - note the growing recognition of non-binary genders (Olchawski, 2016).

In contemporary society, we tend to use sex and gender synonymously. Since the GRA, gender and sex have been synonymous in UK law. The lay public also use 'sex' and 'gender' interchangeably. Note, for example, that we ask of newborn babies, 'is it a boy or a girl?' not 'is it male or female?' If somebody speaks about a man, we tacitly assume they are referring to somebody who has a penis, testes and certain levels of testosterone. However, as explained, some people are intersex and/or transgender.

Although the conflation of sex and gender can work to exclude transgender people, the transgender community also tends to repudiate distinctions between these two concepts, for example, rejecting the idea that a transgender man is biologically female (Vincent, 2018a)⁷. Firstly, transgender men might have had medical interventions meaning their bodies differ from those we would expect for a biologically female person. Secondly, even when they have not had such

⁷ Terminology for referring to transgender people foregrounds their gender, and not the sex they were assigned at birth. So, for example, a transgender woman is a woman who was identified as male at birth.

interventions, being born with a vagina does not make somebody female, since this is one particular point of biological difference – their chromosomes, for example, might remain unknown (Ibid.). Thirdly, because gender and sex are ‘socially entangled concepts’, referring to a man as “biologically female” is invalidating (Ibid.:41) Transgender people often refer to their bodies with terms congruent with their gender. For example, a transgender woman with a penis might refer to her body as female, because, as a woman, she has a woman’s body (Ibid.). Despite the prevalent idea that transgender people are “born in the wrong bodies”, not all transgender people wish to medically transition. For example, out of 871 trans and/or non-binary people surveyed by Stonewall, 10% did not wish to medically change their bodies (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018c) . Transgender people can be non-binary, meaning they are not exclusively male or female – their gender might be fixed or fluid (Vincent, 2018a).

Sexuality

Sexuality and gender are often incorrectly conflated - we presume that gender-nonconformity signifies non-heterosexuality, and vice versa (Girshick, 2011, Devor & Dominic, 2015). For example, we might presume that a feminine man is gay. This conflation is long-standing: late 19th and early 20th century sexologists explained homosexuality in terms of ‘sexual inversion’ - femininity in men, and masculinity in women. For example, Krafft-Ebing considered gay women to have a ‘masculine soul’ inside a ‘female bosom’ (Krafft-Ebing, 1998:264 [originally published 1886]). It was not until the 1960s that the notion of transsexuality (denoting people who desired

medical interventions to change their sexual characteristics) became conceptually distinct from homosexuality in the popular imagination (Emerton, 2018).

During the 19th century, sexual desire and behaviour came to be indicative of fixed, stable identities (Kunzel, 2008). Today, to whom a person is sexually attracted is considered a defining feature of who they are. We categorise people with labels like “straight”, “gay”, and “bisexual”, but these categories are not coherent, and are disrupted on closer inspection (Butler, 1993). The idea that sexual identity and sexual behaviour neatly align remains strong in the public imagination (Kunzel, 2008), yet in practice, people routinely engage in behaviours at odds with their identities. Evidence of this is longstanding (see the Kinsey reports of 1948 and 1953) however it remains a cultural truth that sexuality and sexual behaviour correspond. There is now increasing recognition of diverse sexualities, including asexuality – when people do not experience sexual attraction to others (Garbacik, 2013).

Queer Criminology

Revisiting the Origins of Criminology

Lombroso, widely considered to have established criminology in the 1870s, was ‘a pioneer in the study of human sexuality’ (Rafter & Gibson, 2004:21) a fact given little attention by mainstream criminologists. This omission is significant since sexual and gender deviancy were central to Lombroso’s explanations of crime. He saw both criminals and homosexuals as biologically inferior (Groombridge, 1999) and considered homosexual men a distinct type of criminal (Woods, 2015). Lombroso

conflated gender and sexuality, constructing pederasts as gender nonconforming, with 'feminine clothing' and 'elegance of hair' (Lombroso, 2006:51). He considered women who engaged in crime 'true monsters' since their behaviour violated gender as well as legal norms (Lombroso & Ferrero, 2004:185)⁸.

Later Inattention Towards Gender and Sexual Minorities

Despite gender and sexual nonconformity encompassing an important part of Lombroso's work, little subsequent criminological research on these topics followed (Woods, 2014). Up to the 1970s, criminologists who did engage with gender and sexual minorities tended to investigate them within sex crime research, reflecting popular conceptions of gender and sexual minorities as morally corrupt (Woods, 2015:132).

During the 1970s, social understandings of sexual minorities shifted - in England and Wales same-sex activity was largely decriminalised, as it was in several U.S. states, and in 1973 the American Psychiatric Association stopped classifying homosexuality as a mental illness⁹. However, during the final decades of the 20th century, when Criminology was taking hold as a discipline, research on gender and sexual minorities 'virtually disappeared' (Woods, 2014:17). Indeed, at the turn of the 21st century, Groombridge (1999:531) questioned whether Criminological research on gender and sexuality nonconformity would ever be 'welcome'. Groombridge

⁸ Crime is still regarded as a means of 'doing masculinity' (Messerschmidt, 2001:70). Since women are vastly underrepresented amongst criminalised offenders, they are still deemed to have transgressed gender norms as well as societal laws (Heidensohn & Silvestri, 2012).

⁹ The APA introduced the term 'transsexuality' in 1980, but replaced it with 'gender identity disorder' in 1994 and 'gender dysphoria' in 2013.

(1999) suggested that the discipline's early problematic engagements with these topics might have prompted later criminologists to avoid them altogether. Queer criminologists remain wary of their research being used to further oppress gender and sexual minorities, producing calls for 'careful attention to nuance and tone' (Woods, 2014:32). This fear, that research might 'do more harm to queer communities than good' (Panfil, 2014:107), can be seen in criminological research on other minoritized groups (for example, see Phillips & Bowling, 2003). Crenshaw (1993:1261) warned that 'tokenistic, objectifying, voyeuristic inclusion is at least as disempowering as complete exclusion'. Since much criminological work is policy-oriented, it is perhaps particularly important to avoid reproducing negative stereotypes about marginalized groups (Potter, 2015).

Criminology, like most disciplines, has been structured by the 'normativity of the heterosexual male body' (Miller, 2014:x) and the "criminals" or "prisoners" that criminologists refer to are implicitly heterosexual, cisgender men (Groombridge, 1998). Criminology has only relatively recently begun addressing its neglect and stereotyping of women, and other categories of difference like class and ethnicity (Woods, 2014).

LGBT people are not intentionally excluded from criminological research (Panfil, 2014) but because we live in a heteronormative and cisnormative society, there is a tacit assumption that criminological subjects are straight and cisgender (Groombridge, 1999, Gledhill, 2014). The oversight of gender and sexual minorities has perhaps been facilitated by non-conforming genders and sexualities being

relatively concealable. These identities are not always ‘readily observable or easily categorisable’ (Panfil & Miller, 2014:11,12), whereas other categories, like race, are assumed to be more apparent, and therefore employed more frequently in criminological research (Goodman, 2008).

Since criminologists have only recently begun including marginalised groups, research on these populations is often ‘crude and essentialist’ (Phillips & Bowling, 2003:271), and the limited criminological literature on LGBT people tends not to distinguish between subgroups, preventing nuanced accounts (Panfil, 2014). This thesis is open to such critiques, considering the experiences of LGBT people together. A whole thesis could undoubtedly have focused on one sub-group of the LGBT community, however, given the dearth of literature in this area, I considered it most productive to take an expansive approach. In particular, it might be controversial to group LGB and T prisoners. However, LGBT people often have shared experiences, not least because gender and sexual nonconformity, as explained above, are conflated. Secondly, both sexuality and gender are woefully under-researched in prisons, and so exploring both enables insights into a broader range of experiences. Finally, inside and outside prison people organise around the initialism “LGBT”. To avoid critiques of conflating LGBT experiences (Vincent, 2018b) where possible I write specifically about subgroups. I hope this thesis will help stimulate more specific future research.

Gender and Sexual Minorities as Victims

During the last few decades, criminologists have engaged with gender and sexual minorities within two areas of victimology: hate crimes (for example Berrill, 1990; Herek, 2009; Stotzer, 2008; Walters, 2014) and intimate partner violence (for example McClennen, Summers & Vaughan, 2002; Merrill & Wolfe, 2000; Messinger, 2010). Wider harms against gender and sexual minorities remain largely unexplored, including those inflicted by the state (Gledhill, 2014, Panfil & Miller, 2014). LGBT victimisation is much more thoroughly investigated than LGBT experiences as offenders, or other actors in the criminal justice system.

While it is important to extend the 'scant and scattered' (Peterson & Panfil, 2014:4) victimisation literature, sexual and gender minorities should not merely be incorporated into victim studies (Groombridge, 1999). Since stereotypes construct lesbians as masculine and violent (Hart, 1994; Rafter, 2011), criminologists have paid more attention to women 'fighting back' against homophobic perpetrators than the active responses of non-heterosexual men (Panfil & Miller, 2014:7). Stereotypes of gay men as 'passive, effeminate, middle-class and white' help explain the lack of research on their self-defence and offending (Panfil, 2014:103). These typecasts contrast with criminality as a phenomenon associated with violence, masculinity, poverty (Young & Matthews, 2003) and blackness (Gilroy, 1987).

According to Panfil's research on gay gang members in the U.S., people assume that criminally active gay men will be involved in using drugs, selling sex, or committing fraud (Panfil, 2014). Emerging research, including Panfil's (2017) study,

exemplifies other types of offending by gay men. There is growing research on 'queer pathways to crime' which foregrounds how the social exclusion of LGBT people pushes them into over-policed and criminalised behaviours, including homelessness, and survival crimes like theft, sex work, and using and selling drugs (Asquith, Dwyer & Simpson, 2017:167).

Acknowledging crimes committed by LGBT people recognises their agency, and the lack of research on LGBT offending is accompanied by inattention to experiences of policing, trials and prisons (Peterson & Panfil 2014). Uneven criminological attention is rooted in, and further perpetuates, stereotypes about gender and sexual minorities (Panfil & Peterson 2014). Concerns to study LGBT people in their multiplicity echoes feminist criminologists' insistence on portraying (cisgender) women as having agency (Daly, 2001). There remains an imbalance in the scholarship on other minoritised groups; for example, because black people are hyper-criminalised they have been researched mainly as offenders, leaving discrimination against them largely overlooked (Phillips & Bowling, 2003).

The Scope of Queer Criminology

Explicit calls for a queer criminology first emerged in the mid-1990s, soon after queer theory began shaping academic and political debates (Ball et al., 2014). Several criminologists advocated the incorporation of LGBT populations and/or queer theory - Ferrell and Sanders (1995), Tomsen (1997), Groombridge (1999), Sorainen (2003) and Narrain (2008). Since then an ever-growing number of

publications have claimed, or been ascribed, the label queer criminology (Ball, 2014a). It is now indisputable that 'queer criminology is well underway', (Ferrell, Hayward and Young, 2015:246), although it is currently much more prevalent in North America and Australia than the UK.

Despite its growth, queer criminology 'still lacks a sense of itself and what it might be' – it is host to a variety of intellectual and political perspectives (Ball et al., 2014:2) and academics in this sub-discipline have varied and sometimes conflicting ideas of what it should encompass (Panfil & Peterson, 2014). Such debates are not unique to queer criminology - many sub-fields comprise multiple perspectives, as emphasised by terms like 'feminist *criminologies*' (Daly, 2001:119).

Central to debates concerning the parameters of queer criminology is what the term "queer" should signify. "Queer" has a range of meanings; it is an antiquated term for 'strange' and 'unwell' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2015); during the early 20th century it became a homophobic slur (Ahmed, 2013), and since the 1980s, some gender and sexual minorities have reclaimed "queer" as a means of signifying sexual or gender non-conformity (Jones & Adams, 2010; Serano, 2013). Finally, queer denotes a theoretical approach that developed as a radical critique of the 'assimilationist and often essentialising tendencies' of lesbian and gay studies (Ball, 2013:2). There is an on-going debate concerning how Queer Criminologists should use "queer" - as an identity category, theoretical approach to gender and sexuality, or broader critical disposition.

Queer as in LGBT

Most queer criminological work takes queer as an umbrella term denoting gender and sexual minorities, and comprises empirical research on LGBT populations. Such endeavours have practical importance - through highlighting injustices they create the potential to resolve them (Panfil & Miller, 2014; Ball, 2013). Furthermore, recognising the existence of sexual and gender minorities amongst participants is important for the veracity of conceptual criminological models (Miller, 2014). By treating sexuality and gender as variables of interest, criminologists can evaluate whether existing theories and methodologies need 'reimagination, refinement or reformulation' (Panfil & Miller, 2014:5).

Queer research routinely adopts an intersectional approach (Panfil & Miller, 2015), recognising that people are located at the intersection of multiple identities, such that characteristics like class, ethnicity and religion shape experiences of being LGBT (Crenshaw, 1989). Since queerphobia is interconnected with other systems of oppression, like racism, it is questionable whether a sub-discipline focusing on LGBT people is appropriate. In their proposal of a broad 'minority perspective' Phillips & Bowling (2003:272) choose 'gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, or transgendered [sic] people' to illustrate populations that might sit alongside ethnic minorities in such an approach. Queer criminologists have advocated intersectional perspectives as a means to address the lack of research attention to marginalised LGBT sub-groups, like people of colour, and to prevent queer criminology centering on the needs of economically privileged, white, gay men (Woods, 2014). When the concerns of the most privileged members of minoritised groups are prioritised, this

can be at the neglect, and even expense, of more disadvantaged members (Burgess-Proctor, 2006). The mainstream LGBT rights movement has faced such critiques (Sycamore, 2006) for example for promoting hate crime legislation, which reinforces state violence (Lamble, 2008). As Lamble (2011:240) explains, whilst the criminal justice system might stop targeting the most privileged LGBT people, it will continue to criminalise 'queers who are deemed economically unproductive, socially undesirable and politically threatening'. Intersectional identity politics advocates coalitions and alliances, enabling minoritised groups to avoid exploiting the most marginalised members of their communities. For example, race can be reconceptualised as 'a coalition of straight and gay people of color' (Crenshaw, 1993:1299).

It might be problematic to use "queer" as an umbrella term for LGBT. People often identify as "queer" precisely to resist adopting more specific categories like 'lesbian' or 'bisexual' (Garbacik, 2013), demonstrating resistance to binary understandings of sex and gender (Jones & Adams, 2010), or signifying indifference to mainstream societal acceptance (Muñoz, 2009). In turn, some LGBT people explicitly reject queer as a means of self-identification. Should they fall within the ambit of *queer criminology*?

Employing queer as a synonym for LGBT also limits the scope of queer criminology. Queer encompasses being 'at odds with straight culture', which includes norms concerning gender presentation and sexual practices (Warner, 1999:38), such that people can be straight and cisgender, yet queer in their sexual

practices (Serano, 2013). A queer criminology that focuses exclusively on LGBT people might exclude considerations of sexual desire and behaviour. There are ongoing debates concerning whether topics like pornography and sex work should fall within the remit of queer criminology (Ball, 2013). Perhaps some criminologists are concerned that incorporating deviant sexual practices might delegitimise queer criminology. The mainstream LGBT rights movement has marginalised people 'more visibly defined by sex' in attempts to preserve the 'acceptable face of the movement' (Warner, 1999:66). Choosing not to engage with socially stigmatised sexual practices would allow queer criminologists to 'offload the burden of queerness onto someone else' (Lancaster, 2011:233).

Queer as a Deconstructionist Approach to Gender and Sexuality

Employing "queer" as an umbrella term for LGBT might reproduce the fallacy that gender and sexual identities are natural, coherent and stable. Queer theory arose as a postmodern refusal of gender and sexuality identity categories (Hall & Jagose, 2011), revealing them as socially constructed, contingent and transient (Cohen, 2013). Whilst lesbian and gay politics involves mobilising around particular identities, queer politics seeks to disrupt and trouble these very classifications (Connell, 2009).

A queer theoretical lens on gender and sexuality enables queer criminologists to better represent sexual and gender minorities (Ball, 2013). It also invites criminologists to investigate how gender and sexuality are conceptualised within, and produced by, the criminal justice system (Gledhill, 2014). Queer theoretical

approaches also help analyse dominant genders and sexualities, (Groombridge, 1999) in the same way that gender studies include men (Connell, 2009). Researchers could therefore *queer* criminology by being attuned to gender and sexuality as potentially influential characteristics for all populations, rather than focusing on LGBT people in particular (Panfil, 2014).

Some criminologists have expressed concerns that employing queer as a theoretical approach to gender and sexuality could result in the neglect of the material consequences of being classified by gender and sexuality (Woods, 2014). There is perhaps also a risk of queer perspectives being interpreted by practitioners as invalidating LGBT identities in such a way that justifies denying people appropriate recognition and resources – Pasko (2010) suggests that seeing identities as ‘fleeting and changing’ rather than ‘organic or permanent’ allowed staff to recognise prisoners as straight and deny them support. In practice, queer criminologists tend to use essentialism strategically (Spivak, 1993) – advocating a deconstructionist critique of classificatory systems while recognising their power in practice. Crenshaw (1993:1297) advocates organising around identity categories, since power remains ‘clustered’ around certain identities and ‘exercised against others’. Sexuality and gender categories are pervasive; people define themselves and each other in these terms, and so they continue to have real material consequences. Acknowledging that socially constructed identities shape how individuals respond to the world, and how others respond to them (Potter, 2015) enables research that might engender tangible improvements for gender and sexual minorities. Beyond eliciting critiques for being too deconstructionist, employing

queer as an approach to gender and sexuality can invoke criticism for not fulfilling queer theory's deconstructive potential (Ball, 2014b). Queering sexuality and gender alone might allow other hegemonic ideas and practices within the criminal justice system and criminology as a discipline to go unchallenged.

Queer as a Wider Project of Deconstruction

While queer theory originated as a position vis-à-vis sexuality and gender, it can be detached from these categories. Halperin (1995:62) defines queer as 'whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant'. What unites queer theorists is their position regarding norms and normativity - their efforts to dispute and destabilise taken-for-granted discourses, and demonstrate the permanently contestable nature of all social logics and orders (Ball, 2014a:26). Queer criminology could be a more holistic project to denaturalise dominant ideologies, institutions and practices, however few Queer Criminologists currently utilise queer as a wider critical disposition (Ball, 2013).

Uncoupling queer from gender and sexuality risks obscuring these concepts and identities as criminological variables of interest, and distancing 'queer criminology' too far from contemporary uses of the term. There is a tacit understanding that queer criminology should centre on gender and sexuality. For example, Panfil and Miller refrain from prescribing what queer criminology should entail, '*beyond the fact that it be attentive to issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender presentation*' (2014:12, emphasis added). Furthermore, fully

embracing the deconstructionist logic of queer theory might elicit critiques of irrelevance: that such research lays 'outside the bounds of what is taken to be criminology', and cannot address urgent problems facing LGBT people (Ball, 2013:10).

That said, queer theorists have argued that deconstructive approaches can promote long-term societal change through subverting hegemonic discourses that limit our ways of thinking and interacting (Ball, 2014b). For example, Muñoz (2009:121) proposed 'critical utopianism' as a means of creating change by denaturalising hegemonic logics through appealing to 'something worth striving for', rather than accepting aims that are insufficient but supposedly more achievable (Muñoz, 2009:121). Compromise and pragmatism do not necessarily result in political success (Warner, 1999).

My research falls within queer criminology in that I focus on the experiences of LGBT people, and understand gender and sexuality as socially constructed and contextually achieved. It is not the purpose of this thesis to conduct a queer theoretical analysis of prisons.

Gender and the Prison

Including (Cis) Women

Until the late 1960s, theories of crime focused almost exclusively upon boys and men, reflecting their disproportionate likelihood of committing crime, and

particularly serious and violent offences (Heidensohn & Silvestri, 2012). Early research on female criminality relied on problematic biological explanations and stereotypes. In recent decades, feminist criminologists have challenged the androcentrism of criminology (Henne and Troshynski, 2013), and so research on women in prison has gained traction, although criminologists still too often refer to inmates as a homogenous, implicitly male group.

Despite remaining androcentric tendencies, criminologists can now claim that ‘the battle to make gender a central concern of contemporary criminology’ has ‘been won’ (Heidensohn & Silvestri, 2012:337). Criminology now regularly includes heterosexual, cisgender women, and often recognises the importance of masculinity for heterosexual, cisgender men. However, criminologists almost invariably see gender through a cisnormative and heteronormative lens (Rodgers et al., 2017) and LGBT populations are largely absent from feminist criminologies (Woods, 2014). For example, prisons researchers still almost invariably assume that women’s prisons only house women, and men’s prisons only house men.

The Masculine Turn

Feminist criminologists prompted a ‘masculinity turn’, exploring offending by men *as men* (Groombridge, 1999:532). Masculinity is understood as a way of being that is ‘earned’ and ‘enacted’ (Sabo, 2001:63) rather than ‘preformed and embedded in the individual’ (Messerschmidt, 2001:67). The dominant position of men in our contemporary ‘gender order’ is widely recognised (Sabo, Kupers & London, 2011:5),

however, men are not a homogenous group, and amongst men, multiple masculinities exist and are arranged hierarchically (Connell, 1995). These two hierarchical gender structures, of men over women, and distinctions between men who embody gender in different ways, 'reflect and feed one another' (Sabo et al., 2011:5). The most idealised form of masculinity encompasses the rejection of women and femininity, such that men at the bottom of the dominance hierarchy are considered 'womanly or queer' (Kupers, 2001:116).

Few men fully realise masculine ideals, however, their failure to do so elicits fears of being considered 'unmanly' (Kupers, 2005:716). Alongside male dominance, hegemonic masculinity in Western societies encompasses 'heterosexism, whiteness, violence and ruthless competition' (Sabo Kupers & London, 2011:5). The damaging aspects of hegemonic masculinity, including violence, misogyny and homophobia are labeled 'toxic masculinity' (Kupers, 2005:716) and are 'an exaggeration of many culturally accepted forms of masculinity', like competition, leadership, loyalty and strength (Sabo et al., 2011:13). This male-dominated nature of crime is increasingly understood through the lens of gender (Messerschmidt, 2001). Crime is explained by 'the pursuit of manhood' (Sabo, 2001:65) - a way of achieving masculinity when other, legally sanctioned means are unavailable (Messerschmidt, 1993). The irony is that by pursuing masculinity, men often lose power and dignity via imprisonment (Sabo, 2001).

Prison Masculinities

Toxic Masculinity and Homophobia

In prison, men experience disrespect and relative powerlessness (Kupers, 2005). Their desire to gain respect, in an environment with few positive opportunities for doing so, encourages toxic masculinity (Kupers, 2001). For imprisoned men, masculinity can seem their 'one remaining social asset' meaning they tend to protect it at all costs (Donaldson, 2001:122). As is the case outside prison, femininity defines the bottom of the gender hierarchy, subordinated prisoners considered 'less than a man – in other words, a woman' (Kupers, 2001:115). Prisoners therefore avoid displaying weakness or vulnerability, instead fashioning a 'tough-guy posture' (Kupers, 2005:717). The conflation of gender and sexuality means that contempt for femininity is tied up in homophobia (Sabo et al., 2011). Men endeavor to avoid being considered gay, particularly in prison, and so avoid displaying affection (Ibid.). Homophobia, as part of toxic masculinity, is rife in prison, and to be considered gay can engender 'ridicule, attack, ostracism, or victimization' (Sabo, 2001:64).

Sexual Violence as a Means of Domination

Perhaps seemingly at odds with the prevalence of homophobia, is the pervasiveness of rape in prisons. Sexual coercion is a form of aggression, and so men raping other men this does not signify homosexual desire (Einat, 2007). In fact, it confers masculine status, and so gang rapes are common (at least in some jurisdictions) since inmates gain power from being seen to sexually dominate weaker prisoners (Donaldson, 2001). Research even documents more consensual sexual encounters

between prisoners being considered socially acceptable when the prisoner takes the active role (Ibid.). It is the sexual behavior, not the gender of the partner, which defines sexuality in prison, as in other contexts and periods of time (Ibid).

There is a difference between same-sex behaviour and identity (Koscheski, Hensley, Wright & Tewksbury, 2002), however the two are deeply entangled in the public imagination, and rape in North American men's prisons is often incorrectly referred to as 'homosexual rape', and perpetrators as 'aggressive homosexuals' (Donaldson, 2001:124). This equation of sexual violence with homosexuality is problematic since the vast majority of rapists are straight, and their identities known to other inmates (Ibid., Mogul, Ritchie & Whitlock, 2011). Labeling perpetrators of prison rape homosexual reproduces a flawed understanding of both sexuality and prisons.

Since rape is a tool for 'policing and punishing' perceived sexual and gender nonconformity (Mogul et al., 2011:98) non-heterosexual men and transgender women are particularly vulnerable to prison rape (United Nations, 2009). The symbolic de-masculinisation that accompanies sexual violence reinforces the subordinate position of victims (Donaldson, 2001). Through being 'regendered' as women (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018:166) or constructed as gay, prisoners become even more susceptible to violence (Mogul et al., 2011). Rape is also a tool for re(constructing) gender hierarchies outside prison, however in the community men tend to victimise women in this way (Kupers, 2001).

In U.S. prisons coercive sexual partnerships exist, where subordinated prisoners pair up with more dominant inmates, offered protection in exchange for sexual acts (Donaldson, 2001). The weaker prisoner adopts a feminine role through undertaking domestic duties, and sometimes even wearing women's clothes and make-up (Kupers, 2001). Some prisoners who adopt these roles are said to be 'effeminate homosexuals', and 'street transvestites' (Donaldson, 2001:119), which presumably means transgender women, who Jenness (2010) documents as fulfilling such positions. While the subordinate partner is constructed as female or gay, the dominant partner maintains a heterosexual male identity. While most prisoners enter these relationships solely for sex or protection, some couples establish emotional connections, allowing the dominant partner to express usually suppressed vulnerabilities (Donaldson, 2001). Despite some relationships involving affection, Donaldson explains it would be an 'all-time howler' to suggest that inmates in men's prisons engage in non-sexual 'quasi-familial relationships' like those documented in women's prisons (Ibid.:121-122) and discussed below.

The Origins of Prison Masculinities

The 'inmate code' reproduces hegemonic masculinity (Liebling & Crewe, 2012:911) however its origins are subject to ongoing debate, and there is longstanding interest in the roots of prison culture more generally. Sykes (1958) interpreted prison culture as a response to the 'pains of imprisonment', whereas Irwin and Cressey (1962) identify its origins beyond the prison walls. Toxic masculinity has been attributed to the sex segregation of inmates (Sabo et al., 2011) and other institutional dynamics,

including the inability of prisoners to walk away from confrontations (Kupers, 2005). Since inmates lack opportunities to physically remove themselves from situations, 'one way to avoid a fight is to look as though you are willing to fight' (Sabo et al., 2011:11). Therefore, the prison environment encourages men to display more hegemonic forms of masculinity in the hope of avoiding fights (Ibid.). Staff can reinforce hyper-masculinity through promoting sexual violence as a means of controlling the prisoner population (Mogul et al., 2011).

Softer Masculinities

The prison studies literature contains bold claims, for example, 'prison culture breathes masculine toughness and insensitivity and it impugns softness, caring and femininity' (Sabo et al., 2011:7). However, prisoners can display softer masculinities, for example in 'emotion zones' where feelings can be legitimately expressed (Liebling & Crewe, 2012:912). A recent development in masculinity studies is the emergence of 'inclusive masculinity' theory, which claims that declining homophobia renders men less concerned with avoiding homosexual suspicion, and so more able to be affectionate and have gay friends (Anderson, 2009). This literature presents men as eschewing violence, queerphobia and sexism, and valuing emotional openness and authenticity (Morris & Anderson, 2015). Some studies suggest that the acceptance of homosexuality is more prevalent amongst the middle class than working class (e.g. McCormack, 2014) and whether inclusive masculinity theory holds in prisons remains to be seen (and lies beyond the focus of this study).

Uncoupling Masculinity and Men

Groombridge's critique of the 'straightness' of criminology's masculinity turn remains true today (1999:544). Masculinities research still neglects the experiences of non-heterosexual men, transgender men and people of other genders. The lack of attention to masculinity in women is somewhat surprising given the longstanding recognition that female offenders transgress feminine ideals. However, this absence is more understandable when recognising that key texts conceptualise masculinity as 'the way *men* behave in response to a particular situation' (Sabo et al., 2011:6 [emphasis added]). Despite this definition, masculinity is not exclusive to men (Halberstam, 1998).

So, what does masculinity refer to, if not the behaviour of men? Halberstam observes, 'although we seem to have a difficult time *defining* masculinity, as a society we have little trouble in *recognizing* it' (Ibid.:1 [emphasis added]). We recognise people as masculine through their appearance and actions (Messerschmidt, 2001). Masculinity and femininity are culturally defined, and so societies share understandings of what attributes and behaviours encompass masculinity (Girshick, 2011). When Girshick (Ibid.:195) describes masculine inmates in a women's prison as having 'masculine postures', and wearing 'less feminine clothing', she presumes that the reader will conjure an appropriate image through shared cultural ideas. A masculine posture might involve taking up space, chest puffed out, fists clenched, biceps tensed, eyes narrowed, chin raised, lips slightly pursed. Less feminine clothes might evoke images of loose-fitting, practical, hardwearing, comfortable and plain outfits.

Men are often considered to present different *degrees* of masculinity - working class and black men associated with 'excessive', and Asian and upper class men 'insufficient' masculinity (Halberstam, 1998:2). The less a man exhibits masculine ideals the more feminine he is considered. It therefore makes sense that people of other genders can also be masculine. Female masculinity is widely acknowledged and accepted within childhood, with girls often labelled 'tomboys', however, amongst adults there is less acceptance, and even recognition, of female masculinity (Ibid.:15).

The Punishment of Female Masculinity

Masculinity is associated with power, yet women exhibiting masculinity does not always confer status - for example, masculine women routinely experience hostility in public toilets due to their failure to embody feminine expectations and ideals (Ibid.). Since social norms position binary genders as neatly aligned with binary sexes, masculine women contravene the 'cardinal rule', that people should be 'readable at a glance' (Ibid.:23). To regain their legitimacy in bathrooms, masculine women often emphasise high-pitched voices, breasts, or some other 'decisive gender trait' (Ibid.:21).

Contravening socially prescribed gender norms, masculine women might receive harsher sentences and particular difficulties in prison. U.S. research documents prosecutors vilifying lesbian and gender-nonconforming women accused of murder in pursuit of death penalty sentences (Mogul, 2005). Women who

conform to feminine ideals might accrue leniency in court, however masculine women do not benefit from such paternalism (Ibid.). Since ideal femininity encompasses 'compliance with male desire, and sexual receptivity' (Sabo et al., 2011:5), prosecutors are particularly likely to emphasise the masculinity of non-heterosexual women. When a female defendant does not act like a 'proper woman', due to her gender or sexuality¹⁰, she is vulnerable to harsher treatment (Mogul, 2005).

Masculine inmates in women's prisons experience particular forms of gender policing. Girshick (2011) documents inmates having to wear dresses during transfers, and knickers rather than boxers. Male staff might treat such inmates more harshly, feeling their own gender and authority threatened by prisoners' masculinity (Ibid.). Masculine inmates are sometimes punished due to presumed homosexuality – a Virginian women's prison established a 'butch wing' to prevent relationships between prisoners and 'punish perceived gay appearance' (Ibid.:203), targeting inmates with short hair and baggy clothes (Mogul et al., 2011). Female masculinity is considered particularly threatening 'when coupled with lesbian desire' (Halberstam, 1999:28).

The Sex/Gender Segregation of Prisons

As noted in the introduction, most prisons are sex-segregated (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018), which is considered best practice by the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the

¹⁰ Other women are susceptible to de-feminisation, including poor and non-white women (Mogul, 2005).

Treatment of Prisoners (2016). The separation of men from women is partly an attempt to prevent sexual relationships, abuse and prostitution, and also a means of ensuring gender-specific rehabilitation (Mogul et al., 2011). 19th Century prison reformers promoted physical labour for men, and domestic training for women, who were intended to re-enter society as good wives and mothers (Emerton, 2018). Producing appropriately gendered women was arguably particularly important given their involvement in crime was itself a gender transgression (Girshick, 2011). Uniforms reflected the gendered ideals of prison reformers - women wore clothes akin to domestic servants, while men's uniforms were similar to manual labourers' (Emerton, 2018).

Gender-nonconforming inmates can find having to wear gender-stereotypical clothes humiliating (Girshick, 2011, Mogul et al., 2011). Prison uniforms are less overtly gendered than they once were, as are the rehabilitative programmes that inmates engage in. However, the idea that male and female prisoners should be treated differently remains strong, as seen in Corston's (2007) calls for 'gender-responsive' prisons, and the government's recent 'female offender strategy'. The idea that female prisoners should be treated differently is controversial; Hannah-Moffat (2010) explains that female prisoners who violate normative feminine ideals are constructed as risky.

Beyond encouraging gendered ideals, prisons have used enforced gender *nonconformity* as punishment. Elizabeth Fry advocated cutting women's hair as a means of humiliation (Ibid.) and contemporary U.S. correctional boot camps have

required women to have short hair, their masculine appearance negatively affecting their self-esteem (MacKenzie & Donaldson, 1996). Joe Arpaio, the notorious former Sheriff in Arizona, introduced pink towels, bedding, underwear, uniforms and even handcuffs for male prisoners as a form of humiliation – he explicitly chose this colour because inmates ‘hate pink’ (Billeaud, 2012).

Troubling the Gender Binary

It is a fundamental taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separate pigeonholes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects.

(Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin, 1948:639).

The idea that gender is dichotomous, inherent, static and aligns neatly with sex, has been increasingly destabilised, as explained at the beginning of the chapter.

However, these hegemonic ideas continue to hold strong in the public imagination, which is understandable, given that powerful social institutions are founded upon, and in turn reproduce, these conceptions. Public toilets perpetuate the idea that all people can be separated into men with penises and women with vaginas. Toilets appear to cater to and confirm pre-existing distinctions, however these gender-segregated institutions in fact construct men and women (Halberstam, 1998). The same can be said of prisons: through allocating people to binary institutions, they re-enforce hegemonic gender discourses (Mogul et al., 2011). Transgender and intersex people complicate housing allocation - by failing to fit neatly into either category, they reveal implicit cisnormative assumptions (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018).

When a person's gender does not map onto their sex in a normative manner, prisons often rely on physical anatomy to determine housing, sometimes inspecting prisoners' genitals (Ibid.). Transgender and intersex prisoners are therefore often held in prisons designed for people of a different gender (Mogul et al., 2011). Examining genitals cannot determine the "truth" of a person's sex, since, as explained above, sex is defined by numerous characteristics. Transgender and intersex people reveal the flawed sex and gender logics upon which prison systems are founded.

Transgender Prisoners – a Risky and At-Risk Population

The emerging literature on transgender prisoners has been conducted overwhelmingly in the United States (Dunn, 2013), and focuses almost exclusively on transgender women in men's prisons. Notwithstanding these provisos, there is mounting evidence that transgender prisoners experience significant discrimination and abuse (Rodgers et al., 2017). They are particularly vulnerable to sexual assault and rape (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013, 2014, United Nations, 2009), often unable to access medical services, and particularly vulnerable to mental ill health (Sexton, Jenness & Sumner, 2010). It is therefore unsurprising that transgender prisoners are considered 'an 'at risk' group in terms of suicide and self-harm' (PSI 07/2011:11).

Transgender Prisoners as At-Risk

Transgender women are routinely considered vulnerable, however they are not inherently at-risk, but rendered as such by practices like housing them in gender-inappropriate prisons (Rodgers et al., 2017, WEC, 2016). When transgender women are held in men's establishments their divergence from gender norms make them 'a special needs population' (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018:169).

Due to victimisation from other inmates (often a direct result of allocation decisions) staff might further curtail transgender prisoners' freedom. While ostensibly protecting them from harm, segregating transgender women can induce further harm, and equate to 'additional punishment' (Mogul et al., 2011:107). In segregation, transgender prisoners are especially vulnerable to staff mistreatment, and often lack access to work, education and rehabilitative programmes (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018). Some transgender prisoners are housed on medical wings, reinforcing the idea they are 'diseased and/or mentally ill' (Mogul et al., 2011:108).¹¹ Segregating transgender prisoners constructs them as the problem, rather than transphobia (Emerton, 2018). It also reduces the prospects for 'community-building' between transgender and cisgender prisoners, which might reduce violence long-term (Arkles, 2009:518).

Transgender men are considered highly vulnerable to physical and sexual violence from other male prisoners, especially when they have vaginas (PSI

¹¹ Some American prisons have established units for LGBT inmates that provide separate housing but maintain access to services and interaction between prisoners. These units have been implemented with varying levels of success (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018).

07/2011). There have therefore been cases of transgender men being housed in women's prisons against their will (Emerton, 2018). This gender-inappropriate placement does not appear to place them at additional risk of violence, and so they are housed in the general population (Girshick, 2011). In fact, masculinity is often considered desirable in women's prison, some inmates fostering a masculine appearance to attract feminine inmates as partners (Ibid.). Although gender norms are less rigidly upheld in women's prisons, being forcibly housed in a gender-inappropriate establishment is surely distressing (though this topic remains unresearched).

Beyond housing allocation, transgender prisoners experience other risk-inducing practices. Officers routinely misgender them and make transphobic comments, negatively affecting their mental wellbeing (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018). Transgender prisoners have been prevented from wearing gender-affirming clothes (Emerton, 2018, Girshick, 2011), required to cut their hair and nails in gender-normative ways (Mogul et al., 2011) and denied appropriate medical care (Rodgers et al., 2017). To continue hormone treatment, prisons often require evidence of receipt in the community; posing problems since transgender people often access hormones through unofficial, unregulated means (Mogul et al., 2011). By denying medical care, prisons render some transgender women at risk of self-surgery (Ibid., Emerton, 2018).

Transgender Prisoners as Risky

Risk is a structuring principle of criminal justice systems (Maurutto & Hannah-Moffat, 2006) - prisoners are constructed as posing various levels of risk, and staff as responsible for assessing and managing this. A 'precautionary principle' prevails, such that practitioners focus on worst-case scenarios and are risk-averse (Kemshall, 1998:67). Within this context, transgender prisoners are approached through the discourse of risk, which enables prisons to reinforce the existing gender order (Emerton, 2018)

While transgender men are deemed at-risk, transgender women are presented as sexually predatory and dangerous to other female inmates (Mogul et al., 2011). There are therefore different risk-related rationales for placing transgender men and women in gender-inappropriate establishments. Discourses concerning cisgender men and women are also influential - male prisoners constructed as dangerous, and women as vulnerable (Emerton, 2018).

Transgender women are considered 'inherently risky', however, those who have not had gender confirmation surgery are considered especially risky due to the association of penises with sexual violence (Ibid:187). Transgender women with penises are considered particularly likely to have sex with, or rape, cisgender women in prison (Rodgers et al., 2017). Similarly, intersex women with non-functional micro-penises have been separated from other female prisoners as a result of their perceived risk (Mogul et al. 2011). Beyond the risk of actual violence, there are concerns that the very presence of transgender women could re-traumatise

cisgender women who have experienced male sexual violence and see them as men (Emerton, 2018).

While cisgender women have their gender taken for granted as natural and legitimate, transgender women are subject to greater scrutiny, and constructed as 'artificial' and 'deceptive' (Serano, 2013:179). When transgender people are seen as cisgender they are often described as 'passing', implying they are trying to be perceived as something they are not, and even being actively manipulative (Ibid.). Transgender women who transition during prison are subject to particular suspicion, seen as men trying to access female victims, or have an easier time in prison (Emerton, 2018). Having genital surgery confers more authenticity to transgender women, especially when they transition prior to imprisonment (Ibid.).

As explained, because transgender women are constructed as risky, and cisgender women as at risk, transgender women are routinely housed in men's prisons, where they experience verbal, physical and sexual violence. Prison administrators therefore prioritise hypothetical and largely unfounded¹² risks of harm to cisgender women over known and proven risks to transgender women (Mogul et al., 2011, Emerton, 2018). Being considered risky limits transgender prisoners' access to gender-appropriate items, which can be constructed as a risk to security (a wig could be used to aid escape); to the self (tights could be used as a ligature); and to GOAD (prosthetics could be used to conceal illicit items) (Ibid.).

¹² In the introduction I noted that in 2018 Karen White was convicted of sexually assaulting fellow female prisoners.

Sexuality and the Prison

Prison sex is a longstanding concern for both reformers and administrators. Sexual norms and practices at odds with those in the outside community have always occurred in prisons (Kunzel, 2008). Initial concerns about sex involved moral trepidations regarding homosexuality, whereas contemporary concerns focus upon sexual coercion (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018). Since the late 19th century, prisons have been an important site for sexuality research, due to the historic association of criminality and sexual deviance and researching prisoners being more practical than people in other sex-segregated institutions (Kunzel, 2008).

Sexologists conducted the first research on sexuality in prisons,¹³ and criminologists have explored this topic since the 1930s. Up to the 1980s they approached same-sex relationships in prison with 'negative bias', focusing mainly on sexual coercion and constructing gay men as perpetrators of prison rape (Gibson & Hensley, 2013:357).¹⁴ The limited research on consensual relationships focuses predominantly on women's prisons, where there is little research on sexual coercion (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018). There is scant research in men's or women's prisons on inmates who *identify* as non-heterosexual (Dunn, 2013).

¹³ English sexologists avoided prisons research, reluctant to conflate same-sex behaviours with criminality (Emerton, 2018).

¹⁴ It was not until the 1980s that criminologists understood rape as a mechanism of masculine power distribution, rather than the result of sexuality.

Punishing Sexual Non-Conformity

There is a long history of prisons disciplining sexual nonconformity, and indeed, not so long ago in both North America and Britain people were imprisoned for various consensual sexual practices (Pasko, 2010, Emerton, 2018). Today, male non-heterosexual prisoners are disproportionately affected by a lack of access to HIV healthcare and contraception (Mogul et al., 2011). Most establishments ban sexual relationships, and the 'homophobic policing of prisoner contact' means that non-heterosexual inmates face punishment for physical displays of affection, including hugging (Ibid.:97). As noted above, some women's prisons have housed masculine inmates separately to prevent relationships. Some women's prisons have over-restrictive rules regarding same-sex relationships, and even ban LGBT reading materials as part of their 'policing of same-sex desire' (Mogul et al., 2011:98).

Non-heterosexual male prisoners are at heightened risk of sexual violence (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013), which can be experienced as additional punishment (Mogul et al., 2011). Some men feel compelled to hide their sexuality in prison to avoid victimisation, negatively affecting their wellbeing (Ricciardelli, Grills & Craig, 2016). Staff have forcibly segregated non-heterosexual men for their own protection (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018) and denied others' requests for protective custody (Mogul et al., 2011).

Non-heterosexual men who report rape are often disbelieved due the belief that gay and bisexual men would consent to any sexual proposition (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018), and the persisting idea that prison rapists are themselves non-

heterosexual (Mogul et al., 2011.) Since gay men, and black gay men in particular, are constructed as hypersexual and predatory, staff consider them 'unrapeable', and some prisoners have even been punished for reporting rape (Ibid:93). Since the introduction of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) (2003), young female prisoners have been punished, and even convicted of sexual offences, for consensual same-sex relationships (Pasko, 2010). Although PREA is purportedly aimed at preventing sexual violence Pasko (2010) suggests it was motivated more by homophobic concerns.

Coercive sex

Researchers tend to automatically interpret sex in men's prisons as non-consensual due to continued reliance on the 'punk-jocker' model, which constructs sex as the result of predatory, powerful inmates forcing weaker prisoners into relationships (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018:170). When prisoners have sex for strategic reasons, like trading, safety or status, it is automatically considered evidence of victimisation, and little research acknowledges positive motivations for sex, like 'pleasure, companionship, and self-determination' (Ibid:171).

Pasko (2010) documents staff regarding relationships between women as inherently problematic, explaining sexual attraction and activity as the result of mental ill health, emotional disorders and traumatic life experiences including sexual abuse. Early researchers read sexual coercion into relationships between women, including presumptions that black lesbians targeted straight, white women (Mogul

et al., 2011). More contemporary research documents female prisoners entering relationships to exploit others for material goods (Morgan, 1998). While using people for economic gain seems problematic, the targets of such behaviour do not necessarily feel exploited, sometimes considering it a fair exchange (Ibid). Female prisoners are more likely to experience sexual violence from staff than other inmates (Mogul et al., 2011).

The spectre of prison rape plays a significant role in the public imagination, in large part due to its prevalence in popular culture. Perpetrators of sexual violence are usually constructed as gay, aggressive and black, and their victims as heterosexual and white (Ibid.). These representations are used to induce fear– police use the racialised discourse of ‘the big Black prisoner who makes others their ‘bitch’ as a means of control (Ibid.:105). Prison rape is usually associated with men’s prisons, partly due to the well-known directive, “don’t drop the soap”, however stereotypes also persist of masculine, lesbian predators (Chesney-Lind & Eliason, 2006, Millbank, 2004). These discourses help explain why prison relationships are presumed to be coercive, misrepresenting the more complex reality.

Consensual Relationships in Prison

The lack of contemporary literature on consensual relationships in prisons is partly due to the continuing conflation of homosexuality and ‘deviance’ (Koscheski et al. 2002:113). In particular, there is very little criminological research on consensual sex in men’s prisons, with research on this topic only emerging in the 1980s, in

comparison with research in women's prisons dating back to the 1930s (Ibid.). The criminological preoccupation with women's sexuality and relationships is undoubtedly related to the continuing association between women and 'the private, the domestic and the sexual' (Liebling, 2009:20). Hegemonic gender and sexuality discourses are replicated in prison studies' differential focus on sexual violence among incarcerated men and intimacy amongst women (Ricciardelli et al., 2016).

Despite limited academic attention, there is growing evidence of 'consensual, loving, sexual relationships' between male prisoners (Mogul et al., 2011:95). Hensley (2001) documents high levels of consensual sex in male establishments, particularly medium and maximum-security prisons. He reports over 20% of men engaging in: sexually rubbing each others' bodies; touching each others' penises; having oral sex; and having anal sex and 18.4% of men having kissed another prisoner. Over the course of several decades, researchers in women's prisons have found consensual relationships pervasive. Ward and Kassebaum (1964) suggested around half of prisoners engaged in some sort of sexual relationship, and in more recent studies, Owen (1998) and Greer (2000) document over a third of prisoners having sexual relationships.

Situational and Constitutional Homosexuality

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, sexual behaviour and identity do not always neatly align (Propper, 1982). Early researchers of women's prisons reported that a high proportion of inmates in relationships had not had same-sex

relationships before prison. Giallombardo (1966) estimated that 86% of women had a sexual experience in prison, compared with 5% before. Researchers distinguished 'situational' from 'constitutional' homosexuals - the former describing those who only enter same-sex relationships due to the prison environment (Giallombardo, 1966 and Ward and Kassebaum 1964) and the latter denoting people that identify as non-heterosexual and would enter same-sex relationships irrespective of being in prison (Pasko, 2010).

Giallombardo (1966:123) distinguished 'lesbians' from 'turnouts', and Ward and Kassebaum (1964:167) separated 'true' lesbians from 'jailhouse turnouts'¹⁵. Contemporary prisoners use specific terms like 'gay for the stay' and 'prison gay' to refer to those who enter same-sex relationships for the first time in prison, and/or who only have same-sex relationships in prison (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018:164). Rooted in the concept of sexual inversion, it was commonly accepted up to the 1970s that constitutionally gay male prisoners could be identified by gender nonconformity, trying to seduce heterosexual prisoners through enacting femininity in terms of sexual role, appearance or demeanour (Emerton, 2018.).

Researchers proposed that situational homosexuals entered relationships due to being deprived of partners of the 'opposite'¹⁶ sex (Clemmer, 1940, Ward and Kassesbaum, 1964, Giallombardo, 1966) and so assumed they would return to

¹⁵ The use of the phrase 'turned out', emphasises the influence of 'an outside party' on sexual behaviour (Morgan, 1998: 77), implying that constitutional homosexuals are responsible for straight prisoners entering sexual relationships.

¹⁶ I use scare quotes here because sex and gender are not binaries. Henceforth I do not, for ease of reading.

opposite-sex relationships upon release (Severance, 2005). This 'deprivation model' (Gibson & Hensley, 2013) posits that situational homosexuals are actually straight, and behave at odds with their sexuality due to their circumstances. In contrast, "constitutional homosexuals" are considered to have always been gay and to enter relationships due to their inherent sexuality. Both deprivation and importation models are essentialist approaches (Gibson & Hensley, 2013) perpetuating the idea that sexual identity is 'stable and fixed' (Kunzel, 2008:5). Since same-sex behaviour was either the result of inherent homosexuality, or the temporary result of a lack of alternative partners, early researchers cast same-sex behaviour in prisons as 'unilluminating and unmeaningful' for wider understandings of sexuality (Ibid.:4). The incidence of heterosexual prisoners engaging in relationships did not imply that heterosexual people in the community were also capable of same-sex relationships (Ibid.). Sex between prisoners could otherwise have revealed heterosexuality as 'fragile, unstable, and, itself, situational' (Ibid.:8). More recent scholars of prison sex recognise that the hegemony of opposite-sex relationships outside prison is the product of social and historical circumstances. Donaldson (2001:125) considers the absence of social disapproval as explaining why the vast majority of male prisoners have same-sex relationships, and considers the lack of same-sex relationships amongst men in the community as resulting from 'cultural mores and the availability of women'.

The homosexual/heterosexual binary is a discursive strategy that male prisoners employ to maintain a heterosexual identity - if bisexuality were considered a potential identity, men who have sex in prison would be less able to maintain their

heterosexuality (Ricciardelli et al., 2016). Male prisoners can avoid stigmatised identities by redefining the boundaries of heterosexuality to include ‘covert same-sex sexual practice’ (Ibid.:1673). The word “covert” is important– same-sex encounters between men tend to be accepted so long as they remain discreet (Ibid.). Ricciardelli et al. (2016:1680) suggest moving away from the term ‘situational homosexuality’ since men who have sex in prison ‘are not homosexual, not even situationally; instead, their heterosexuality does not preclude sex with other men’.

Contemporary studies on prison sexuality often conflate behaviour and identity (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018). This is difficult to avoid, since terms like “homosexual” are used as ‘both an identity and a descriptor of sexual behaviour’ (Ricciardelli et al., 2016:1668). Morgan (1998:81) uses ‘lesbianism’, ‘lesbian relationships’ and ‘homosexual relationships’ synonymously and Gibson & Hensley (2013:357) reference ‘homosexual behaviour’. Phrases like ‘same-sex relationships’ or ‘same-sex behaviour’ would be clearer, not invoking ideas about identity. Even when emphasising the difference between sexual behaviour and identity, Koscheski et al. (2002:112) use terminology that might reinforce the two, writing ‘not all individuals who engage in homosexual *activity* consider themselves homosexuals’. It would be precise to write, for example, “not all individuals who engage in *same-sex relationships* consider themselves homosexuals”. Whilst this might seem pedantic, precision is important given the complexity of relationships and identities behind bars. Within this thesis I use terms like ‘same-sex’ rather than ‘homosexual’ to reference behaviour.

The Meaning of Relationships

Research on relationships in men's prisons invariably focuses upon *sexual* relationships. However in women's establishments, relationships are presented as involving romantic more than sexual intimacy (Severance, 2005). Propper (1982:136) found that only half of inmates who were 'married' or 'going steady' also reported 'sex beyond hugging and kissing'. Same-sex relationships in women's prisons are often studied in terms of 'make-believe families' - social structures where inmates use kinship terms to demonstrate and reinforce close bonds (Ibid.:127). While most pseudo-kinship relationships are asexual, between sisters, mothers and daughters, some prisoners become spouses, sometimes officiated by informal ceremonies (Ibid.). Researchers often referred to these couples as 'husband' and 'wife', the former inmate taking a more masculine, and the latter a more feminine role (Koscheski et al., 2002).

The existence of same-sex relationships within pseudo-families has come to dominate the way that criminologists think about both make-believe families and consensual relationships (Propper, 1982). This is in spite of early researchers like Selling (1931) distinguishing spouses from lesbian couples – the latter were repudiated, while the former were accepted and considered as having 'social' rather than 'emotional or sexual' bonds (Koscheski et al., 2002:120). Propper (1982:135) advocates distinguishing 'homosexual and make-believe family participation' arguing they are 'different ways of adapting to imprisonment' (Ibid.).

Researchers often present same-sex relationships as a form of “adaptation”, explaining that prisoners might enter relationships for ‘support and companionship’ in the harsh prison environment (Morgan, 1998:76), to fit in or gain social status (Ibid.; Pasko, 2010) or to ‘affirm their humanity’ within a profoundly dehumanising context (Mogul et al., 2011:95). Some prisoners’ reasons for entering relationships might remain subconscious (Morgan, 1998). Of course, some prisoners enter relationships out of ‘basic human desire’ (Mogul et al., 2011:95). Researchers and staff often overlook what would in other circumstances be the most obvious explanations for relationships, perhaps inadvertently rendering same-sex attraction invisible in consensual relationships between prisoners (Ricciardelli et al., 2016). As noted above, some staff deny prisoners’ sexuality claims, dismissing same-sex attraction as the result of imprisonment or experiences of sexual abuse (Pasko, 2010). Staff presume that women will return to relationships with men after release, and even when they remain in same-sex relationships, regard inmates as trying to prove a point rather than ‘really being gay’ (Ibid.:18).

Through relationships in prison, some people experience a shift in their sexual identity. Hensley, Tewksbury and Wright (2001) found that 79% of men identified as straight before incarceration, compared to 69% during incarceration (the proportion of inmates identifying as gay rose from 6% to 7%, and bisexual from 15% to 23%). Through relationships in prison, some women discover new sexualities (Morgan, 1998). Contemporary scholars are beginning to recognise that not all people ‘enter prison with the same identity, desires, or sense of self with which they are released’ (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018:166).

LGBT People in Prison

While there is a long history of prison sex research, 'sexuality in prison populations remains one of the least understood issues in the criminal justice system' (Gibson & Hensley, 2013:356). Researchers often fail to distinguish between prisoners who *identify* as non-heterosexual and those who engage in same-sex relationships, and there is a dearth of literature on how relationships are related to identity (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018.). Little of the research on prison sexuality focuses on inmates who identify as LGBT, and furthermore, there is a need for broader research on LGBT prisoners as a subpopulation with particular needs (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018). Having explored broad themes related to gender, sexuality and imprisonment, the next chapter focuses on the limited, but ever-growing, British literature on the experiences of LGBT prisoners.

Chapter 2: The British Context and Prison Studies

Introduction

Having explored more theoretical ideas in Chapter 1, this chapter reviews the sparse British literature on LGBT prisoners, before situating it within the broader British prison studies literature. Outlining the British literature is important, since much of the literature in Chapter 1 originates in the U.S.A., Canada and Australia, where prisons are significantly different. I draw out several themes from the limited empirical research on LGBT prisoners; starting by summarising the problems they face in terms of bullying and deciding whether to reveal their marginalised identities. Next I consider sexual relationships and coercive sex, before turning to the management of LGBT prisoners in terms of housing, healthcare, and access to appropriate resources. I further consider sources of support for LGBT prisoners, and the barriers to such provisions.

The second part of this chapter considers how this literature fits in relation to British prison studies, engaging with five key themes of life behind bars; the pains of imprisonment and coping mechanisms (Crewe, 2011; Power, McElroy & Swanson, 1997; Liebling, 1995); legitimacy, power and resistance (Crewe, 2007; Carrabine, 2005; Sparks & Bottoms, 1995); staff roles and culture (Crawley, 2004; Bennett, Crewe, & Wahidin, 2007; Arnold, Liebling & Tait, 2007); prisoner subcultures and social relationships (Crewe, 2005) and prisoners' identities (Phillips, 2012; Phillips & Earle, 2010; Kaufman, 2012).

Literature on Gender and Sexual Minorities in Prison

There is very little British research on how transgender people experience prison (Marlow, Winder & Elliott, 2015, Gorden, Hughes, Roberts, Asbury-Ward & Dubberley, 2017) or the wider criminal justice system (Poole, Whittle & Stephens, 2002). Existing knowledge pertains almost exclusively to transgender women (for example see PPO, 2017 and Forder, 2017) and their experiences in men's prisons (Hasan et al., 2017). There is very little research on transgender men, and no research on non-binary and gender-fluid prisoners. There is a dearth of research on consensual sex and coercive sex in prisons, and how sex and relationships behind bars might affect prisoners' sexual identities and wellbeing (Stevens, 2015; Howard League, 2013). There is almost no British research on queerphobia, or support for sexual minorities.

Within the limited existing literature, the voices of LGBT prisoners are scarce, which renders particularly important three sources of data in non-academic publications. Phil Forder's (2015) 'Inside and Out' is a compilation of writings from LGBT people in HMP/YOI Parc, and 'Released Inside' (2017) shares the stories of female transgender prisoners and staff who work with them. Forder is a prison manager, and his two collections are published by G4S, which inevitably shaped his access to, and presentation of, LGBT prisoners' experiences. The Bent Bars Project, a letter-writing program that connects LGBT people inside and outside prison, has published 7 newsletters on a range of themes, including 'coming out' and 'role models', which contain poems, letters, stories and drawings from LGBT prisoners. These publications provide valuable insights into prisoners' lives and, importantly,

let them speak in their own words, subject to editing for clarity, length and confidentiality. Forder (2015, 2017) does not detail how he edited or collected his contributors' stories. This thesis seeks to both amplify LGBT prisoners' voices, and to synthesise, analyse and contextualise their experiences.

One reason for the lack of criminological research on LGBT prisoners might be a lack of statistical data. The US Bureau of Justice's annual statistics on prison rape have prompted research on LGBT victimisation, and there is no British equivalent data source. Likewise, prisoners' sexualities are not systematically recorded in cases of suicide – another missed opportunity for gathering statistics that might inspire research (Read & McCrae, 2016). Finally, prison inspectors might have overlooked homophobia due to interpreting a lack of complaints as evidence that prisons are safe (Dunn, 2013).

Bullying/Discrimination

No studies focus upon queerphobic bullying and discrimination, however these topics are referenced in several publications, which suggest that homophobia is more prevalent in prison than outside (The Howard League, 2013) and that homophobic slurs can induce suicidal thoughts (Carr, McAlister & Serisier, 2016). Transgender women in men's prisons recount bullying and harassment from other inmates (PPO, 2017; Forder, 2015; Baker, 2017; Marlow et al., 2015), sometimes inducing mental ill-health and self-harm (Bashford, Hasan, Marriott & Patel, 2017).

Straight and cisgender prisoners perceived as LGBT are also subjected to queerphobic bullying (Carr et al., 2016:14).

Staff often disregard queerphobia, and fail to support affected prisoners (Dunn, 2013, WEC, 2016), which helps explain why LGBT inmates sometimes feel uncomfortable confiding in staff (PPO, 2013). Some prisoners are reluctant to report abuse for fear of revealing their LGBT status or being considered a 'rat' by other inmates (Carr et al., 2016:27). When prisoners submit Discrimination Incident Reporting Forms (DIRFs) responses range from wholly inadequate (PPO, 2017) to proactive (Carr et al., 2016). LGBT inmates in men's prisons have therefore responded to victimisation with violence or by arming themselves (Carr et al., 2016), sometimes resulting in their punishment (Forder, 2017).

In women's establishments, lesbians can experience 'an undercurrent of stigma' and occasional verbal abuse (Carr et al., 2016:15), and transgender men experience misgendering (Bashford et al., 2017). In general, women's establishments are more accepting of diverse genders and sexualities, and queerphobia is more prevalent in men's prisons (Ibid.).

The literature documents positive experiences for LGBT inmates (Forder, 2015, Forder, 2017). While some practitioners suggest that prisoners are less accepting of transgender people (Bashford et al., 2017), transgender women report support from other inmates, with only a minority actively bullying them (Marlow et al., 2015). When 'JP' entered her wing wearing women's clothes and make-up for

the first time 'no one seemed to bat an eyelid' (Forder, 2017:22) and while 'AL' encountered 'banter', it was 'good natured' (Ibid.:11-12). Prisoners suggest that younger people are more accepting, and that attitudes in prison have improved over time (Carr et al., 2016).

Hiding Identity/Coming out

Non-heterosexual men (Forder, 2015), transgender women (Forder, 2017), and transgender men (Baker, 2017) can feel compelled to conceal their identity in prison. Being openly LGBT is challenging in a queerphobic environment (The Howard League, 2015), and concealing LGBT identities can be a means of self-protection (Carr et al., 2016). Even a transgender woman who physically transitioned prior to imprisonment is documented as feeling compelled to live as a man due to safety concerns (Hasan et al., 2017). This woman died by suicide in prison, and while staff knew that she was transgender, other transgender prisoners might take their own lives without staff knowledge of their gender, leaving it unacknowledged in official records (Bashford et al., 2017).

Prisons do not routinely collect information on gender identity, as opposed to legal sex (Lamble, 2012) tending to only ask if a prisoner's transgender status is considered 'self-evident' (Bashford et al., 2017:30). Prisons routinely record sexuality, but their means of doing so can be problematic, involving embarrassed officers asking newly-arrived inmates their identity, without explaining why, or the

parameters of confidentiality (Dunn, 2013). Few prisoners are likely to feel able to disclose non-heterosexuality in these conditions (Ibid.).

A reluctance to disclose LGBT identities might have methodological consequences. Former prisoners have claimed that serving inmates would not speak to researchers regarding sex in prison due to confidentiality concerns (Stevens, 2015). However, Forder (2015, 2017) accessed numerous LGBT prisoners' stories, and, perhaps surprisingly, found that some inmates, especially those from 'repressive religious or cultural backgrounds', find it easier to come out in prison than outside (Forder, 2015:15). The majority of transgender prisoners that Forder (2017) interviewed began transitioning in prison, while the U.S. literature tends to focus on women who transitioned before imprisonment.

The British literature recognises that imprisonment might shape how people understand and describe their sexuality through acknowledging that being imprisoned in a single-sex environment during adolescence, a formative stage of sexual development, might lead to confusion (Howard League, 2015). There is a negligible research on how imprisonment impacts sexual behaviour and identity (Howard League, 2013).

Sexual Relationships and Public Displays of Affection

Stevens (2015) does note that some men enter prison straight, and adopt non-heterosexual identities following sexual relationships, however, she does not

explore this in any detail. She explains that straight men who have sex in prison usually maintain a heterosexual identity, though might be labelled 'prison gay', 'jail gay' or 'gay on the inside' by fellow inmates (Stevens, 2015:6). Straight male prisoners who have sex tend to receive oral sex or anally penetrate their partners, while imagining women, and would deny these sexual experiences to others and ignore their sexual partners after the event (Ibid.). Sex between men occurs mostly amongst long-term inmates, and is perhaps more common in sex offender establishments, and on vulnerable prisoner units (VPUs) (Ibid.). Gay and bisexual prisoners also tend to be discreet about sexual relationships, partly due to fearing homophobia, although some couples are quite open (Ibid.).

British studies document 'erotic and romantic relationships' as commonplace in women's prisons, including amongst straight women, (Rowe, 2014:411). Couples are documented as being more openly affectionate and co-dependent (Stevens, 2015), and are more upfront with staff about having sex (Howard League, 2013). Couples often have 'sincerely-held, committed emotional attachments' and so the breakdown of relationships can be painful (Howard League, 2014a:3). Some prisoners keep their relationships private for fear of separation, and so feel unable to request support from staff (Howard League, 2014a). Twenty per cent of self-inflicted deaths in women's prisons between 2007 and 2012 were preceded by relationship problems with another inmate (PPO, 2013). Even when staff are aware of relationships being problematic, they might fail to support prisoners with problems like domestic violence (PPO, 2011).

Some women's prisons have policies prohibiting couples from sharing cells, though governors have been known to transgress such rules for particular inmates, despite the punitive opposition of other staff (Rowe, 2014). The Howard League (2013) found a disjuncture between The National Offender Management Service's (NOMS) official stance (that sex is prohibited and couples in sexual relationships should be separated) and practice on the ground in men's prisons. They noted that 'discreet' couples are sometimes allowed to live together (Ibid.:3), which prisoners recognise as means to maintain order (Stevens, 2015). When staff separate prisoners presumed to be in a sexual relationship, inmates can perceive this as homophobic (Howard League, 2013). Gay prisoners have received warnings for low-level affection (Ibid.) and such punishment can provide staff homophobic staff a means of expressing their prejudice (Dunn, 2013).

Coercive Sex

Alongside consensual relationships, the British literature documents coercive sex in prisons. HMIP reports that 1% of prisoners have been sexually abused, likely to be an underestimate given under-reporting (Howard League, 2014b). Staff have told gay prisoners not to pursue complaints since their sexuality would induce disbelief (Banbury, 2004). The Howard League's Commission on Sex in Prison documents unwelcome sexual advances and serious sexual abuse –three men being raped by other inmates (Stevens, 2015) and a transgender woman sexually assaulted and harassed by male staff (Howard League, 2014b).

Banbury (2004:113) suggests that the most likely targets for sexual coercion are 'younger, passive, homosexual, inexperienced prisoners without group affiliations'. Stevens (2015) documents a stronger prisoner protecting a young, middle-class gay man from other inmates in return for sex – echoing the U.S. Punk-Jocker model. She recounts a straight prisoner being raped as retribution for his sexual offence, and another being gang-raped because his young age made him vulnerable - only this prisoner reported the abuse. Staff discouraged him from pursuing a complaint, suggesting it might invoke further victimisation, and he was segregated and moved to another establishment for his own protection (Ibid.). After being raped, this prisoner questioned his sexuality; worried he was targeted for looking gay (Ibid.) and other survivors of sexual violence have suffered with mental-ill health (Banbury, 2004). According to the very limited existing research on the topic, coercive sex is relatively rare in British prisons, however inmates are often fearful of rape (Ibid.), which can itself be distressing (Howard League, 2014b). In the outside community sexual coercion is significantly under-reported due to emotional responses like embarrassment or shame, fear of negative social or legal repercussions, and a lack of confidence in investigations, and the reporting of rape in prisons is 'necessarily complicated by the inherent power differentials that comprise prison culture' (Worthen, 2016:369). In 2014, 228 sexual assaults were reported in prisons in England and Wales (MoJ, 2018b).

Inmates in both men's and women's establishments trade sex for goods and contraband (Plugge, Douglas & Fitzpatrick, 2006), arrangements that can be coercive when prisoners are in financial need (Stevens, 2015). Staff can struggle to distinguish

consensual from coercive relationships (Howard League, 2013), and prisoners, particularly women, might not recognise their arrangements as abusive, having become acclimatised to unhealthy relationships in the community (Howard League, 2014a).

Sexual relationships between inmates and staff are considered rare in both male and female establishments (Stevens, 2015). However, male prisoners have reported grooming (Ibid.) and there are cases of staff exchanging goods for sex with female inmates (Howard League, 2014a). Rowe (2014) reports women feeling sexually vulnerable, concerned about male staff seeing them undress, and being strip-searched by lesbian officers.

Housing

The most significant decision regarding accommodation for transgender prisoners is where they are housed. Emerton (2018:211) explains that, under PSI 7/2011, there was in practice a 'black-and-white test', such that transgender prisoners with legal gender recognition were housed in a gender-appropriate prison, whereas those without were not. Case conferences regarding transgender prisoners' location were not always 'proactive, timely, or consistent' (PPO, 2017:3). Some transgender prisoners (including those who subsequently died by suicide) were not consulted regarding their placement or informed of their right to request transferring estates (Ibid.,; Emerton, 2018).

Staff tend to regard transgender women's applications for transfers to the female estate as sexually-motivated (Bashford et al., 2017). Alongside being perceived as "risky", staff have also justified keeping transgender women in the male estate due to the risk posed to them by other prisoners' interest in their genitals (Forder, 2017). In men's prisons, where most transgender women are housed, they tend to be held separately, either on VPUs, segregation, or healthcare, supposedly for their own protection (Emerton, 2018.). Such placements can negatively effects prisoners' mental health, leading to suicide attempts (Forder, 2017). PSI 2016 renders it more difficult for prisons to segregate transgender prisoners, though research does not yet document its effect in practice.

In women's prisons, transgender women tend to be held separately initially, before living amongst other women (Emerton, 2018). As noted in the introduction, in March 2019, a separated unit was created at HMP Downview to house three transgender women with GRCs, who would normally be entitled to live alongside other women (Clifton, 2019). Transgender men are almost invariably housed in women's prisons, and located in the main population (Emerton, 2018).

Some transgender prisoners resent housing decisions made on their behalf, for example being made to live on VPUs rather than in the mainstream population (Forder, 2017). Some transgender women advocate separate transgender, or LGBT, wings, or even prisons, suggesting they would foster staff expertise and better support (Ibid.). Likewise, some professionals consider clustering a means of ensuring peer support, well-equipped staff, and access to specialist services (Bashford et al.,

2017). Conversely, some prisoners regard such arrangements as stigmatising (Forder, 2017) and some practitioners emphasise problems with clustering, like holding transgender prisoners far from home, considering this approach as benefitting establishments more than prisoners (Bashford et al., 2017).

There is very little research on the housing needs of non-heterosexual prisoners, though (Carr et al., 2016) note gay men finding it awkward to share cells with heterosexual inmates, especially in terms of having to undress in each others' presence.

Healthcare

Prisoners are disproportionately likely to have blood-borne viruses (BBVs) (Howard League, 2013), and female prisoners are particularly likely to have sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (Howard League, 2014a). Since 1994, British prisons have been required to provide equivalent healthcare to that available in the community, including sexual healthcare, and, since 1999, gender confirmation treatment (Emerton, 2018)¹⁷. The National Aids Trust (NAT) (2011) recommends that sexually active prisoners use condoms and lubricants to avoid contracting BBVs, however, there is varying access to barrier protection and lubricants.

In some establishments, there is easy access, with staff issuing provisions on reception, or otherwise making them available discreetly, through prisoner

¹⁷ However, until 2013 there was uneven access to gender identity services, and some primary care trusts did not fund gender confirmation surgery (Emerton, 2018).

representatives, or at LGBT groups (Howard League, 2013). Other establishments provide condoms through vending machines, or leaving supplies in toilet areas (NAT, 2011). At other prisons, condoms are only available on request, and some prisons have required inmates to return used condoms 'for a one-for-one swap' and punished inmates requesting multiple condoms (Howard League, 2013:5). When inmates can access and dispose of condoms discreetly safe sex is more likely (NAT, 2011). Having to request condoms can discourage prisoners from using protection due to concerns about being separated from their sexual partners (Howard League, 2013), or breaches of confidentiality (Stevens, 2015, Carr et al., 2016). Transgender people are often reluctant to engage with healthcare, particularly regarding issues related to sexual characteristics (Bashford et al., 2017), perhaps making them particularly unlikely to request barrier protection. In the absence of condoms, some prisoners have improvised using sugar bags (Carr et al., 2016).

There are several explanations why prisons might not provide easy access to condoms. Staff might misinterpret NOMS's prohibition of sexual relationships as meaning condoms cannot be provided (Stevens, 2015) or consider provisions unnecessary, believing there are no gay prisoners there, and therefore no one having sex (Howard League, 2013). Staff have expressed concerns about condoms being used to conceal drugs (NAT, 2011).

Some transgender prisoners report positive experiences of healthcare, with access to hormone replacement therapy (HRT), support from counsellors, psychologists, and speech therapists (Forder, 2017). However, transgender prisoners

face significant barriers to medical care. When transgender prisoners accessed hormones in the community online, rather than through prescriptions, GPs are reluctant to prescribe them, meaning prisoners must endure the lengthy process of applying to a GIC (Bashford et al., 2017). Even when inmates were officially receiving hormones before imprisonment, establishments struggle to gain information from GICs in a timely manner, leading to delayed access (Ibid.). When gender dysphoria goes untreated, it can lead to self-harm and suicide (WEC, 2016).

Like transgender people in the community, transgender prisoners face long waits for diagnoses and treatment. One transgender prisoner waited five-and-a-half years for HRT (Forder, 2017). Prisoners face additional barriers due to their relative powerlessness – one transgender prisoner struggled to even see her GP, having to first convince staff she was transgender, rather than lying to ‘gain privileges’ (Ibid.:34). Prisoners rely on staff to attend appointments, and when they miss them, can be moved back to the beginning of the waiting list (Bashford et al., 2017). In some prisons, GIC practitioners come into the establishment, removing the issue of escorts (Ibid.).

Transgender prisoners often have severe and complex mental health needs, which can hinder their access to gender-related healthcare (Ibid.). GICs have refused to treat prisoners with on-going mental health or substance misuse problems – producing a Catch 22 when these conditions are linked to gender dysphoria (Ibid.). GICs have denied treatment to transgender women on the basis that their experience of living as a woman in a men’s prison is ‘not ‘real’ enough’ (Emerton,

2018:310). Practitioners have explained these approaches as the result of risk-aversion (Bashford et al., 2017). There are on-going international debates concerning what constitutes 'real life experience', however for long-term inmates there is widespread agreement that prison should be treated as their 'normal environment' (Ibid.:91).

Some staff regard GICs as discriminatory towards prisoners (Bashford et al., 2017). Public discourses construct transgender prisoners as less deserving of NHS treatment (Emerton, 2018), and Lambie (2012) suggests that discriminatory attitudes towards prisoners might hinder access to gender-related treatment. GICs appear to only grant access to genital confirmation surgeries in exceptional circumstances, for example when prisoners are serving whole-life tariffs (Emerton, 2018). When transgender women lack appropriate healthcare, they sometimes resort to self-surgery (Bashford et al., 2017; Baker, 2017).

Access to Appropriate Resources

Some transgender women have good access to gender-affirming clothes and accessories, while others endure lengthy fights to gain them (Baker, 2017, Emerton, 2018, Forder, 2017). Transgender women have been restricted to wearing gender-affirming clothes, make-up and accessories in their own cells, and required to dress in a more masculine manner elsewhere (Emerton, 2018, Forder, 2017). Some prisons enforce overly restrictive or vague rules regarding gender presentation, leading to transgender women being punished for wearing lipstick (PPO, 2017). Prisons have

justified restricting gender-affirming items on the basis of risk to security, GOAD, and the transgender prisoner, from herself and other inmates (Emerton, 2018). Some practitioners explain variation between establishments as resulting from the prison's culture as established by the Governor (Bashford et al., 2017).

Beyond gender-affirming clothes and accessories, transgender women have struggled to access sex offender treatment programmes (SOTPs) which are designed and accredited for men and only available in male establishments (Emerton, 2018). Transgender women report being required to complete SOTPs while living as men, therefore having to delay or reverse their transition (Forder, 2017). Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) are currently reviewing treatment programmes to consider access for transgender prisoners (Bashford et al., 2017).

Prisoners can struggle to access LGBT magazines due to the prohibitive cost of purchasing them and because some establishments consider them 'pornographic', despite allowing 'heterosexually explicit magazines' (Dunn, 2013:8). Transgender women can feel isolated without access to films and music featuring similar others (Forder, 2017). LGBT cultural materials help inmates feel connected to the LGBT community (Carr et al., 2016).

Support

Staff knowledge and attitudes

The British literature outlines a number of ways that prisons support, or fail to support, LGBT inmates, and staff behaviour is a key theme. Some staff lack the knowledge, skills and confidence to support LGBT prisoners, requiring training on; responding to sex between prisoners (Howard League, 2013); recognising and confronting more subtle instances of queerphobia (Dunn, 2013); and working with transgender people (Poole et al., 2002, WEC, 2016). There are concerns of self-selection – that only already LGBT-friendly officers undertake relevant training (Bashford et al., 2017).

Staff are often unfamiliar with terminology regarding sexuality (PPO, 2013) and gender (Marlow et al., 2015). Even specialist equality and diversity staff can be ignorant of LGBT issues (Dunn, 2013). Some staff recognise their limited knowledge - one prison's Equalities Lead recognised his ignorance, and was afraid of causing offence and seeming like a 'bigot' (Forder, 2017:40). Staff often try to educate themselves, researching terminology online, reading prison service guidance, and speaking with the LGBT prisoners they are responsible for supporting (Ibid.). Marlow et al. (2015:245) report staff valuing learning 'from the horse's mouth', however it might be problematic to render transgender prisoners responsible for educating staff. The government has committed to providing 'training, guidance and awareness materials' on working with transgender offenders (PSI 17/2016:24) and HMIP have undertaken training on LGBT issues (Dunn, 2013).

Some staff are personally committed to LGBT equality, and make conscious efforts to support LGBT prisoners (Forder, 2017). Others purposefully misgender transgender women, refuse to use their correct names or search them according to prison rules (Forder, 2017). Staff appear particularly hostile to transgender women who are not stereotypically feminine, and who they have known prior to their transition (Forder, 2017). Practitioners suggest that staff are not sufficiently challenged for discriminatory behaviour, and that a culture of support for transgender prisoners needs to be top-down (Bashford et al., 2017:84).

Since staff are less likely to personally know an openly transgender than gay or bisexual person, they are particularly likely to be prejudiced towards transgender prisoners (Dunn, 2013). However, working with transgender prisoners does make some staff more accepting of them (Forder, 2017) and committed to supporting them (Marlow et al., 2015). Transgender women tend to have better relationships with female staff, and to want further access to LGBT officers (Forder, 2017.). Staff acceptance fosters greater acceptance amongst inmates (Forder, 2015).

Other Inmates

Peer support can improve LGBT prisoners' experiences (Lamble, 2012, Howard League, 2013). Some establishments have prisoner equality representatives to challenge discriminatory behaviour, but these inmates can lack trans-specific knowledge, prompting calls for specific transgender representatives (Marlow et al., 2015). At the limited number of establishments where they exist, LGBT support

groups can help foster a 'vibrant and visible' LGBT community, but they can suffer from poor advertising and a lack of privacy for attendees, and are vulnerable to the departure of significant members (Dunn, 2013:7).

External Organisations

Some LGBT prisoners receive support from external charities (Forder, 2017), like 'buddying' schemes between transgender prisoners and community members (Bashford et al., 2017:78). However, staff report struggling to determine whether charities are qualified and capable of providing support (Ibid.). Some establishments inform inmates nearing release about LGBT community groups, while others do not provide such information, or *solely* refer to external organisations, without offering internal support (Dunn, 2013).

Inconsistency and Barriers to Support

Supportive provisions for LGBT prisoners exist in individual establishments but are not consistently provided across the prison estate (Dunn, 2013, Bashford et al., 2017). Prisons are therefore a 'post code lottery' – LGBT inmates might have good support in one establishment, but find no provisions upon transferring to a new prison (Forder, 2017:20). Even within particular prisons there is inconsistency – staff might support a certain inmate but, without official policies, fail to help all prisoners consistently (Read & McCrae, 2016), and, as explained, some staff are more supportive than others (Forder, 2017). Progress is fragile, and prisons can become more or less LGBT-friendly over time (Dunn, 2013).

Prisons fail to support LGBT inmates in part due to a 'cycle of invisibility' (Ibid.:6). When prisoners feel unsafe, they might conceal their minoritised gender or sexuality, and so their establishment might fail to recognise they are housing LGBT prisoners. This justifies a lack of effort to create an LGBT-inclusive environment, which further discourages prisoners from coming out.

Budget cuts also explain a lack of provisions. Prisons are struggling to maintain relatively safe environments (Stevens, 2015) let alone to proactively respond to new equalities legislation (Forder, 2017). Staff shortages can result in GIC appointments being cancelled (Ibid.) and heighten the risk of sexual assault to LGBT inmates (Read & McCrae, 2016, Howard League, 2014b). Cuts to specialist diversity staff make prisons less-equipped to support LGBT inmates (Dunn, 2013), and when staff are allocated LGBT responsibilities, it is often 'tagged onto a long list of other duties' and so considered a 'burden' (Forder, 2017:6). Staff shortages limit opportunities to train staff on transgender issues, and specialist LGBT charities are less able to engage in prison work, struggling with their own reduced funding (Bashford et al., 2017). Legal aid cuts leave LGBT inmates less able to legally challenge their treatment (Emerton, 2018).

Prison Studies Literature

Sociological accounts of prisons have shaped how British criminologists understand the nature, effects and purposes of imprisonment. These accounts have invariably neglected LGBT prisoners. The rest of the chapter considers how the themes

identified in British research on LGBT inmates relate to the British prison studies literature.

Pains of Imprisonment and Coping Mechanisms

While most people find prison distressing, it can be especially difficult during particular stages of a prison sentence, and for certain groups of people (Crewe, 2016). Older prisoners, whose numbers are fast increasing, tend to experience 'additional pains' because prison environments and regimes were designed for younger inmates (Mann, 2016:514). They have particular coping mechanisms, like drawing on past experiences of overcoming difficulties, and earning the respect of officers (Ibid.). Women tend to find being separated from their children particularly difficult, and to be more concerned about privacy and autonomy (Crewe, 2016). Women self-harm at much higher rates, which is not necessarily the result of imprisonment– they often have histories of similar behaviour in the community, and often explain suicide attempts in prison as the result of traumatic life experiences outside prison and before their incarceration (Borrill, Snow, Medlicott, Teers & Paton, 2005). Some prisoners use self-harm to alleviate emotional and mental-health difficulties (Ibid.).

Inmates help each other cope with imprisonment; in men's prisons peer support involves mainly social and economic assistance, whereas in women's establishments it is mainly emotional (Crewe, 2016). However, some women prefer dealing with problems on their own, or hide their emotions (Borrill et al., 2005) and

male prisoners sometimes comfort each other (Wilson, 2004). Formalized peer support roles can help those receiving support, and also those offering it (Crewe, 2016), however, there are risks of peer supporters breaching confidentiality (Borrill et al., 2005). Empathetic staff can also help prisoners cope with problems, however inmates often lack sufficient access to supportive officers (Ibid.). Some prisoners find counseling services effective, however such processes can resurface problems that inmates then struggle to deal with (Ibid.). Meaningful activities help reduce the extreme boredom of imprisonment (Mann, 2016) and so prisoners cope through keeping busy: doing in-cell activities, working, and working out (Borrill et al. 2005).

Like older prisoners (Mann, 2016), LGBT inmates might have particular needs. Particular pains of imprisonment for them might involve queerphobic bullying and discrimination, having to conceal their gender or sexuality, coercive relationships, and lacking access to appropriate housing, healthcare and resources. LGBT-friendly staff, support groups, external organisations and cultural resources can help LGBT inmates cope with imprisonment.

Legitimacy, Power and Resistance

Prisons maintain order through a combination of reward and punishment, however different establishments wield power differently, for example women's prisons tend to have more infantilizing and trivial rules (Crewe, 2016). While staff hold the monopoly on the legitimate use of force, they tend to exercise power informally

(Arnold, 2016). Instead of strictly enforcing all rules, they maintain order through discretion-based selective implementation (Ibid.).

Prisoners assess legitimacy according to whether procedures are fair and outcomes consistent, staff behaviour, and the quality of prison regimes (Sparks, Bottoms & Hay, 1996). Prisoners have been known to resist what they consider unjust treatment, including through collective action, though this is less common since the introduction of the IEP scheme, which promotes access to improved conditions through individual compliance (Crewe, 2016). Prisoners are rather fatalistic, and so rather than engaging in overt acts of resistance, they largely tolerate the status quo while challenging institutional power through small, symbolic actions (Carrabine, 2005). Resistance is performed through 'everyday, minor acts of subversion' including through physical appearance and assertions of identity (Crewe, 2016).

Wilson (2004) found that young black men resist penal control through 'keeping quiet' or 'going nuts' depending on how fairly and respectfully they feel treated - when staff exercise power in a way they consider unjustified, they vocally display their anger, often resulting in physical restraints. These prisoners are often ill-informed regarding formal discrimination complaints procedures, doubt that complaints against staff would be taken seriously, and worry about retaliation (Ibid.). Young black men's engagement with staff is shaped by their relative disempowerment in the outside community (Ibid.).

Certain groups have a reputation for disobedience, with Muslim prisoners now considered the most defiant and rebellious (Crewe, 2016.). Older prisoners tend to be most complaint - they pose little threat to staff's physical safety, but challenge the legitimacy of staff authority through non-physical means, like contesting the femininity of female officers (Mann, 2016). Similarly, Wilson (2004:326) reports young black men insisting that officers are 'pussies' on the streets, undermining their power, and elevating their own relative status.

Like young black men, the marginalization of LGBT people in the community might shape their engagement with authorities in terms of issues like complaints – 81% of LGBT people in the community forgo reporting hate crimes, believing they will not be taken seriously (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018d). Based on the stereotypes discussed in Chapter 1, gay and bisexual men would be considered particularly submissive to prison staff, and lesbian women oppositional. Prisoners' participation in prohibited sexual relationships, or vocal identity assertions, might be interpreted as subversive responses to perceived institutional illegitimacy.

Staff Roles and Culture

While officers invariably value security most highly, their roles extend far beyond keeping inmates in prison (Arnold, 2016), for example acting as carers for older inmates, despite their lack of health and social care training (Mann, 2016). Similarly, healthcare staff must combine care and control orientations - treating patients as prisoners (Ibid.). When values compete, staff must make choices between security

and prisoners' wellbeing (Arnold, 2016). Cuts to prison budgets and staff numbers encourage officers to focus more on 'the basics' of their jobs (Ibid.:280).

People usually become prison officers with the desire to improve prisoners' lives, yet cynicism towards inmates is deeply ingrained in officer culture (Ibid.). Arnold (2016) explains that staff tend to regard prisoners as dishonest and dangerous, making them wary of informal and proactive engagements with them. Staff are highly loyal to each other in the interests of protecting themselves both physically and psychologically (Ibid). Officers use humour to cope with difficult experiences like prisoner suicide, and in their daily interactions with prisoners to generate rapport and diffuse conflicts (Ibid.). Officers' humour can have 'undertones of mockery, derision and sarcasm' and therefore be considered 'inappropriate, unprofessional and insensitive' (Ibid.:281). Staff behavior has recently shifted in light of being constructed as role models for inmates and the increased likelihood of being disciplined for discriminatory comments (Ibid.).

The humour inherent to officer culture might influence staff reactions to queerphobia, and other sensitive topics like sexual relationships, rape, and strip searches. Their deeply held cynicism towards prisoners contextualizes the suspicion towards transgender women noted above. The recent re-prioritisation of the 'bread and butter' of their role (Ibid.:272) might make officers less inclined and equipped to support LGBT prisoners.

Prisoner Subcultures and Social Relations

The prisoner community is roughly divided into flexible subgroups, which are loosely structured around characteristics like religion, age and geographical region (Crewe, 2016:). Some prisoners, for example Muslims, tend to form more fixed and mutually exclusive groups, providing each other solidarity, material and social support (Ibid.). The prevalence of prisoners with particular characteristics can influence their experiences, for example black prisoners can feel isolated in establishments with few black inmates (Wilson, 2004). While loose sub-groups exist, most prisoner relationships are 'transient, instrumental and defensive' (Crewe, 2016:87).

British research, like American prison studies, identifies an inmate code. It is nuanced, flexible, and difficult to define – its general rules have exceptions, for example displays of vulnerability are prohibited, but permitted in 'emotion zones' like faith centres (Liebling & Crewe, 2012:912). The inmate code differs between establishments, for example victimizing vulnerable prisoners is considered legitimate in young offender institutions (YOIs) but frowned upon in adult prisons (Crewe, 2016). Prisons are structured according to an inmate hierarchy - the most subjugated prisoners being sex offenders and those who are 'unintelligent, provincial, cowardly, mentally unstable, poor copers, criminally naïve, or who inform on others' (Crewe, 2016:89). To avoid victimization and gain status prisoners often adopt a tough persona and engage in fights (Wilson, 2004).

LGBT support groups might enable gender and sexual minorities to form subgroups that provide mutual support. However, the limited number of openly

LGBT inmates might render them prone to feeling isolated. The inmate code might limit their ability to express the pain induced by queerphobia. The victimization of LGBT prisoners, and their resulting violence, noted above, can be contextualized within broader strategies to climb prisoner hierarchies. British prison studies have overlooked sexual and romantic relationships as structuring social relations in prison.

Prisoners' Identities

Imprisonment affects people differently depending on their characteristics. For example, as noted above, prisons are less equipped to cater for old and disabled people (Crewe, 2016), limiting their opportunities to form social relationships and establish positive self-identities in an environment that values masculinity and youth (Mann, 2016). With fewer opportunities to work, exercise, or fight, they establish masculinity through other means, like adopting father figure relationships with female staff (Ibid.:522). Other male prisoners also achieve masculinity in relation to female officers through 'discourses of charm, chivalry and the 'good son'', as much as through toxic masculinity (Crewe, 2016:91).

Staff can question the identities that prisoners construct for themselves. For example, inmates might define themselves as 'mixed race', but be considered 'black' by officers (Wilson, 2004) and staff sometimes suspect prisoners of falsely claiming identities for instrumental reasons (Phillips, 2012). Black prisoners tend to feel less

respected than other inmates, and racism remains pervasive, though less overt than in U.S. prisons (Crewe, 2016).

Like older and disabled prisoners, LGBT inmates might lack access to hegemonic routes for positive identities in prison, and so produce affirming self-concepts through different means. LGBT experiences of bullying and discrimination might be contextualized within prisoners' high regard for normative forms of masculinity. Suspicion towards transgender prisoners' asserted identities can be seen within wider contests over claimed characteristics. LGBT prisoners' coming out decisions could inform the British literature on identities behind bars, which largely overlooks choices to conceal or disclose stigmatized identities.

Conclusion

This chapter has summarised the British literature on LGBT prisoners, drawing out key themes regarding their experiences. It has contextualised emerging data on LGBT prisoners' experiences within the broader British prison studies literature. While existing British research offers important insights into LGBT prisoners' experiences, their voices are notably absent from the limited literature, which I seek to address through Chapters 4 to 7. First, I turn to methodological concerns.

Chapter 3: Methods

Introduction

Having reviewed the relevant literature, this chapter provides the methodological context for the chapters that follow. I explain how I accessed participating establishments and individuals, before discussing key aspects of the fieldwork process and summarising my approach to data analysis. I then turn to positionality, explaining how my identities influenced my topic choice, data collection and analysis. I explain that in turn, conducting research influenced my sense of self. Finally, I consider ethics, illustrating my efforts, and sometimes failures, to uphold the principles of 'beneficence' - maximising societal benefits, and 'non-maleficence' - avoiding causing harm (Israel & Hay, 2011:505).

Qualitative methods were most suitable given the exploratory nature of my research (Ritchie, 2003). Initially, I planned to use three – observing LGBT support groups, interviewing staff, inmates and professionals, and analysing administrative documents. Researching both men's and women's establishments was important given vast differences between the two estates, particularly in terms of sexual/romantic relationships (Crewe, 2007; Hensley & Tewksbury, 2002; Howard League for Penal Reform, 2014). Struggling to access LGBT respondents in men's prisons, I adopted a fourth method, placing a call for letters in the prison newspaper *Inside Time*.

Access

The more closed a setting is to public scrutiny, the harder it is to secure research access (Noaks & Wincup, 2004), making accessing prisons particularly arduous. Before fieldwork, I gained ethical approval from my university, and applied to do research in prisons through NOMS, now HMPPS. Upon my supervisor's advice, I pursued access to one establishment at a time, since the individual prison's governor and regional psychological services review single applications, rather than the full National Research Committee (NRC) increasing the likelihood of access. By chance, my supervisor met a Deputy Director of Custody (DDC) who expressed interest in my research. I met with them, and secured their support for conducting fieldwork in the public prisons within their geographical region of responsibility¹⁸. Social contacts often help researchers secure access (Noaks & Wincup, 2004).

According to the latest HMIP and Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) reports, two prisons in this region had active LGBT groups. However, the DDC's office reported that only one men's prison had an active support group – a different establishment to the one I had identified through publicly accessible reports. This establishment was a Category C prison for sentenced prisoners. The DDC encouraged the governor to grant me access:

Her research seems interesting and fits well with our work on Decency and Rehabilitative Cultures...I would appreciate it if you could facilitate the research

¹⁸ I keep my fieldwork sites anonymous, which requires removing specific details particularly in the women's establishment given the small size of the female prison estate (Rowe, 2014).

The governor agreed, and suggested I also undertake fieldwork at a nearby women's establishment, cc'ing in the governor. I explained that I had been advised to apply to one prison at a time, and that this establishment apparently lacked an LGBT group to observe. The governor replied explaining they in fact had 'an active group',¹⁹ and were happy to host my research. The women's prison housed both sentenced and un-sentenced prisoners, and some young offenders.

The head of equalities at the men's establishment allowed me to start at my convenience, and so I began fieldwork in February 2016, spending seven full days at the prison. On the penultimate day of fieldwork I received an email regarding my NOMS application, requesting three minor amendments. I was asked not to provide prisoners with drinks and snacks, to always gain written, as well as verbal, consent, and to explicitly state on both consent forms the parameters of confidentiality (that I would have to report participants posing a risk of harm to themselves or others) – I had included this on the staff consent form, but accidentally omitted it on the prisoner version. By chance, I had already implemented these amendments – it was not practical to provide refreshments, I always secured written consent, and had explained verbally the limits of confidentiality. The third request was to remove the word 'Queer':

Although I believe the term "Queer" is used within academia it does not sit well with the decency agenda and would therefore require you to change this term throughout

¹⁹ It transpired that the prison held forums for LGBT inmates every other month alongside similar forums for other protected characteristics. I had intended to visit establishments with *support* groups, but uncovering the differences between LGBT groups proved informative.

I had used the word 'queer' on some documents, given its use in the title of my thesis. Gender and sexual minorities have reclaimed this slur, though while some use it to self-identify, others still despise it (Vincent, 2018b).

I spent 17 full days at the women's prison between March and April 2016, arranging access informally with the governor. I applied to conduct fieldwork in a further men's prison, outside the DDC's region, after hearing about a successful LGBT support group there. I explained that I had interviewed staff from the charity facilitating their group, who had invited me to observe a session with the prison's agreement. I noted that I had received NOMS approval from another men's establishment, and been granted access by the governor of a women's prison. The LGBT lead²⁰ passed on my details to relevant NOMS officials, and ultimately insisted I apply 'through the proper NRC channels'. On the penultimate day of research at the women's prison, NOMS's regional lead psychologist emailed regarding my research there, explaining that before commencing I needed to apply to the NRC. Although they asserted, 'all research has to be logged with the NRC via the application process', in practice, governors clearly have autonomy to disregard these rules. Having received sufficient data through letter participants, I decided against formally applying to conduct further research in prisons.

²⁰ From conversations with a researcher at that establishment it transpired that this member of staff was particularly strict regarding procedures.

Men's prison

Having been informed there was an active LGBT group at the men's prison, during my initial meeting there I learned that the two gay men who comprised the group, which had only been held twice, had both recently left. Upon asking how the group was advertised, the head of safer prisons and equality realised it was unpublicised. He arranged for adverts to be posted under every cell door, hoping to establish a group by the time I started fieldwork:

Notice to Prisoners

Inside and Out is the new support network at [REDACTED] for Gay Prisoners, if you would like to be a part of this support network, participating in focus groups, preparing for up and coming events, offering support to other Prisoners, please complete a general application form to the Safer Custody Team, who will then be contact with you to discuss this further.

Jan 2016

issued
Sat 23rd
Jan
2016

No prisoners responded to the establishment's advert, so I created my own, which staff posted to all inmates:

Research on Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Prisoners

My name is Mia Harris and I am doing a PhD in Criminology at Oxford University. My research focuses on how gay, bisexual and transgender people experience being in prison. I want to hear your views regardless of your own gender or sexuality.

To arrange to speak with me in private please write to me stating your name and prison number. Put this in a sealed envelope in the Discrimination Incident Reporting Form (DIRF) box. If you would like to write about your views rather than speaking with me in person then please submit a letter in a sealed envelope in the DIRF box.

Anything that you say or write to me will remain anonymous and confidential unless I have reason to believe that you pose an immediate risk of harm to yourself or others.

Thanks for reading, and I look forward to hearing from you!

I only received one reply, from a straight, cisgender prisoner, Barry, who had misunderstood my advert, believing I was a member of staff recruiting an LGBT representative. In casual conversation, two prisoners suggested I would only receive joke letters, written on behalf of prisoners by friends who wanted to pretend they were gay. Some LGBT inmates might have been uninterested in participating, but I suspect others felt unable to take part. It is difficult accessing participants who have 'considerable motivation to remain "unknown"' (Jenness, 2010:522).

I would have preferred to recruit in person to establish rapport and trust. However, given the limited duration of my fieldwork, staff decided it was simpler to escort me than arrange access to keys. Research inevitably places demands on staff (Noaks & Wincup, 2004) and given understaffing, I chose not to request an escort for face-to-face recruitment. After observing the induction process, I was able to recruit three induction mentors myself – Joey, Robbie and Faisel. A senior officer (SO) in safer custody recruited two further prisoners - a black, Muslim prisoner, Trent, and a traveller prisoner, Johnny, for their awareness of equality and diversity issues. I was conscious they might have been selected to provide a good impression (Roberts & Indermaur, 2008) however, Trent's vocal criticism of the prison, and his claims to be well-known for speaking his mind, reassured me that he had not been chosen to push a particular agenda.

Alongside my 6 prisoner participants, I interviewed 10 staff - officers, offender managers, healthcare administrators, two SOs in safer custody (Bethan and Becca), a chaplain (Joel) an IMB member, a training coordinator and an equality

officer. I was based in the safer custody office, where staff sometimes enabled social access to fellow staff, making initial contact on my behalf. I had access to a computer there, and gathered ethnographic data while 'hanging out' (Jenness, 2010:535) and opportunistically interviewed staff present there. I photocopied and analysed relevant restricted access documents, including minutes of previous LGBT groups. I learned of relevant documents during interviews, and staff facilitated access to them.

Women's prison

At the women's prison, I conducted formal interviews with 13 members of staff, including education and healthcare staff, a chaplain, a probation officer, a drug and alcohol support worker, a family engagement worker and equalities officers. I also conducted formal interviews with 32 prisoners. I interviewed 4 prisoners twice, and 2 prisoners 3 times. I also had numerous informal conversations with staff and prisoners.

The governor responsible for LGBT inmates invited several prisoners to participate in my research before my arrival, in ways that staff and prisoners found problematic. An officer approached Ali:

He said, 'Ali, are you gay?'...And then, 'do you want to go to this thing?'...Afterwards he shouted me over and he went... 'The question I asked you earlier on, do you think it was appropriate?' I said, 'I'm not really that bothered, me.... Why?' He said, 'because the Governor asked me to ask that, I don't think that was appropriate.' So I was like 'yeah, I'm not arsed...but I can see why some are' and I thought that was nice of him. He must have not felt comfortable ...So I don't know

if the Governor don't have a clue about how to fucking talk about this shit or what.

Neither the officer nor Ali understood the purpose of my research – a further problem with this recruitment process. Paula was similarly confused:

They said, 'do you know anyone that's gay on the Wing?' and I said, 'well that's a fucking stupid question, there's a load of people' ...I thought they were looking for somebody...I thought somebody had hidden in somebody's room...And I went, 'well what do you want somebody for?..I'm not naming people unless you tell me what it's for', because I thought they were asking me to grass...And then they went, 'nah it's just we need somebody to go up and talk to somebody about gay'.

Paula was insulted by the officers' heteronormative presumption that she was straight:

I said 'well I'll go up', and the two of them nearly give themselves whiplash. They went like that. [Turns head quickly]...Because I don't go out parading on the Wing and that, holding people's hands, and going around with big love bites on me neck, and I don't have short hair, they were just shocked. They went, 'no fucking way', and they went, 'Will you go?' and I went, 'yeah that's no problem.' ...They were shocked to see it off me because I am dead feminine...and me husband comes to see me with the kids. They were like, 'fucking hell'. Just because I'm not out there, but what does a lesbian have to look like?

I interviewed the handful of prisoners that the LGBT lead had well-meaningly invited, but recruited the vast majority of participants myself. The LGBT lead had struggled with recruitment, with inmates not 'forthcoming about their sexuality'. She therefore enabled me to recruit prisoners:

We've arranged that if you go down to the wing they'll introduce you to the ladies...It's a captive audience.

I approached prisoners during their association, explaining my research and handing out short adverts similar to the one produced for the men's establishment. Speaking in person allowed prisoners to put a face to a name, ask questions and easily arrange interviews. Ali, who I had previously interviewed, rushed over to say hello and helped me gain 'social access' (Noaks and Wincup, 2004:63), telling people 'I know her...she's sound'. People were interested in my research, and there was an air of excitement. Prisoners I approached often told me upfront they were gay or bisexual, or joked about the prevalence of lesbians in prison. Some women said they were ineligible to participate, being straight, some referencing prison officers' previous recruitment on my behalf. I explained I was interested in everyone's views, which they valued. I distributed adverts to inmates living in other locations. The timing meant I was unable to speak to many directly, and so I left adverts for them. A safer custody orderly volunteered to deliver the final leaflets later in the day when prisoners were locked up. No prisoners contacted me having just seen the advert - only those inmates who I spoke with face-to-face participated, suggesting that meeting LGBT prisoners in person significantly increases participation rates.

Like at the men's establishment, I was based in the safer custody department. Towards the end of fieldwork I was allocated a particular desk, but beforehand was based in the general area, also open to prisoners. Inmates worked there as orderlies, and others went there for help. Christine, the head prisoner orderly, commented that I became 'part of the unit'. I interviewed most orderlies, and some inmates visiting the department. I also used snowball sampling - participants often suggested I talk with other prisoners with particular experiences

to share. I interviewed some participants multiple times, if there was more ground to cover or circumstances changed – for example I re-interviewed Billie after she approached me explaining that her partner had been ‘shipped out’. Carrying keys provided ‘autonomy and mobility’ (Crewe, 2009:467) enabling frequent informal interactions, which often resulted in further interviews.

I interviewed a range of staff - healthcare workers, family engagement workers, a probation officer, a chaplain (Alfred) the head of safer prisons and equalities (Debbie) an education manager (Roger) a mental health manager, a PE instructor, a nurse, a Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service (DARS) coordinator (Aidan) a governor responsible for LGBT inmates (Paige) and an equalities officer (Brian). At the prison’s Pride event I met staff from a nearby male establishment who invited me to meet LGBT prisoners there - a further example of snowball sampling.

I observed two ‘support groups’ at the women’s prison; one focused on the protected characteristic of ‘sex’, and the other combined ‘sexual orientation’ and ‘gender reassignment’. The latter meeting was meant to occur on my first day of fieldwork but was postponed due to benchmarking. The LGBT lead offered to rearrange it for a time that suited me, showing my impact on the research site. Unfortunately, the LGBT lead was unable to attend the rescheduled meeting, and it was cut short due to an unexpected lockdown. Interestingly, many prisoners did not know that the LGBT forum was a regular provision, and some believed I had established it – Charlotte admonishing the governor leading it for wasting my time given he ‘didn’t have a fucking clue’ what he was doing.

Community Stakeholders

I interviewed 7 professionals in the community - staff at LGBT and HIV charities, a prison researcher, Iris and a mental health nurse, Oliver. I found initial participants through purposive sampling (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003), who recommended further professionals, who they sometimes introduced via email, aiding access. Some interviews were conducted via phone or Skype for practical and financial reasons, but where possible were face-to-face. Remote interviews allowed less opportunity to build rapport and establish a conversational tone (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Remote interviews can pose technical difficulties (Bryman, 2012) and I struggled in particular to hear one participant and had static feedback on the recording. As with my interviews in prisons, these interviews were semi-structured – I built on my interview schedule using follow-up questions to gain additional information and explore unanticipated topics (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Advertising Behind Bars

Are you Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Questioning your gender or sexuality (LGBTQ)? If so, I want to hear from you!	
I am a PhD student at Oxford University and my name is Mia Harris. My research explores how people who identify as LGBTQ experience being in prison.	
If you are an LGBTQ person in prison then I'd be interested to hear about your experiences, good and bad. In your letter, please include some basic information about yourself, such as your age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and religion. It would also be helpful to know how long you have spent in prison. Feel free to write as much as you would like to.	
Please send your letter to me at Mia Harris, Centre for Criminology, Manor Road Building, Manor Road, Oxford, OX1 3UQ. If you would like me to reply to you then please provide a return address. I will enclose a stamped envelope in my reply so that you can respond if you would like to.	
Please note: I will store your letter securely, and nobody else will have access to it. I might quote your letter in academic publications or presentations, however if I do this then I will make sure that you remain anonymous. Everything you tell me is confidential, however if I believe that you are going to harm yourself or others then I am required to tell the prison.	
	Thanks for reading and I look forward to hearing from you!
	

Using letters enables access to a wide range of prisoners without the time and resource implications entailed by face-to-face research (Vannier, 2018). I submitted an advert to the April 2016 edition of *Inside Time*, a free monthly newspaper distributed across British prisons:

The advert cost £420, a discounted rate for academics and charities, and I could use colour at no extra cost. I used rainbow colours for the background, making it instantly recognisable as LGBT (the rainbow flag has been used for this purpose since 1978).

I asked an enthusiastic participant at the women's prison, Emma, to help finalise the advert, recognising that participants have expertise on effectively engaging their communities (Vincent, 2018b). After consulting staff, I arranged to reimburse Emma by adding money to her account. Staff advised me that paying the going rate for research assistance could lead to Emma being targeted. Other researchers recommend paying prisoners commensurately with prison work (Roberts & Indermaur, 2008:315), however paying less than £1 felt embarrassing. I agreed on £5, equivalent to roughly half a week's wages. Emma was proud of her involvement, and suggested she wanted to do similar work in the community.

My advert called for participants who were LGBT or questioning their identity. Since gender and sexuality are 'fluid, blurred and contingent' it might appear illogical to use terms implying coherence and solidity (Browne & Nash, 2010:11). There is a tension in researchers employing identity categories while acknowledging their incoherence (Jenness, 2010), and I was conscious that using these specific categories might produce a skewed representation of gender and sexual minorities' experiences (Browne & Nash, 2010). However, the familiar identity categories I used on my advert elicited responses from people with diverse

minoritised genders and sexualities. Fred wrote despite feeling disconnected from these labels:

I'm unsure of what help, if any, I might be... as I don't feel I identify as LGBT. I have an unusual outlook on sexuality... I believe you fall in love with who you fall in love with. I have been told that this makes me bisexual, but I don't believe so.

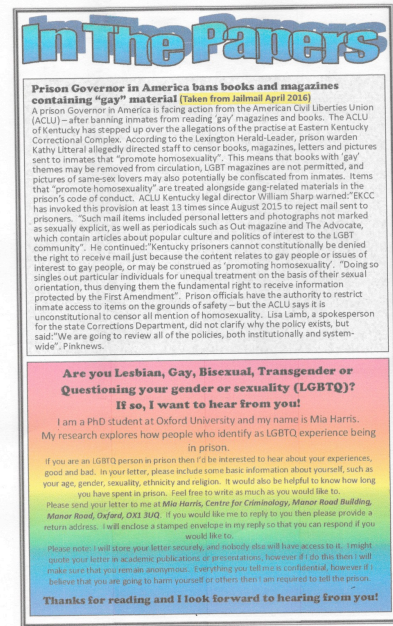
Similarly, Avi did not subscribe to 'the stereotypical categorisation of individuals', but referred to himself as 'homosexual' for the purposes of my study. A cross-dresser who did not identify as LGBT wrote to me, and I received a particularly interesting letter from Benjamin:

I read your ad in 'Inside Time' asking for accounts of LGBTQ peoples' experiences in prison. Although I don't fit neatly into one of those categories, I do think that I'm part of a significant sexual minority. In the UK, discrimination against us is legal, compulsory and extremely popular. Much of that is justifiable, but some isn't. You've probably worked this out! My repeated convictions...are for downloading illegal images of children. Those convictions are due consequence of my unfortunate and exclusive sexual orientation towards children...The LGBTQ communities have widely distanced themselves from us for generally sound reasons. Did I choose my sexuality? No. Am I responsible for ensuring it causes no harm to others? Of course.²¹

My letter correspondence enabled further physical access to prisons. Several participants invited me to visit LGBT support groups, and I participated in two day-visits to male sex offender prisons. Sometimes these visits were not possible to arrange - I missed one planned visit due to ill health, and when Shane invited me to an event at his prison it proved too late for staff to grant me access – instead he summarised the event and sent copies of the pamphlets and flyers distributed.

²¹ Due to space constraints I am unable to engage with paedophilia in this thesis.

Prisoners shared my advert with other potential participants. Stanley tried to 'drum up' replies at his prison's LGBT group, which motivated Larry to participate. He in-turn encouraged a friend at another establishment to participate, who later wrote to me. Gerry reproduced my advert word-for-word in his establishment's LGBT newsletter:



Letters as a Method

I received approximately 200 letters from 67 prisoners. I replied to each letter and corresponded with most participants multiple times. The majority of letter correspondence took place between April 2016 and March 2017.

Correspondent	Gender and/or sexuality	Number of letters received	Type of establishment(s) at time of writing
Kevin	Bisexual man	6	Category D, Category C Sex Offender
Peter	Gay man	2	Category B Local
Daniel	Bisexual man	3	Category B Training
Katherine	Trans woman	2	Women's Prison, Scotland
Richard	Gay man	1 (my reply was returned saying he'd been released)	Category B Local
Nicholas	Gay man	3	Category B Local, Category C
Ken	Gay man	2	Category C training

Robert	Bisexual man	2	Category C sex offender
William	“Open” man	7	Category B Local
George	Unknown man	1	YOI
Sam	Bisexual man	3	Category B Local
Jasmin	Transgender woman, straight	7	High security
Glenn	Gay man	2	Local Prison, Scotland
Sebastian	Gay man	3	Category C Sex Offender
Derek	Unknown man	1	High Security
Gerry	Gay man	3	Category C Sex Offender
Gordon	Gay man	2	Category B Local
Tony	Bisexual man	2	Long-term offenders, Scotland
Larry	Bisexual man	4	Category C Sex Offender
Dennis	Gay man	3	Mixed-Classification, Scotland
Greg	Bisexual man	1	Category C
Owen	“Gay (sometimes bisexual)” man	3	Category C
Colin	Gay man	3	Local Prison
Heather	Transgender woman, bisexual [data omitted due to false claims]	5	Category D
Aaron	Bisexual man	4	Category B Local, Category B Training
Niall	Gay man	2	Medium security, Ireland
Harry	Bisexual man	2	Category B Training
Lee	Bisexual man	4	Category B Local
Stanley	Gay man	3	Category C Sex Offender
Avi	Gay man	3	High Security
Graham	Bisexual man	2	Category C Sex Offender
AJ	Gay man	1	YOI
Fred	“You fall in love with who you fall in love with”	1	Category B Local
Zach	Gay man	3	Category B Local
Sean	Gay man	3	High Security
Sandra	Gay transgender woman	1	Women’s open prison

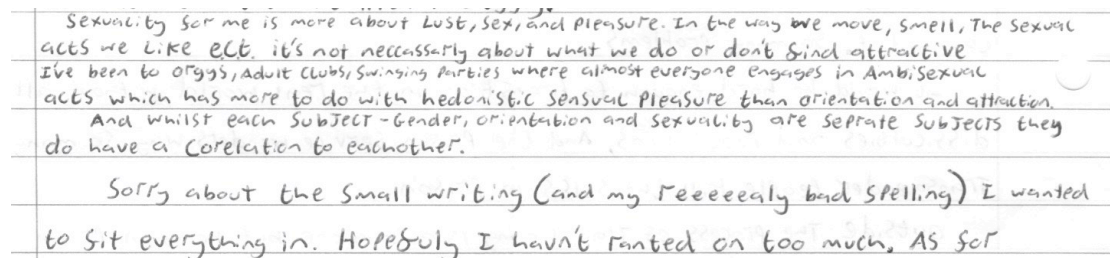
Megan	Gay transgender woman	2	Category C
Robin	Gay man	3	Category C
Sienna	Transgender woman	5	Category C sex offender, Category C sex offender
Connor	Gay man	1	Category C sex offender
Liam	Gay man	1	Category B local
Leo	Straight cross-dresser	3	Category C sex offender
Martin	Gay man	3	High security
Shane	Bisexual man	4	Category C sex offender
Gilbert	Straight man	1	High security
Bob	Gay man	3	Category B training
Tom	Bi-gendered, assigned male at birth. Attracted to men.	2	Category C sex offender
Jenny	Transgender woman	4	Category C sex offender
Ricky	Bisexual man	2	Category C sex offender
Lucas	Bisexual man	4	Category C sex offender
Ben	Gay man	4	Category B sex offender, Category C
Addison	Transgender woman	3	Local prison
Edward	Gay man	3	Category D
Justin	Bisexual, non-binary, assigned male at birth	6	Category C sex offender
Raymond	Unknown, wrote about learning disabilities	1	Category B training
Lilly	Bisexual transgender woman	4	Category B local
Kyle	Bisexual man	2	Mixed category prison, Scotland
Farah	Gay woman	1	Women's prison
Idrees	Gay man	2	Category C
Becky	Transgender	13	Category B local

	woman, bisexual		
Benjamin	“minor-attracted man”, attracted to boys and girls	4	Local prison, Scotland
Nicole	Trans Woman, Bisexual	3	Category B Local, Category C, Sex Offender
Jason	Gay	2	Category C, Sex Offender
Courtney	Trans woman, lesbian	1	Training prison, Scotland
Ted	Gay	8	Category B Local, Category B Training
Curtis	Gay	2	Category B Local
Desmond	Gay	1 (and 1 email)	Category B Local

As seen in the table above, I received letters from a range of establishments, including Category A, B, C and D, local prisons and training prisons. Participants wrote to me from 49 different establishments, including two in Wales, five in Scotland and one in the Republic of Ireland. It is worth noting that my letter correspondents wrote about their experiences not only in their current establishments, but also in previous prisons, broadening my insights.

Only three participants wrote from women’s prisons, and only one cisgender woman wrote to me – Farah. Notably, Farah wrote seeking my assistance to fight her deportation, as discussed later in the chapter. I interpret the lack of cisgender women writing to me as the result of the increased openness regarding non-heterosexuality in women’s prisons. The lack of letters from women’s establishments does not limit my findings given my numerous interviews in the women’s prison.

Some letters were short; others extremely lengthy – William sent a 15-page letter across two separate envelopes and written a few days apart. Other participants, including Jasmin and Martin, were only permitted to write four pages. Jasmin apologized for her writing becoming increasingly small:



Sexuality for me is more about Lust, Sex, and Pleasure. In the way we move, smell, The sexual acts we like etc. it's not necessarily about what we do or don't find attractive. I've been to orgies, Adult clubs, Swinging parties where almost everyone engages in Ambisexual acts which has more to do with hedonistic sensual pleasure than orientation and attraction. And whilst each Subject - Gender, orientation and sexuality are separate Subjects they do have a correlation to each other.

Sorry about the small writing (and my reeeeeally bad spelling) I wanted to fit everything in. Hopefully I haven't ranted on too much. As for

While Jasmin apologized for spelling, others apologized for unclear handwriting – Justin only had access to a broken pen. At times I struggled to interpret meaning due to participants' handwriting, spelling and grammatical errors. A few participants clearly had limited writing ability, so I was particularly conscious to use simple language in responses to them²². I received one letter written by a probation officer on behalf of a prisoner who was presumably unable to write himself. It was frustrating that some prisoners' low literacy levels limited their participation via letter - I imagine speaking face-to-face would have facilitated more in-depth discussions with them.²³

²² I sometimes used words that participants did not understand – Shane asked what I meant by 'rationale'.

²³ My advert only being in English might have excluded some LGBT prisoners.

Prisoners often enclosed additional items like drawings, newspaper clippings, newsletters, personal documents, or Christmas cards. Colin sent the following leaflet advertising LGBT support at his prison:



A few prisoners attached LGBT stickers to their envelopes, turning our correspondence into a political act – Larry was ‘a great believer in letting Royal Mail get a message across!’ He used stickers from Stonewall, and LGBT organisations local to his establishment, others attached their prison’s LGBT support group logo.



I wrote replies on the computer, which created an instant record and was quick thanks to a template:

Mia Harris,
Centre for Criminology,
St Cross Building,
University of Oxford,
St Cross Road,
Oxford,
OX1 3UL

Dear

With my very best wishes,

Mia Harris

Please note:

If you have a concern or complaint about my research then you can contact my supervisor at Dr Rachel Condry, Centre for Criminology, St Cross Building, University of Oxford, St Cross Road, Oxford, OX1 3UL.

If you remain unhappy after her response then she will send you the contact details of Oxford University's Research Ethics Committee, who will deal with your complaint.

I also used a template for ending correspondence:

Feel free to get back in touch with me if you:

- Have any further information that you would like to share with me concerning what it is like being LGBT in prison
- Have any questions about my research
- Would like to receive a copy of my research findings. (If you would like a copy of my results then please update me with any changes of address).

Thanks again for participating, I really appreciate it and I hope that my findings will help to improve prisons for LGBT people.

I provided participants with lined paper and a stamped envelope, so that participation did not incur costs. Unfortunately, some establishments confiscated lined paper and unaddressed envelopes. Some prisons even prohibited envelopes that were addressed:

Dear MIA

Stamps and Stamped Addressed Envelopes are not allowed to be sent in via the post.

In your recent correspondence with [REDACTED] stamps or S.A.E were found, due to new procedures that have recently been put in place where by prisoners are only allowed to purchase stamps from the prison canteen shop.

I am therefore returning

- 1x Stamped addressed envelope

The level of rapport I established with some letter correspondents surprised me, however others struggled to open up. Derek wrote:

I think that I'll hold back from entering into dialogue re: the catalyst of your expertise/subject matter, for the time being, until I gauge as to whether I can talk to you/TRUST you!

Advertising research without providing a clear rationale for the study can produce skepticism and hesitancy to participate (Staples, Bird, Masters & George, 2018), so a more detailed advert might have been beneficial. I tried to gain Derek's trust, explaining that I understood his hesitancy to disclose personal information, and offering to answer any questions. Unfortunately, he never replied. Derek clearly had broader trust issues, explaining at great length that the police and media had manipulated information about him. Likewise, Connor was reluctant to share personal information without building trust:

It is really good that a PhD student is doing research on us LGBTQ and I would love to be able to provide you with information, But I am cautious about releasing such personal info to a person I don't know, so for this ~~letter~~ First letter I will tell you ~~a~~ brief info about me.

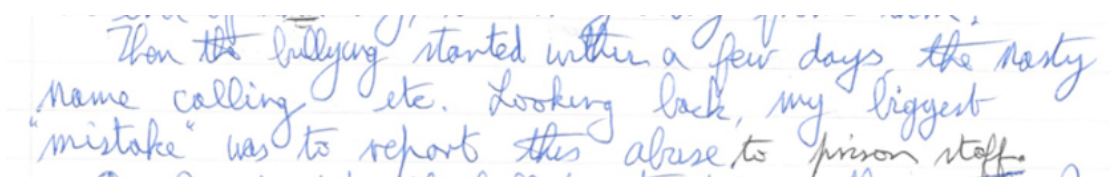
Connor did not reply to my response, indicating I failed to appease his concerns:

Thanks very much for responding to my advert in *Inside Time*. It's been very helpful to hear about your experiences as a gay man in prison.

You said that you are cautious about telling me additional information in your first letter. That makes sense. I'd also be cautious of telling personal things to a researcher who I'd never met. Unfortunately the nature of my research means that I have to ask people who know very little about me to open up about personal matters. You asked me to tell you more about my research, and so I'll do that now.

While some participants were hesitant, others wrote lengthy, detailed accounts of sensitive, personal experiences. The distance that letters create can facilitate disclosure of personal information (Maybin, 2000), and clearly suited some participants. Peter found it easier communicating with somebody he did not know. Unexpectedly, we subsequently met in person when I attended his prison. He hardly spoke during the group discussion that an officer was facilitating, and left mid-way. I sensed his discomfort in meeting, which he had unanticipated during our correspondence. Former prisoners have suggested that due to confidentiality concerns they only felt able to participate in research on sex in prison after their release (Stevens, 2015). Letters are clearly another means of enabling prisoners to share intimate details of their sex lives.

Letters provide participants ample opportunity to reflect before sharing their experiences, unlike the instantaneous responses required from interviews. Some correspondents were very thoughtful - Martin evidently edited his responses using a different colour pen:



Then the bullying started within a few days the nasty name calling etc. Looking back, my biggest "mistake" was to report this abuse to prison staff.

Likewise, letters provided more control for me over the timing and nature of fieldwork. Given the time-limited nature of my prison visits, I tried to conduct as many interviews as possible, meaning that on several occasions I interviewed participants while tired or unwell. Interviews were often spontaneous, sometimes hampering their quality. For example, I opportunistically interviewed an officer, adapting an inappropriate interview guide on the spot, and ever-conscious that we could be interrupted at any moment by the colleague she was waiting for - unexpectedly it was actually an alarm bell that cut our interview short. Prison interviews can be stressful due to stringent time restrictions, and letters allow more measured, thoughtful responses (Vannier, 2018).

Letters also enabled access to prisoners' experiences over time. When Nicole wrote initially, I had to write her deadname on the envelope, but in the six weeks between her first and second letter, she had legally changed her name. It was very informative being able to track changes in prisoners' circumstances over time, rather than only having access to a snapshot.

Data Analysis

Data Processing

Alongside recording interviews (usually with two devices) I made notes in case of technical failure. On a couple of occasions my tape recorder ran out of battery, and

so I relied on my notes, which were often cramped and difficult to read - participants sometimes made comments like, 'I hope you can understand your scribbles'.

Having tendonitis meant I could not transcribe all interviews myself, and I received funding for 45 hours of transcription. I listened to the original recordings while reading these transcripts, enabling me to correct errors, and add omitted information, like conversations with people interrupting the interview. Errors were rife in the transcriptions, seemingly due to a lack of attention to detail and unfamiliarity with accents and terminology:

Actual Speech vs. Transcription	
Substance misuse wing	Substitute wing
Six man unlock	Six [0:09:54.7]
Samaritan's phone	A man on the phone
Cat D	Can't eat
Cat C	Can't see
Class C prison	Classy prison
Home detention	Whole potential
DIRF	Dare
Juvenile	June
Padded up	Pally up
Governor grades	Governor grace
Shia and Sunni Muslims	Sheer and sunny hostels
ROTL	Razzled

Walter Mitty	[0:43:23.7]
Don Corleone	[0:28:51.2]
Spice	[0:12:33.4]
A little bit of physical bullying	A lot of it was physical bullying
Being a grey man	Being a gay man
Hype themselves	Hide themselves
Big themselves up	Beat themselves up

The transcriber often omitted hesitations, mutterings while I skimmed the interview schedule, and the rewording of questions, providing an inaccurate semblance of order and efficiency. However, they noted every time I used cues, like ‘yeah’, or ‘ah ok’, resulting in participants’ sentences appearing over several lines, broken up by indications I was listening. I have omitted these for ease of reading. Listening to recordings while reading the transcripts enabled re-familiarisation with the data, voices helping me recall important contextual information, and consider factors like pace, tone and emphasis, aiding interpretation and analysis.

I photocopied and scanned letters, creating digital and hard copies. This was laborious but my efficiency improved over time. Typing out letters would have allowed for simpler information retrieval, but been a lengthy process requiring expensive assistance due to my tendonitis. Furthermore, my analysis benefited from working with letters in their raw format – I could consider crossings out, drawings, handwriting, text size, and so on, which would have been lost in a word-processed version. I have corrected participants’ spelling mistakes. Prisoners often had dyslexia

and without easy access to a dictionary, let alone autocorrect, most participants made unintentional errors. Correcting them creates consistency with interview transcripts, which don't reveal potential spelling errors that participants might have made in writing.

Data Analysis

During data-collection, I noted important themes as they arose, which I used to code the letters, interviews, documents and field-notes. I formulated new codes as I progressed, and split broad codes into smaller, more specific ones (Bryman, 2012). As my coding framework changed, I returned to data I had previously analysed, assessing it according to new categories. I used Microsoft Word, rather than software like NVivo, which has many functions superfluous to my needs. Having used Word to conduct thematic analyses in the past, it felt more intuitive and practical. Data analysis was highly time-consuming, given my quantity of data, the exploratory nature of my research, and my Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) discussed further below.

Data Presentation

Having produced lengthy documents of coded data, I set about creating coherent chapters. This required deciding which themes to present and what data to include and omit. Having OCD, I became consumed with the need to present my entire data, and each prisoner's story. I spent months painstakingly summarising and re-ordering

data, before eventually accepting that producing a thesis required omitting much of it.

It was difficult to move away from the minutia of participants' words, step back from the detail and trust both my ability to identify macro-level themes, and memory of data analysis. It is a common feature of OCD to lack confidence in memory (Samuels et al. 2017) and pay disproportionate attention to detail (Yovel, Revelle, Mineka, 2005). I took comfort from Crewe's (2009:486) explanation that 'more analytical' reflections replace fading memories, and Noaks and Wincup's (2004:70) reminder that all research is 'incomplete and imperfect', and so researchers must strive for a 'good enough' understanding, or 'run the risk of never completing the study'.

Positionality

Criminologists are paying increasing attention to how social location shapes data collection and analysis (Phillips & Bowling, 2003). Initial reflections on positionality centered on whether researchers were 'insiders' or 'outsiders' in relation to participants, and today the previously dichotomous insider/outsider binary is considered more of a spectrum (see Chavez, 2008). People are multidimensional, never 'just racialized, gendered or situated in some socioeconomic class' (Trahan, 2011:2) and so while researchers and participants might share some characteristics, they inevitably differ according to other axes of identity.

It is important that criminologists recognise the impossibility of producing impartial representations of social life, and acknowledge how their social location, and resulting power relations, shape the knowledge they produce (Phillips, 2012). Given the importance of power dynamics, we must reflect on our privileged as well as marginalized attributes, which we too often take for granted as 'the default' (Potter, 2015:4). For example, 'white male subjectivity' must be recognised as such, rather than 'masquerading as non-racial, non-gendered objectivity' (Crenshaw, 1989:46). Intersectionality theory provides a more nuanced account of identities, explaining they are inseparably connected rather than distinct and mutually exclusive (Burgess-Proctor, 2006).

I attempt to recognize and communicate the effects of my interconnected characteristics; however producing a 'complete picture' of my social location is impossible (Henne and Troshynski, 2013:467). People have 'endless constellations' of intersecting identities (Davis, 2008:77), and so the following list of relevant characteristics inevitably ends on what Butler (1989:143) calls an 'embarrassed 'etc.'': I am White British with no criminal convictions, middle-class and after attending state schools, studied at the most elite universities in the country – Cambridge and Oxford. I was 24 during the majority of fieldwork, am able-bodied, and have longstanding mental health problems.

A Bi-directional Influence

My sexuality influenced my choice of topic, which in turn influenced my gender identity. I began to “come out” as bisexual aged 20, and when I submitted my doctoral proposal, aged 21, planned to study stigma during former prisoners’ reintegration. Upon commencing my PhD I decided to include additional sources of stigma, related to ethnicity, disability, class, religion, *gender and sexuality*. My supervisor encouraged me to focus on fewer identities, and I gradually accepted my particular interest in gender and sexuality. At this point, I was relatively open about my bisexuality, and involved in the LGBT community. Acknowledging this research interest, and being able to share it with others felt like ‘coming out’. I would not have chosen this topic had I not become relatively comfortable with my own sexuality, especially since researching LGBT populations invites questions and assumptions regarding my own identity, as discussed below.

My PhD influenced how I understand my gender. I was assigned female at birth, but even as a young child never felt like a girl. I briefly thought I was a boy, but never felt attached to a male identity. I grew up a ‘tom boy’, but felt compelled to adopt a more feminine appearance during my teenage years. After coming out as bisexual, I re-adopted the more stereotypically masculine clothes I felt able to wear as a child. Through academic reading, I learned more about transgender people, who started to feel less other, alien, and taboo. I struggled to identify what differentiated me from them. A year into my studies, I read newspaper articles about being non-binary and having top surgery, which instantly struck a chord. I had met two non-binary people during university, but was sceptical of the concept — in retrospect

subconsciously trying to protect my fragile identity as a woman. However now I was more informed and non-binary genders were gaining mainstream recognition. The unthinkable –that I was not a woman – appeared less controversial. I concurrently realised that I identified as non-binary and wanted top surgery. Through studying gender I acquired the space and vocabulary to better understand and inhabit my own. In this way, the PhD has been a ‘personal quest’ – a journey enabling me to learn about myself while learning about others (Lewin & Leap, 1996:8).

Identity in the Field

Sexuality

Looking Gay

Sexuality is concealable, in that you cannot determine it by looking at somebody.

Some gay people, like Rowe (2014) are not seen as gay, due to the predominance of the ‘heterosexual assumption’ (Lewin & Leap, 1996:12). Others are presumed to be non-heterosexual based on stereotypes about appearance and demeanour.

Participants often assumed I was gay because of how I look, and my research topic.

People often assume that researchers investigating non-heterosexuality are themselves not straight (Ibid.). For example, McClennen (2003) encountered incorrect insinuations that she was gay due to researching gay and lesbian domestic violence. Likewise, academics that teach LGBT issues are often presumed to be LGBT themselves (Nash, 2010). Interestingly, simply conducting research in women’s prisons holds connotations for some of homosexuality – after telling a taxi driver I

was there for research, he commented, with no further information about my study, 'oh, butch lesbians?'

Letter participants often asked what interested me in LGBT prisoners particularly. Lucas asked, 'I wonder why you choose LGBT?' Courtney wrote, 'If you don't mind me asking, why does this issue interest or affect you?' Similarly, William asked what motivated my research, commenting, 'Unless you have a personal interest, it wouldn't be a subject that immediately comes to mind'. Others asked outright if I was LGBT. It is unlikely that such questions came purely from a place of curiosity. Minority groups often distrust researchers who do not share their identity, for example some non-heterosexual people objected to McClennen's heterosexuality (2003:37).

During the 'ineluctably embodied' (Rowe, 2014:404) experience of fieldwork in prisons, participants had visual cues concerning my sexuality. This first photo was taken in November 2015, shortly before coming out as non-binary. Note that I wore make-up and jewellery, wanting to ensure I did not look overly masculine.



During fieldwork at the men's prison, I essentially looked like this:



This photo was taken in August 2016. My haircut was now more traditionally masculine, and I was not wearing any visible makeup. As I became more comfortable with my gender, which coincided with fieldwork, I felt able to reduce my application of make-up, and shorten my hair. The outfit in this photo is typical of what I wore during fieldwork.

Being seen as a masculine woman, participants often presumed I was gay. At the women's prison I was often asked, 'are you gay, Miss?' When I presented emerging findings to an LGBT group at a men's prison, an inmate jokingly suggested that after my PhD I should become the first lesbian Prime Minister. At times, my appearance felt like an elephant in the room, for example when Faisal said he could tell when female staff were gay because of their short hair and 'butch' demeanour. I felt embarrassed, presuming that he thought I was gay. Other factors beyond my gender, such as my whiteness, might have contributed to "looking gay". Race invokes ideas about sexuality (Moran & Sharpe, 2004) so if I were non-white, having short hair and wearing masculine clothes might have been interpreted differently.

Disclosing Sexuality

When asked my sexuality directly, I told the truth, and occasionally I volunteered my sexuality. At times, I explicitly tried not to reveal my LGBT status. For example, when asked why I chose my subject, I sometimes answered with reference to there being very little research on LGBT prisoners, choosing not to address allusions to my sexuality. What I shared depended on how I felt at the time, and how LGBT-friendly I presumed the person asking was.

On several occasions I encountered queerphobia from participants, prompting me to conceal my LGBT status. Several inmates in the women's prison, including lesbians, openly professed biphobic attitudes. This contrasted with my expectation that being bisexual would straightforwardly provide 'an in' with LGBT participants. When participants there disclosed their bisexuality I revealed mine attempting to communicate solidarity and acceptance in a biphobic environment. Sometimes biphobia was directed towards me. Imogen, a trans man, asked how I could be non-binary and also have a boyfriend, and a heterosexual, cisgender officer responsible for LGBT prisoners at a men's establishment asked what my boyfriend thought of my bisexuality, implying it would be a problem.

Uncomfortable Situations

Occasionally, being openly bisexual and researching sexuality felt awkward. While recruiting participants in the women's prison, a group of inmates asked whether I was gay. Upon explaining I was bisexual, they probed, 'do you go for masculine women or feminine women?' Caught off guard, I explained, 'I'm not here to talk

about things like that'. They were amused by my embarrassment, continuing, 'If you had to pick, who would you go out with, me or her?...I'll tell you if I think you're good looking, if you tell me if you think I am'. On another occasion I overheard a prisoner comment, 'I wouldn't mind a piece of Mia'. Given the blatant power hierarchies, I felt uneasy with prisoners questioning, "Do you fancy me?" and discussing me as an object of desire. I was also conscious, given enduring stereotypes about gay women, that I could be considered voyeuristic or lecherous (Rowe, 2014). At the women's prison's Pride event, I made a passing comment about a participant's face-paint looking nice, and instantly worried this pleasantry could be misconstrued.

Fearing Offending?

At times participants clearly feared causing offence due to presuming I was gay.

Alfred, the women's prison chaplain, was obviously cautious with his choice of words:

I need to approach this from my own perspective ... I don't have a problem with people being gay, or lesbian... I'm trying to put it in a nice way.

Later, when discussing same-sex relationships, he clarified, 'not that it's bad, don't get me wrong'. Rowe (2014) questioned whether participants would have shared their ambivalence towards same-sex relationships had she been openly gay. Perhaps I might have encountered more critique of LGBT people if I looked different, or were not overtly studying LGBT prisoners' experiences. Nonetheless, some participants did share openly hostile views.

Gender

Being Seen as a Woman

While I received multiple questions about my sexuality, nobody asked about my gender. I was consistently read as a masculine woman, although on one occasion an old woman asked the taxi driver taking me to the prison ‘who’s that handsome young man in the back of your car?’ Being read as a woman meant I was constantly misgendered, which was a little wearing, though no more than in day-to-day life. Not recognizing transgender peoples’ identities can negatively affect their mental health, contributing to ‘minority stress’ - the additional pressure people feel due to belonging to a stigmatized group, and associated actual and expected discrimination (McLemore, 2018:54).

I was consistently referred to as ‘she’ and ‘her’, and sometimes as a ‘lady’ or ‘girl’. Prisoners routinely called me ‘Miss’, the standard title for female staff (Rowe, 2014). Letter correspondents assumed I was female, presumably due to my name. Curtis imagined I was a very ‘busy woman’, and I was greeted with ‘Miss, ‘Ms’ and even ‘Mrs’. One participant wrote: ‘Dear Sir or Madam’. Presumably he had not considered my name overtly gendered. After disclosing to a transgender woman, Lilly, that I was non-binary, I was met with the affirming question of what title she should use, if any, when writing to me. I explained that I preferred not to use a title, but when necessary usually used ‘Mx’.

Participants often made cissexist and transphobic comments they might not have done had they known I was transgender. The invalidating suggestion that

external sex organs determine gender was commonplace, and an officer who ran an LGBT group I was visiting explained she did not understand 'non-binaries' [sic], making me feel unable to disclose my gender to the prisoners there. When participants misgendered transgender people, I usually referred to the person they were discussing with they/them pronouns, avoiding supporting their misgendering without explicitly challenging or correcting them, which might have damaged rapport.

Although I told a handful of inmates about my gender, as discussed below, it was not something I regularly disclosed. I worried about being viewed as odd and pretentious, given the continued lack of recognition and acceptance of non-binary genders. Furthermore, I did not yet feel secure in this identity, and was only 'out' to a small number of friends and family. In this sense, there was not a great disjuncture between my 'inside and outside behaviours and identities' (Rowe, 2014:413). Of course, my transgender status might have become known by other participants due to the prevalence of gossip in prisons (Ibid.).

When I present my findings to participating establishments, even if I do not explicitly disclose my transgender status, I will inevitably feel self-conscious about it. I am now flat chested, having previously had noticeably large breasts, never wear make-up, and have a buzz-cut. While all identities have a 'continually-being-formed nature' (Phillips & Earle, 2010:361), my fieldwork occurred at a particularly transient time.

A Shared Status?

I often disclosed that I am non-binary to prisoners who told me about their own marginalised gender, and occasionally to cisgender prisoners with whom I had developed a good rapport. When Justin explained they had only recently begun identifying as gender-dysphoric I wanted them to feel recognized and understood:

On a personal note, just to let you know that I realised in January that I identify as non-binary transgender (I was identified as female at birth, but I don't identify as a woman or a man), so I can empathise with your experiences.

Justin replied they had never heard of non-binary genders, and after I provided information, suggested they might too be non-binary rather than a woman, as they had initially suggested.

The two transgender men I interviewed at the women's prison clearly valued me being non-binary, having previously never knowingly met another transgender person. Prisoners can feel more comfortable discussing discrimination with researchers who share their minoritised status (Philips, 2012) and I felt they opened up to me more than they would have to a cisgender researcher. However, our shared status at times felt problematic.

Imogen came out while I was recruiting participants on the wing. His friend, Tracy, asked me what 'transgender' meant, and after explaining, Imogen simply said, 'that's me'. He explained he previously 'wasn't sure of the right term' for explaining his gender. Imogen put significant emphasis on our relationship, and I interviewed him several times. Imogen was 'only just coming to terms' with his gender, having

only previously told his girlfriend. He explained that meeting me had increased his confidence, discussed 'our journey', and asked, 'Can we stay in touch? I'd like a friend to write to'. I had to explain we could only correspond for research purposes.

The other transgender man, Jordan, explained I was his only source of gender-related support. Speaking with him made me acutely aware of my privilege. During our first interview, he remarked that it was too late for him to have top surgery. I explained that some people transition much later in life than him. He explained he could not transition because of his life circumstances – his drug addiction, homelessness and cycle of imprisonment. Getting top surgery on the NHS is an extremely long and arduous process even in the best circumstances (Vincent, 2018a). Jordan wanted for me what he could not access himself, instructing me to 'go for it', explaining 'You've got that life...You're in university...You've got that chance'.

Jordan was right that he would never physically transition. Some time after my fieldwork had ended, he went on to take his own life in prison. He had left a real impression on me. We had spent several hours together and shared interests, and hopes for having top surgery so that we would feel more at home in our bodies. I got my surgery, but Jordan never got his. Other identities can exacerbate or soften the impact of a marginalized status (Moran & Sharpe, 2004). My many privileges enabled me to transition – I was able to pay for top surgery privately, in installments, to avoid an estimated 5-year wait. Jordan's many disadvantages made transitioning much harder for him, and he became stuck in a vicious circle, using drugs as a coping

mechanism for gender dysphoria, in turn making it harder to transition. Fieldwork can shape how researchers see themselves (Rowe, 2014) and meeting Jordan certainly affected my self-understanding.

Getting it Right

Cisgender researchers can inadvertently cause offence due to unfamiliarity with transgender issues (Staples et al. 2018). Jenness (2010) acknowledged that during her ground-breaking research on transgender prisoners she lacked a nuanced understanding of how gender differed from sexuality. Heterosexual academic McClennen (2003:37) required non-heterosexual participants to educate her. It is important that researchers do not require education from participants (Vincent, 2018b) and being transgender meant I was familiar with terminology, and able to avoid basic mistakes.

That is not to say that I got everything right. When interviewing a transgender woman, I inadvertently referred to her as somebody who *identified* as transgender, which she took issue with, considering herself simply a woman. Jenness (2010:528) was advised that her concern regarding language was misguided since transgender prisoners 'don't care about identity politics'. However, it is clear that terminology is important for some. Some transgender participants used labels often considered problematic within the transgender community, like 'MTF' (male to female), which has been largely replaced with 'AMAB' (assigned male at birth) (Vincent, 2018b). In recent years terminology has evolved rapidly and I suspect that participants who used what might be considered outdated language did so due to

limited knowledge of alternatives.

Recognising their right to define their own gender, I did not 'police' participants' language (Ibid.:108). However, I did sometimes introduce new concepts, for example asking transgender men what pronouns to use. Jordan explained:

Oh I don't, I don't, whatever you...I'm a girl aren't I now, so just say 'her'. Do you know what I mean? I would like someone to say 'him', you know, but I've not been addressed like that.

Imogen had not considered this a possibility either. He would 'love to be called 'he'', but thought other people would laugh if he requested this. I routinely asked prisoners how they identified in terms of sexuality and gender, and the latter question often caused confusion. Charlotte asked, 'My gender? What do you mean - am I gay or straight?' This might be the result of cisgender privilege - people who are comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth rarely have to think about their gender. It might also reflect participants' demographics, such as age, class and formal education levels.

Ripple Effects

Instigating conversations regarding gender and sexuality could be consequential, as

Tracy explained:

When you put the flyer through it opened up a whole new world...Imogen said, 'I'm transgender'...It actually blew me off my feet...I didn't even know what transgender was.

Tracy began questioning whether masculine-presenting people were transgender:

She looks like a man...Does she want to be a man?...Obviously nobody has to disclose what their gender is, but you have made me think.

To ensure that Tracy did not impute transgender statuses to all masculine inmates I reiterated the difference between gender identity and presentation. Generally intrigued, and keen to support her friend, Tracy asked numerous questions about transgender people, and my own gender, which I happily answered. She informed her partner about transgender people, and wanted to educate her family and friends. I hoped that my explanations would help Tracy better support Imogen.

Other Identities

Unlike my gender presentation, my class and elite university attendance remained constant throughout fieldwork. Participants often commented on me studying at Oxford. Ali explained that, unlike her, I'd taken the 'right path', and 'put the work in'. Her comparison of our lives was uncomfortable, and I explained my relatively privileged upbringing. Other participants commended my achievements, Katherine writing:

First and foremost, congratulations on being a PhD student at such a prestigious university.

The conversation that ensued when an inmate at the women's prison asked where I came from reveals the connection between education and class:

You don't sound like you come from Stoke

Where does it sound like I come from?

Uni, you've got a uni accent.

Some prisoners were highly educated. I felt intimidated by a participant with a Masters in gender studies, and pretended I had heard of a theorist they mentioned. However, my educational background might have alienated others. Gilbert offered to help me 'become a good criminologist' and claimed that his 'common sense' approach to improving prisons trumped any formal qualifications.

During fieldwork I was 24, and participants were often much older. Sometimes they acknowledged my age, for example, a member of staff referred to me as a 'young girl'. On paper, my age was hidden. However, being a student invoked assumptions. When police and probation officers were concerned about my safety, as discussed below, the fact I was a student, and therefore presumably young and naïve, was central to their concerns. Likewise, Courtney associated me with stereotypes about undergraduates, signing off:

You should probably get back to sleeping, or drinking or whatever else uni students do.

Other correspondents seemed to assume I was older. My efforts to appear 'credible and "together"' (Ibid.:411) felt exposed after meeting a prisoner's friend. They sent my participant a photograph from my university profile, and apparently indicated that they wanted 'to adopt' me. At a few points during fieldwork I caught myself referring to myself as 'a researcher at Oxford University', rather than a student, subconsciously trying to compensate for my apparent youth.

Participants sometimes referenced that I had not been to prison. When Amanda described staying out for almost two years, she added, 'I know it doesn't

sound like a lot to yourself'. Similarly, Martin struggled to convey a scenario to somebody 'outside of prison'. Brian, an equality officer, implied that we were alike, and distinct from prisoners, contrasting 'our' lives with theirs. As noted above, I have other attributes that undoubtedly influenced fieldwork, like being British and not physically disabled. I did not have to consciously reflect on these attributes because of my privilege according to these hierarchies.

Ethics

Trying to Avoid Causing Harm

Informed Consent

I provided my 67 formal interview participants information sheets and consent forms, and reiterated key points like the 'parameters of confidentiality' (Noaks & Wincup, 2004). As shown above, these factors were summarised in my *Inside Time* advert, and participants were reminded how to express concerns or complain at the end of each letter. In practice, I did not always achieve informed consent. I conducted some interviews opportunistically, their unplanned nature meaning I did not have information sheets or consent forms. However, I briefly summarized the nature of my research and parameters of confidentiality, and was satisfied that participation was freely chosen. In both prisons, I gained information from overhearing relevant conversations, and interviewees sometimes asked people nearby their opinion, who again, did not formally consent to participating.

I was concerned that inmates who staff had recruited might have felt pressured to participate. Achieving fully informed consent is difficult with a 'captive, vulnerable population' (Roberts & Indermaur, 2008:310) and I was careful to reiterate that they could refuse to participate, ignore any questions, and leave whenever they wanted without negative ramifications. On one occasion, an officer asked an inmate to provide information on an unfamiliar topic, which resulted in a joint-interview. People can feel compelled to participate when asked by a superior (Rowe, 2007), and at times the officer sought the prisoner's agreement, using phrases like 'isn't it?' emphasising the power differential between them. Although she did occasionally challenge the officer's perspective, at other points I felt the prisoner was saying what she wanted to hear.

Signposting to Support

When letter participants disclosed distressing experiences or appeared in need of support, I signposted them to relevant organisations.

Sources of Support

I have included this document because you mentioned an experience of homophobia, biphobia or transphobia.

I have provided the details of some organisations that can offer you support, incase this is something that you would like.

You might also be able to access support within the prison, for example by talking to a prison officer who you trust or speaking to a member of the Independent Monitoring Board.

I later developed a similar document for survivors of sexual abuse, given the number of participants disclosing these experiences. I provided addresses as well as phone numbers, conscious that prisoners might be unable to make discreet phone-calls. A participant, Becky, later explained that prisoners could have to wait several weeks for access to new numbers. Signposting participants meant I could offer support without inappropriately adopting 'the role of counsellor' (Noaks & Wincup, 2004:85).

Researchers cannot guarantee they will cause no harm (Vincent, 2018b) and the documents I provided were a means of mitigating any problems that my research had resurfaced or exacerbated. Several participants noted these documents were helpful given the difficulty of accessing information in prison. Justin appreciated material I sent on gender dysphoria, noting, 'You are the only person to have even offered information that may be helpful'. Several participants planned to share my resources, for example taking them to LGBT group meetings. Some prisoners explained they did not currently require the documents, but would keep them in case of future need. Avi thanked me for my concern, but explained he was 'mentally and emotionally strong' and did not need support. I hope that signposting participants did not cause offence.

Beyond letter participants, I provided Jordan and Imogen with a list of local and national charities, a stamped envelope so they could contact them, and information about being transgender. Imogen planned to contact the organisations

upon release, while Jordan did not. Addicted to drugs and homeless, he did not attend probation 'never mind anywhere else':

I've got nowhere out there, all I do is take drugs... If they came in here like you, I'd speak to them... Because I'm comfortable. Out there I'm not.

Given my agreed parameters of confidentiality, I did not disclose that Jordan was struggling with his gender. When he died by suicide, some time later, I wondered what more I could have done to support him, like helping to arrange for a local LGBT organisation to provide counselling.

Inadvertently Offending

During a small number of interviews, I accidentally used fillers inappropriately. Some instances were clearly harmless, while others were offensive, due to concerning the participant's personal experiences, as seen in this exchange with Tina:

I got out for 11 months and this is my second recall.

Okay. Cool. So when you were in for like 13 years...

It's not cool [Laughs]

No, it's not cool [Laughs]. No, sorry, that's not what I meant...

A second means of unintentionally causing offence was forgetting details about participants and their experiences. I re-interviewed some prisoners, like Amber, some weeks after our initial interview, without notice or preparation time. Listening back, I asked several questions Amber had answered in the previous interview. In future research, I would keep handy short summaries of participants' experiences to

skim before any re-interviews. One further incident involved mistaking a mixed-race prisoner I had already interviewed for one I was planning to. Upon realising my mistake, I apologised, my participant explaining, 'don't worry, staff get us mixed up all the time'. The 'cross-race effect' does make people less able to distinguish people of races they are less familiar with (Brewer, Weber & Semmler, 2005:190), nonetheless I know the cumulative impact such microaggressions can take.

Face-to-face I could sense how prisoners received what I said, and try to mitigate any accidental insult. Without non-verbal cues it is harder to recognise when you have caused offence (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I was therefore especially careful with my choice of words in letter correspondence, and always re-read the participant's letter and my response and consulted my supervisor when dealing with particularly sensitive letters.

I tried to pre-empt causing offence, for example explaining to Benjamin, who described himself with phrases like 'minor-attracted man' in his brief first letter, my use of the word 'paedophile' in my reply. This phrase is often used synonymously with 'child rapist', and I explained that I used it occasionally for clarity and brevity, and only to refer to people who are sexually attracted to children, without further connotations. Benjamin had no problem with this, using the word himself in further letters. However, Martin made it clear that I had insulted him. In his very short initial letter he had mentioned coming out, and so I probed for more information, which he considered outside the remit of my research, and an attempt to impose a

particular narrative. What might have been interpreted as a casual follow-up question during an interview took on new significance when written down:

I don't see how my mid-70s coming out experiences have any bearing on my day-to-day or current experience of being gay in prison...It is my experience of the past eleven years that I wish to focus on ONLY! (BTW I did not suffer any traumatic rejection experiences in the mid - 70s, so your question on 'how did other people react' has no relevance to me).

Prisoners sometimes appeared worried that I would judge them. After explaining he was convicted of a sexual offence, Sean clarified, 'I am not proud of what I did or boasting but I thought honesty would be best for more accurate information'. Similarly, Benjamin asked whether I wanted to hear about his experiences, noting that paedophiles were 'still human', and often had 'surprising and interesting stories'. Upon disclosing that some Listeners share confidential information, Ricky said this made him feel 'sick', and wanted me to know he had never done this.

During interviews I was alert to participants' emotional responses, and tried to ensure they were not distressed before leaving (Noaks & Wincup, 2004), for example, staying and talking with Jordan, who cried during our interview, until he felt better. Since letter correspondence took several weeks, it was impossible to help participants regain emotional equilibrium immediately after sending or receiving a letter. In fact, some participants never received replies, as became apparent upon visiting a men's prison. A transgender woman confronted me, asking why I had not replied to the letter she had taken great effort to write. It transpired that she had sent it to another prisoner to forward to me. I do not know why this letter did not reach me, or how many other letters failed to do so. However, this participant was

clearly upset and angry at my lack of response. My concern that participants might not receive replies in a timely fashion, or at all, reminded me of the lyrics to Eminem's song 'Stan':

It's been six months and still no word, I don't deserve it, I know you
got my last two letters, I wrote the addresses on 'em perfect

Not wanting to Impose

I was conscious of not intruding upon interview participants' lives. At the Pride event, I conducted opportunistic interviews quickly, trying not to hinder participants' enjoyment of the occasion. At times, prisoners disclosed they were not in the best headspace to participate. In the men's prison, Barry explained after our interview that his nephew had died a few days previously, but that he had wanted to participate since I had made the effort to come in and he suspected he might be the only person to volunteer (he was correct). Grace had initially had doubts about participating, contemplating, 'Do I really want to talk about my stuff?' Casey was being investigated for drug dealing and so explained she was not fully 'with it', and so less talkative than usual. While she still felt able to participate, letter correspondents had much more control over timings. Stanley waited for his mood to lift before writing:

Sorry for the delay in responding, to be honest I've been pretty down.
Just fed up with it all really, but I'm starting to slowly feel better.

Confidentiality

Declarations regarding confidentiality can unnecessarily formalize interviews (Crewe, 2009) and, listening back to early interviews, at times, my explanations of

the parameters of confidentiality sound reminiscent of a police caution. Most prisoners seemed familiar with confidentiality agreements, Tay replying, 'yeah, yeah, I know, that's alright'. I did not state upfront whether I would inform staff if prisoners disclosed breaking laws or prison rules. Tay described smuggling in needles on a previous sentence for tattoos:

Fucking hell, if they found out I'd brought them in they'd take me for a strip search straightaway.

Yeah. I didn't hear that.

[Laughs].

Prisoners were sometimes very rude about staff. Charlotte referred to a governor as 'a poisonous little bastard', clearly trusting I would keep her comments confidential. The following exchange reveals the potential power I held in this regard:

I will not tell her you said that [Laughs].

No, don't because I'll get locked up. She'll have me in her office.

[Laughs].

Some prisoners double-checked confidentiality agreements. Paula asked, 'All this is confidential in here isn't it? It doesn't go to [staff]?' before disclosing a clandestine relationship with another inmate. If prisoners had disclosed serious, harmful behaviours, I would have dealt with this on a case-by-case basis. I did occasionally warn letter participants not to write about any crimes they had committed, but not been convicted of, conscious security personnel might read their letters.

Occasionally prisoners seemed to believe that I had shared information about participants with staff. At the pride event, Tracy explained that shortly after I had finished fieldwork, the LGBT officer invited several LGBT prisoners to a forum. Tracy asked whether I had provided their names. The forum was presumably the standard LGBT group that few prisoners knew about, however, its presumed association with my research could have reputational consequences.

Staff were also concerned about disclosing information. A probation officer at the men's prison checked that inmates she references would be anonymised, and visits centre staff were concerned about identifying a gay officer:

This isn't gonna be like published or anything?

Yeah

Oh god

No, no, I won't name names or anything.

[Laughs]. Hi [officer's name] we're writing about you!

I use pseudonyms to protect participants' identities, and omit personal and contextual information as necessary. When the equalities officer at the men's prison suggested she might make the prison 'look bad' I reassured her I would not name the establishment in written publications.

I conducted most interviews in private rooms, however, these spaces did not always ensure confidentiality. One served as a through corridor in the safer custody department, resulting in frequent interruptions. Another offered visual privacy, but

had thin walls, as I discovered when interviewing Grace, who had waited in the room next door and listened to my previous interview. Beyond private rooms, I sometimes interviewed staff in shared offices, and occasionally interviewed inmates in public areas due to movement restrictions. During interviews on the wing, participants and I struggled to concentrate and other prisoners sometimes interrupted. These conditions were not conducive to confidentiality, and I always gave participants the option of speaking in a more private place at another time.

During one interview on the wing, a prisoner noticed my voice recorder and interrupted to check her friend knew she was being recorded, demonstrating concerns regarding confidentiality. My participant joked I also had an undercover camera, and was filming for Panorama. Participants often commented on my voice recorder. The training coordinator asked whether I was allowed it, and Joey expressed his surprise security had permitted them. Charlotte asked to hear her recording back:

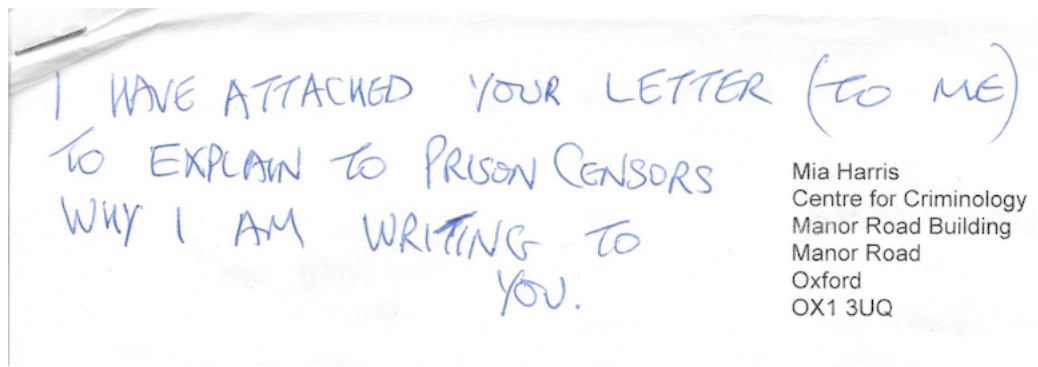
So it's recording me now?

Yeah, yeah

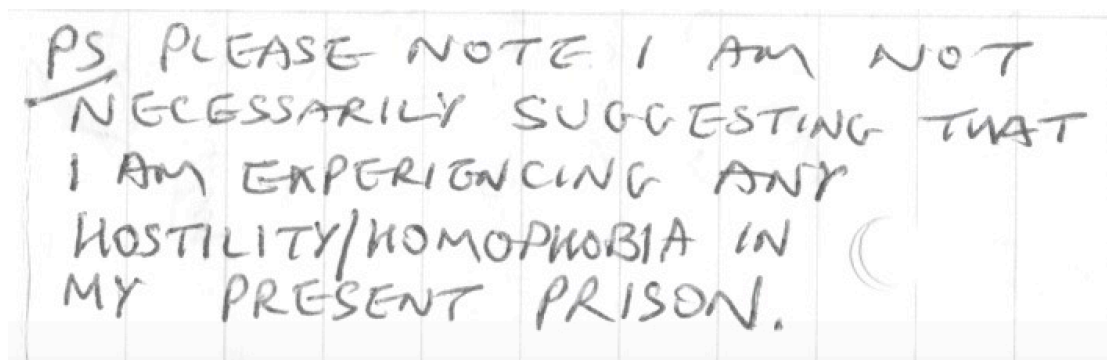
[Puts on funny voice] Heya Mia!'

Several letter correspondents expressed confidentiality concerns. Graham said he would be more comfortable disclosing experiences of discrimination in person since letters were 'subject to potential scrutiny by the prison'. Similarly, William explained he would have disclosed more 'had we been able to communicate in the outside world'. As noted above, occasionally, prisoners' letters did not reach me. Larry was

confused and 'a bit miffed' that I did not receive his letter, having spent quite some time writing it. He wrote his future letters more guardedly, worrying that his letter, containing some 'quite scathing remarks' had been intercepted. Upon receiving my reply, William expressed his relief 'that such personal information arrived safely'. Kevin suggested that the potential for letters to be intercepted made it unlikely that inmates who were not 'out' would write to me. However, I received several letters from such participants, including Nicholas, who was 'trying really hard' to hide his sexuality in prison. Martin was clearly conscious about security reading our correspondence:



In one letter, Martin wrote a clarification in the margins, in capital letters and a different colour pen, seemingly stemming from this anxiety:



Staff twice returned one letter Martin wrote to me because he had written a quote in Hebrew, which they suspected was a coded message. Security intercepted

George's letter, concerned he was grooming me, as explained below.

A few participants had had previous problems communicating via letter, making them cautious in our correspondence. Becky had once disclosed her drug use and debt in a letter, which she accidentally put in the wrong box, sending it directly to staff. Larry usually kept copies of letters he sent, having been misquoted in the past. Courtney requested I return copies of her letters, keeping records as a precaution since part of her index offence involved threatening letters.

Outing Participants

Concerned about the potential for outing LGBT participants, I emphasised my interest in the views of cisgender and heterosexual inmates too, in the hope of reducing potential suspicion. When Laura said she was straight but happy to participate, her friends playfully teased her, insisting she was bisexual. Beyond such jokes between friends, Tracy suggested that inmates who saw us talking might actually question her sexuality, which for her, was positive:

When I was walking off with you... I thought, 'oh no I bet they all think I'm gay now.'

Oh no!

It doesn't bother me...I was proud to walk off with you actually, to think, yeah man, I'm open.

In my advert, I only requested LGBTQ participants, and there was a risk that prisoners might be 'outed' if our correspondence was read by staff or other inmates. However, participants would have been aware of the risks related to letter writing,

informed of letter monitoring during prison inductions, and so presumably decided they were worthwhile.

Upholding Confidentiality Between Participants

I was conscious not to share information between participants. Letter correspondents sometimes noted they knew of other inmates writing to me, and that they had discussed their participation together. I upheld confidentiality in these situations, not getting drawn into conversations about other participants. As noted above, my research instigated Imogen coming out to Tracy and me as transgender. Tracy repeatedly asked questions about Imogen, waning to learn more to offer support. I discussed transgender men's experiences in general terms, and reiterated the importance of maintaining confidentiality regarding Imogen's gender.

On one occasion, I accidentally breached confidentiality. My final interview at the men's prison was with Becca, who explained that the governing governor being deeply Christian made her uncomfortable since she suspected he was homophobic. I explained that the chaplain, Joel, did not approve of same-sex relationships, but distinguished this from being homophobic. Having bonded over shared experiences of biphobia, the interview with Becca had been very conversational and in this context I slipped into an overly informal role. I immediately realised my inappropriate comment and apologised. Becca reassured me she would not act on this information or share it, and so hopefully any negative consequences were limited.

Keeping Prisoners Waiting

I collected post from my department approximately every two weeks during the height of letter correspondence. I balanced responding alongside other work and non-work commitments. Sometimes replies were delayed by a lack of ink, envelopes or stamps, and occasionally I put off replying when experiencing 'emotional exhaustion' (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Liamputtong, 2007:344).

Sean thought that his initial letter had been lost due to my delayed response. I was conscious that participants might worry about whether their letter had reached me safely, and if and when I would reply. Having not explicitly stated in my advert that I would respond, some prisoners, like Zach, were 'pleasantly surprised' to receive my reply. In my first batch of letters I apologized for the delay in writing, explaining 'I've had a very large number of letters so it's taking me a while to get back to everybody.' Several participants, including Jasmin, expressed their understanding:

I can imagine you were probably overwhelmed with letters and the herculean task of trying to reply to them, so I really do appreciate you writing back.

Gerry was impressed that I had replied to all participants, and Lilly thanked me for replying given her presumption I was 'extremely busy with studying'. What counts as a reasonable timeframe for replying is subjective, and Tom thanked me for replying so quickly, having received my response just over a month after writing his initial letter, which I considered relatively slow. Aaron, wrote a few months after our correspondence had finished, explaining he had not yet received my findings, and

questioning, 'perhaps you are still working on your assignment?' I had not indicated how long it would take to disseminate my results, however when participants asked, the timescales I offered proved far too ambitious, for example telling Kevin and Shane I would send summaries of my findings by the end of 2017. William sent a Christmas card in 2016, communicating he was looking forward to receiving my results. I felt under pressure to deliver feedback, and that I was letting participants down, having not provided a clear and realistic deadline for doing so. I explained to William that I had taken time off for an operation, that PhDs are a slow process, and that I would likely take two further years to complete it. Conscious to convey I *was* working, I attached two recent articles, perhaps somewhat defensively explaining:

Don't worry, I am doing something with all of the information that you and other LGBT people in prison have so kindly given me!

Beneficence

Research can be beneficial for individual participants and wider society (Israel & Hay, 2011) and my motivation for research has always been to highlight injustices, and create social change. Conducting research invokes personal benefits through career progression, and so aiming for beneficence prevents research being too much of an 'uneven exchange' (Dupont, 2008:199).

Benefiting Individual Participants

Someone to Speak with

Some participants simply valued the opportunity to speak with somebody. Derek, who was in segregation, thanked me for providing 'a sense of interaction', Megan had nobody else to write to, and Colin 'a lot of free time' to fill. Other prisoners were busy to the point they were unsure whether to write, or sent delayed responses.

Participants appreciated a different form of interaction. Tracy commented, 'I love talking to you...It's something new', and William valued the chance to speak with 'an intelligent outsider' about topics that interested him. He wrote at length about naturism, and expressed his gratitude I would 'spare the time for such a personal response' to this tangential topic. For Benjamin our 'thought-provoking' correspondence provided a change from his 'rather monotonous life, with little in-depth human contact', and he appreciated interacting without judgment or ramifications for his perceived risk level. In this sense, I benefited from my impartiality and enthusiasm to listen in a context where disclosures are routinely used against prisoners and 'sympathetic outlets' are rare (Crewe, 2009:484).

A Weight off Their Chest

Participating provided some prisoners an outlet for important issues they rarely discussed. Zach thanked me 'for being an ear', and Benjamin found it a 'small freedom' to openly discuss his attraction to children. Tony valued participating since he rarely spoke about his sexuality and mostly hid it. Some participants shared previously 'untold' experiences (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007:338). Tony had never

spoken to anybody about having sex with men, and Jordan had never disclosed becoming bulimic to try and stop developing breasts. He was glad to have spoken, because although painful, it was 'a weight off [his] chest'. Other prisoners used similar phrases to convey feeling lighter having participated. Ali apologized for 'going on', explaining our interview felt like counselling and was a rare opportunity to speak openly. Ricky used my advert as an opportunity to disclose being abused as a child, and felt he might now be able to report his attacker:

You are really good in understanding... I feel much better in my self with telling you about the abuse...It's been weighing heavy on me for years.

Participating in research can be therapeutic (Roberts & Indermaur, 2008) and it was interesting that Ricky most appreciated the chance to discuss his experiences of abuse rather than sexuality - for him the two felt connected.

Making their Voice Heard

Many prisoners valued participating for allowing them to be heard and to potentially influence change. Owen, expressed his 'delight' that I was researching an 'all too ignored' topic, and Barbara valued sharing her criticism, confirming my recorder was on, before exclaiming, 'Good, I want that recorded'. Participants valued being heard, as seen in the following exchange during an interview with Jordan on the wing:

I did that the other week Jordan, it's interesting innit?

Yeah she's sound, Mia...She's interested in us. It's nice that though, innit?

Qualitative research can enable marginalised groups to share stories 'in their own words' (Dupont, 2008:204) and it can be especially important for inmates to have

their voices amplified given the limits placed on communicating beyond prison walls (Jenness, Maxson, Sumner & Matsuda, 2009). Kevin valued being acknowledged, commenting, 'it gives me great satisfaction knowing that my voice is actually being heard', but also appreciated participating in research that would 'highlight and potentially address the many problems that LGBTQ prisoners face'. Casey recognised the potential for my research to create positive change:

We should say 'thank you' too, because your research could do something good for us.

Casey's use of the qualifier 'could' is reassuring. Participants often believe research will produce tangible, immediate change (Clark, 2008), and I tried to discourage unrealistic expectations. At the women's prison, inmates were interested in whether I could make changes in their particular establishment. Charlotte suggested the prison should hire me to support LGBT inmates and recommend improvements. During discussions about impact, I tried to convey that any potential changes would be distant, using phrases like, 'hopefully', 'eventually', 'long-term', and 'easier said than done'.

People seeking my research expertise invariably ask about transgender prisoners, reflecting an imbalance of attention given to different sub-groups of the LGBT community in prison. One inmate thanked me for researching gay and bisexual prisoners too, disappointed that his prison's LGBT meetings usually focussed on issues facing solely transgender prisoners. Another prisoner, Gilbert, wrote asking why I was not researching heterosexual, cisgender men. The supposed disadvantage

to non-LGBT prisoners is discussed further in Chapter 7 in the context of relationships.

Some participants requested help regarding tangential or even unrelated issues. Benjamin hoped participating could help address misconceptions regarding paedophilia, and Jasmin, asked me to send her 34-page prison and law reform document to relevant organisations. I spent several hours scanning and distributing it, and returning a copy to her. Raymond wrote exclusively asking for resources on prisoners with learning disabilities, and the details of relevant researchers to share his experiences. I was happy to help amplify prisoners' voices and find support for them, recognising my privileged access to information and people with power to potentially produce change.

Requesting Help

Most participants who asked for support did so during the course of substantial correspondence. However other inmates, like Raymond, wrote explicitly asking for assistance, without intending to participate. Desmond wrote shortly before his release and emailed a few days afterwards, seeking advice on coming out as a gay, African man. That he had gone to the effort of finding my email address suggested he lacked access to other avenues for support. I recommended relevant organisations, before asking whether I could ask research-related questions. His response did not mention my study, and so I did not pursue it. Ricky wanted support with disclosing his bisexuality and history of child sexual abuse. In such cases it felt inappropriate to probe for research-related information, and so I focussed on

offering support. I gave Ricky a self-help guide and information, and emphasised that I was not qualified to provide advice, but could offer my 'unqualified opinion from one person to another'.

Producing Change in Participants' Prisons

My research sometimes prompted immediate change. For example, Aidan noted he was now attuned to sexuality and gender as potential factors contributing to substance-misuse. Likewise, Mo, an HIV charity worker, said he would discuss with prisoners he supported some of the issues I had raised. Colin had tried and failed to reach his establishment's LGBT officer, but participating made him sufficiently frustrated 'to keep pushing', and he went on to co-establish an LGBT group. As noted above, staff at the men's prison recognised the need to advertise LGBT groups. According to an IMB member there, the head of equalities hoped my research would help prisoners feel more able to come out.

I donated 17 LGBT-themed DVDs and 12 books to the women's prison's library. I hope these resources will be affirming for LGBT inmates, and help heterosexual, cisgender prisoners learn more about the LGBT community. I selected resources to cater for people from different backgrounds and with different accessibility needs. I provided two educational books on transgender people, conscious that Imogen and Jordan were new to this identity, and lacked resources beyond the few printouts I had provided. I will donate similar materials to the men's establishment when feeding-back my findings.

I will present my findings to staff and inmates at my fieldwork sites, and will follow other researchers in providing a research summary for their libraries (Roberts & Indermaur, 2008). Where possible, I will send a summary of my findings to participants who requested this. In practice this might prove difficult, since, as William explained, prisons are 'not renowned for their ability to forward mail'. While some participants supplied contact details in the community, I have no means of contacting other participants post-release.

After Jordan's suicide, I wrote to the women's prison. I was hesitant to posthumously 'out' him, but felt it necessary that those conducting the inquest knew he was transgender, since his drug and mental health problems were influenced by his gender dysphoria. Unfortunately, since there was no further evidence of him being transgender, this factor was not considered by the Ombudsman. I hope, however, that my disclosure will engender improvements for other transgender inmates in the women's establishment. To maximise social value (Dupont, 2008) I have disseminated my findings to government and non-governmental organisations, delivered conference presentations, and written online articles, and will continue to do so.

Being Unable to Help

Sometimes, participants asked for help I was unable to provide. Farah requested my help in fighting deportation to a country she had left as a child, and where she worried she would be beaten, raped or killed:

I thought to write as you maybe might be able to help...Mia I feel so alone and terrified I do not know where to turn after seeing your advertisement I thought to write and see if there's any help for what I am going through?...I am terrified that death is what my future holds.

Farah asked me to reply as soon as possible, explaining, 'I do not know how long I have before they deport me'. Given the serious nature of her letter, I checked my response with my supervisor. I replied to Farah just over a month after she wrote, enclosing two copies of useful information, hoping she would keep one copy, and forward the other to a loved one. Frustratingly, my letter was returned due to insufficient postage:



I placed excessive stamps on my next attempt, determined to reach her, but a reply indicated she was now in Yarl's Wood Immigration Detention Centre.



I wrote there, but received no reply, and do not know what happened to Farah.

Farah's case raises the tension between responding quickly, and responding thoughtfully. This incident led me to change my approach from opening and replying to letters one at a time, to triaging them and responding in order of urgency.

Researchers often feel responsible for helping participants (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007), however, people with OCD experience particularly strong urges 'to rectify potentially harmful situations' and distress upon failing to do so (Foa, Amir, Bogert, Molnar & Przeworski, 2001:269) due to heightened levels of guilt and responsibility (Arntz, Voncken & Goosen, 2007). At times during fieldwork I lost sight that I was producing work for a PhD, and felt my sole aim was to support LGBT inmates. At times participants, like Phillip, reminded me of the instrumental reason for my research, writing, 'I hope this letter is helpful in your studies and that you gain your PhD'.

Relationship Boundaries

Interactions with participants at the men's prison were discrete, one-off events, whereas at the women's prison I saw some participants daily, and with letter correspondents I exchanged up to a dozen letters.

In/formality

At times I worried that my casual demeanour might be deemed unprofessional. Between interviews I often sat with prisoners in the main seating area of the safer custody department and, not wanting to occupy the limited seats, sometimes sat on the floor. When one prisoner commented she should have got me a chair, her friend said not to worry, joking 'she's a student, she's used to sitting on the floor'. I wonder whether I struck the right balance between making interactions 'as egalitarian as possible without eliding evident discrepancies in power and liberty' (Crewe, 2009:468).

While interviewing a participant on a bench, an officer mistook me for a prisoner. Not all staff were aware of my research presence, and presumably our interview location, my posture and demeanour distinguished me from staff. While waiting in a common room for a participant to fetch something from her room, the prisoners I spoke with said they could not tell whether I was an inmate or staff. Other prison researchers describe people trying to figure out what 'kind of person' they were (Rowe, 2014:407). At the men's prison staff twice mistook me as a fellow officer.

Most interviews were conversational and informal. Sometimes I discussed unrelated tangents with participants, which they seemed to appreciate and aided rapport. Occasionally interviews felt overly formal - while sat across a table from a prison officer I joked that it felt 'like a job interview', trying to break the ice. A participant at the women's prison approached me while sat on a bench talking to a prisoner, and asked for an interview. We went to the safer custody department, and when I gave her the consent form and asked if I could record it she commented, 'This is more official than I thought...it's like a police interview!' Some participants were very casual with me, for example calling me 'babe'. Via letter, I made conscious choices to try and forge appropriate relationships - I communicated formality through letters being printed and their set format, which I softened with a hand-written signature, in blue ink, and a warm sign-off, 'with my very best wishes', a phrase copied from my mental health mentor. Interestingly, some prisoners replicated this sign-off - Lucas progressed from 'from', to 'best wishes' to 'with my very best wishes'. After meeting in person, Larry signed his letter 'Love and Peace', having ended his initial letter with 'Regards'. I tried to express my concern and interest in correspondents, which some prisoners, like Sam, noted, thanking me for my 'kind hearted letter'.

Some participants tried to convey politeness, suggesting their recognition of the professional nature of our relationship. Barry tried to be 'politically correct', commenting, 'I wouldn't normally be talking like this, but I'm just trying to be polite'. Oliver was conscious when what he said was 'un-PC'. Interview participants often swore, before apologizing and some letter participants used symbols to replace the

middle letters of rude words. Avi considered other prisoners' comments 'too rude to state'. I explained that I was OK reading them, but he explained that his 'policy of probity' prevented him from repeating them, 'especially to a lady'. Sean apologized in case he had provided too much information when explaining his penchant for BDSM and the leather scene.

Power Imbalances

On certain occasions power differentials felt particularly explicit. When a prisoner complained of a headache, I instinctively suggested I might have painkillers, and she explained I was not allowed to give her medicine. During discussions about staff I realized that I knew their first names while prisoners knew their surnames. Prisoners sometimes requested I use my relative power, for example letting them through gates, rather than having to wait for an officer. Having to refuse felt mean-spirited. Carrying keys can heighten perceived power imbalances (Roberts & Indermaur, 2008), and Rowe (2014:409) encountered inmates insisting she act beyond her authority. Sometimes I breached small rules, like agreeing to make a prisoner tea with fresh rather than UHT milk, or helping to disguise that Jordan was smoking a cigarette. When I went to drop off resources to Imogen, who was on basic, he said he needed to speak with me. I requested an officer unlock him, who said it was probably an excuse to get out of his room, but agreed. It transpired he had nothing new to tell me, but I was glad to have enabled him some time out of his cell.

My relative power between inmates and officers became apparent when interviewing Amber, who was on a restricted regime. An officer was waiting to escort her to work, explaining, 'I've got other jobs to do, and I'm getting held up'. I offered to accompany Amber after our interview, since I had keys, but this was not allowed. Jessica presumed that I had access to her prison record, and so could tell whether staff had made negative comments about her. I did have access to prisoners' records, however only used PNOMIS to find participants' locations to arrange interviews. When the equality officer, Brian, went to meet a transgender woman, Emily, housed on the first night centre [FNC], he asked me to join him. I agreed, but felt uncomfortable observing him ask questions about Emily's crime and family's reaction.

As explained in the introduction, I use 'prisoners' rather than 'people in prison' for brevity. I occasionally did so during fieldwork too. During an early interview, I referred to other 'prisoners', and immediately felt uncomfortable. I asked what terminology was best, explaining I wanted to avoid sounding judgemental, and that I heard 'inmate' was preferable. My participant replied, 'We *are* prisoners, we're cons...I think the staff prefer the word 'inmates' ...They have to be more PC than us'.

Reciprocity

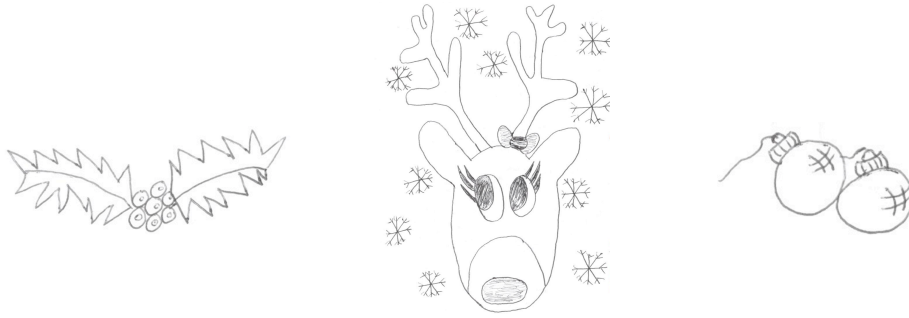
Sometimes I spontaneously opened up to participants, making interviews feel more conversational, and perhaps easing power differentials (Noaks & Wincup, 2004,

Fontana & Frey, 2003). While some researchers explicitly decide parameters of self-disclosure in advance (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007), my approach was more spontaneous and dependent on how I felt at the time. When participants disclosed a stigmatised attribute that I shared, like a mental health problem, I often reciprocated, trying to make them feel understood and accepted. Barry appreciated me sharing that I too sometimes struggled with emotional control, commenting, 'I'm glad you said that... we are all human'.

Sometimes participants, like Grace, returned my questions. Having asked how prisons could be improved for LGBT inmates, she responded by asking *my* perspective. Similarly, Lilly asked whether I had experienced queerphobia, and Lee asked a host of questions:

How do you find daily life? How did you know you were bi and non-binary? How did you find coming out?...How did you know you wanted to be a criminologist?

I answered honestly but briefly – trying not to open up further discussion about myself. However, when a participant asked during an informal conversation where I was staying, I instinctively provided a vague answer, having had it drilled into me not to share personal information with prisoners. Sometimes participants were keen to communicate beyond the parameters of my study - Lee kept me updated with the progress of his parole application, Larry sent an unrelated certificate he had received, and Jasmin sent drawings at Christmas:



Maintaining Rapport

Researchers can struggle to manage relationships between conflicting groups (Noaks & Wincup, 2004), and at times it felt difficult maintaining positive relationships with both staff and prisoners. Like Rowe (2014) I was occasionally asked to assist with tasks that might have compromised my appearance of independence. I agreed to collect tickets from prisoners attending a talent contest, hesitant to be associated with staff, but uncomfortable refusing given understaffing. On another occasion, knowing that I was going to interview Emily, Brian asked me to find out her clothes size, having forgotten to at our initial meeting.

During the Pride event, some officers wore pink shirts, and I was offered one, which I declined, not wanting to wear a uniform that would have overtly associated me with staff. I had a particularly tense moment while preparing decorations for the Pride event. The LGBT officer disappeared, and the prisoners I was helping began expressing their vehement dislike of her. I remained neutral, but probed for more information. As they were talking, one of the prisoners spotted her, within earshot. She had been bent down doing decorations, and we quickly, and very obviously,

changed topic. Sometimes I did not remain neutral, for example when two prisoners called a particular officer a 'bitch' I agreed that she was unnecessarily aggressive. Occasionally, prisoners criticised other participants, and I tried to gather further information without taking sides.

Ending Relationships

I was conscious of establishing bonds that would end with my fieldwork. Letter correspondence can be important for prisoners (Maybin, 2000), and my letters were clearly meaningful for some participants. As explained above, Imogen wanted to stay in touch as friends, and similarly Megan requested I become her penpal, asking '1. Age, 2. Girlfriend, 3. What you do for hobbies.' I briefly answered her questions, and suggested she write to the Bent Bars project who might be able to find her a penpal. Other participants, like Jordan, were more aware of relationship boundaries – he likened our relationship to one with a mentor who had to end contact when she stopped working at the prison. With one exception, none of my interview participants wrote to me, and so when fieldwork ended, those relationships did too. Via letter, there was no clear end to correspondence, and some participants kept writing, despite my attempts to end our exchanges.

Keeping Safe

Safety in Prisons

Researchers tend to pay little attention to their own wellbeing, however it is important to reflect on the toll that fieldwork often takes (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007).

My loved ones expressed concerns about my physical safety in prisons, though it is extremely rare for prison researchers to experience violence (Roberts & Indermaur, 2008), and on the whole, I felt very safe in prisons.

My first interviewee, Robbie, seemed intent on scaring and impressing me with stories of serious incidents, including one where he was the only person to help a female officer being held hostage. A few days later, I interviewed Barry, the only respondent to my advert. Safer custody staff informed me of a security alert communicating he posed a 'risk to females', that he was in prison for hostage-taking, and had made no indication that he was LGBT. I felt anxious and discussed precautions with staff, who reassured me, arranging for the interview to happen in a private room on his wing, and reminding me to sit nearest the door. Barry's demeanour was intimidating - he was very tall and muscular, spoke loudly, often stood up, and made large, expressive hand movements. The content of his words were not threatening, but I remained intimidated, although I tried to conceal this. Some time into the interview, an officer checked on us - I later learned that safer custody staff had requested they check I was OK, having expected me to have already returned. I felt reassured by their concerns about my welfare. Since prison researchers can feel 'uncomfortable and out of place' (Noaks & Wincup, 2004:63) I had volunteered with the IMB before commencing fieldwork, however I had never been alone with a prisoner. This anxiety-inducing interview proved helpful, making me more confident about interviewing less "risky" prisoners.

On three occasions at the women's prison I felt momentarily unsafe. Early on during fieldwork, I asked an inmate working in the gardens for directions. She insisted on escorting me, and as we walked down a narrow passageway, I suddenly felt vulnerable, realising I was with an unknown prisoner carrying a heavy spade. On another occasion, I interviewed a prisoner in a kitchen – not an ideal setting, but the only place available before her release the next day. The house was initially open, but was locked shortly after I arrived. I realised that staff rarely patrolled this area, and that I was unsure whether my keys unlocked the main door. My participant laughed and joked, 'You're staying the night now. You can't get out'. She was unintimidating, but I was fleetingly anxious. When interviewing Imogen, who was mentally unwell, he disclosed hearing voices telling him to attack prison officers. He explained he would not attack me, but had wondered whether I worked for the police. I felt unsafe due to his paranoid demeanour.

Safety in the Community

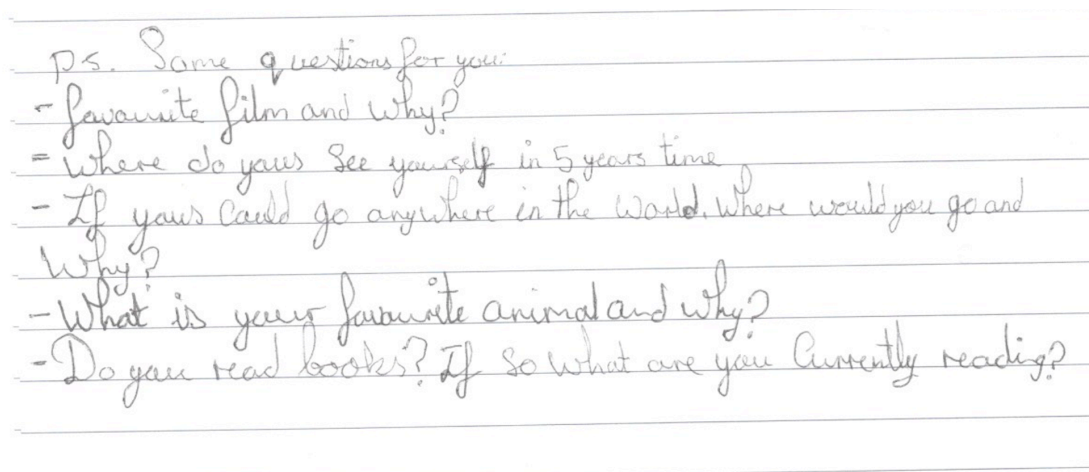
Via letter, participants were physically far-removed, however I was sometimes concerned for my safety upon their release. A probation officer contacted me after intercepting a letter. She advised that some prisoners are manipulative and would reply to my advert even if they were not LGBT, writing 'to multiple women in attempt to groom them'. She was concerned that I had advertised my department address:

It took me just a quick telephone call to get your email address. You may want to ask staff at the Centre to verify who callers are before giving out your details. If I were a highly manipulative, newly released

prisoner it would be easy for me to visit your place of study to try to contact you. Sorry to sound alarmist but this has concerned me.

She was unable to disclose who had written the letter or its content beyond explaining that its tone was 'overfamiliar', that the prisoner did not mention my study, and had asked about meeting in person. I was not overly concerned, reassuring myself the probation officer was over-reacting.

However, just over a month later, a police officer in Oxford emailed about my Inside Times advert, writing, 'Not wishing to alarm you but there is some information that I need to share'. It did not occur to me that these two incidents were connected, but during a phone call I learned they involved the same prisoner - George. He had now been released, and police were concerned he might contact me. The officer explained we needed to speak 'fairly soon', but that I should not be overly concerned, since their approach was 'belt and braces'. We arranged to meet the following week. I re-read George's initial letter. It was informal and chatty, and he did not disclose any information regarding his gender or sexuality, only sharing some generic demographic information, expressing his desire for us to 'get to know each other better', and asking numerous questions about my interests:



Handwritten text on lined paper:

P.S. Some questions for you:

- favourite film and why?
- where do you see yourself in 5 years time
- If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?
- What is your favourite animal and why?
- Do you read books? If so what are you currently reading?

Since he had also asked what inspired my research, and how many people had written, I presumed he was trying to decide whether to participate. I briefly answered his personal questions, hoping to build trust, and addressed his questions about my research. I explained that I could only be in contact for research purposes, and asked whether he wanted to participate.

Although I had not shared any personal information, I was concerned he could discover where I lived. He had disclosed living in both Oxford and London, and I studied in the former and lived in the latter. After re-reading his letter, I noticed a man matching his demographics walking behind me, and waited until he was gone before entering my flat. Although this paranoia was irrational, and rooted in my longstanding anxiety disorder, I nonetheless feared for my safety. Meeting the police alleviated these anxieties. They explained that George was a ‘fantasist’, had lied about personal details to gain my affections, but only posed a risk to ‘silly teenage girls’, and they were confident I could look after myself.²⁴ They noted that probation staff had been concerned about me being a student, and that my ethical approval to conduct research in prisons had ‘raised a few eyebrows’.

Psychological Support

Hearing about, and responding to, participants’ distressing experiences was difficult; especially when I knew I was the only person they had opened up to. Unlike trainee clinical psychologists, there was no requirement that I access professional support.

²⁴ The officer also knocked on the desk between us, saying some people she interviewed were ‘as thick as this table’, which felt like victim-blaming, and made me uncomfortable.

Like many researchers, I relied predominantly on fellow students, friends and family for 'counselling and debriefing' (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007:345). I also attended a short series of university vicarious trauma workshops, and fortunately had regular mental health mentoring through the disability service.

I struggled to compartmentalise my research given my focus on sexual and gender minorities while simultaneously exploring my own identities. It was distressing to hear participants share queerphobic opinions. For example, I distinctly remember feeling personally affronted when Joel commented, 'it should be man and woman'. Being LGBT made it difficult reflecting on queerphobia on a daily basis.

Conducting research away from home was difficult, having no opportunity to debrief after 'long and emotionally taxing days' (Jenness, 2010:537). I stayed in spare rooms on AirBnB, conscious of my limited budget, and struggled having little privacy and having to make small talk with hosts, who sometimes asked inappropriate questions, offered unsolicited advice, and made it difficult to relax. I stayed in a hotel during my final week of fieldwork, seeking better down-time. I often had nightmares during fieldwork about accidentally taking my mobile phone into the establishment,²⁵ or being in prison myself.

It was also difficult bringing participants' experiences into my own home. Reading distressing letters, like vivid descriptions of bloodletting, in my living room made it difficult to later relax in the same space. Vannier (2018) dedicated a set time

²⁵ I was never searched during fieldwork.

to letters to limit their emotional impact. Having a distinct space would also be beneficial. Some letters were particularly distressing. AJ, who was only 16, described traumatic experiences and ended his letter on a concerning sentence, 'Everyday is more trouble. I find myself asking, when will it get better?' His hopeless tone worried me, and I spent several hours finding tailored support and constructing a supportive response. I never heard back, and wondered whether AJ had received my letter, and whether he had sent a reply that had been intercepted or lost in the post. I often feared the worst – that my responses had distressed participants, leading them to self-harm. On one occasion, after telling a family member a participant had castrated herself, they asked whether I believed she had done this to gain my attention. Although this insensitive question was unfounded, the suggestion was distressing.

Over time, I experienced 'desensitization' (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007:340) - given the quantity of letters detailing distressing events, it became routine to read about child abuse, bullying and self-harm. It was as though I had reached capacity, and was becoming numb to suffering as a survival mechanism. Other prison researchers working with letters describe similar feelings of 'emotional overload' (Vannier, 2018:13). At times I put off replying, overwhelmed by the anxiety that I would not produce an appropriate response, which further increased my anxiety, worrying about taking too long to respond. In this sense, letters proved a difficult method for me.

The most distressing event of my research was learning, by scrolling through my twitter feed, that Jordan had died. I immediately felt I had contributed to his death, or at least could have done more to prevent it. It was unclear from newspaper reports whether he had taken his own life. However, the Prison and Probation Ombudsman (PPO), whose investigation I assisted, informed me that he had. People with OCD tend to have an 'inflated perception of responsibility for harm' (Foa, Sacks, Tolin, Prezworski & Amir, 2002:444), and to treat not intervening to prevent potential harm as equivalent to directly causing it (Foa et al. 2001).

Some researchers create in advance strategies to cope with incidents including participants dying (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007) but I had not anticipated an event like this. Although I would be affected if any participant had died, I had formed an 'emotive bond' (Detamore, 2010:179) with Jordan, who I interviewed several times and got on with very well. I sometimes think of Jordan when listening to Tupac, whose music we both enjoyed. I remain affected by his suicide, and struggle with the thought of him dying in prison. I hope that through research, activism and fundraising I can help improve life for other transgender people like Jordan.

Reporting Findings

Data Validity

Having learned that George had lied in his letter, I began questioning the veracity of what prisoners shared, especially via letter, where it is easier to provide false information. There was one particular participant whose story I doubted - an inmate

in a men's prison who claimed to be a transgender woman. I had to write Heather's deadname on the envelopes I sent her since she was waiting a legal name change, like a few other participants. I had no misgivings about her until she sent a picture she claimed was of herself, ripped out of a magazine. I found a news report online that confirmed my suspicions that this photo was not of her.²⁶ Heather claimed to be in prison for prostitution and stealing money from a client, however this article reported her conviction for false imprisonment and rape, and used a mug-shot completely different to the magazine image. The picture she sent had matched her description of having 'long curly hair' and having had breast implants and facial feminisation surgery. The photo online showed a bald person with masculine features.

Heather's letters had been long, detailed, consistent, and convincing. However it was clear she had lied about her crimes and appearance, which was deeply connected to her supposed experiences as someone who stood out as a woman in a men's prison. I have therefore omitted Heather's account from my findings. I sincerely wanted to find that Heather was telling the truth, reluctant to perpetuate discourses that question transgender women's gender authenticity (Serano, 2007). While presenting my results at a men's prison, a transgender woman told me that another participant was actually cisgender and pretending to be a woman. Irrespective of whether this claim was true, it illustrates suspicions

²⁶ I often researched prisoners who wrote to me, occasionally finding information that contradicted what they had disclosed about their convictions. This concerned me that other information they shared might be untrue. It is not uncommon for researchers to use other data to assess the veracity of their participants' accounts (Jenness et al. 2009), however I felt guilty for doing so.

regarding gender authenticity within, as well as towards, the transgender community.

Prisoners are often treated with suspicion (Presser, 2009), and it is in my nature to be exceptionally trusting. When Brian started working at the women's prison he believed everything, but soon learned to be more skeptical, after prisoners repeatedly taking him 'for a fool'. On the IMB I learnt a similar lesson. When asking prisoners on reception whether they had had sufficient food and drink, one inmate claimed with a wry smile to be dehydrated – it transpired he had just had a bottle of water. Another prisoner complained of being unfairly targeted for searching, but days later was found with a large stash of contraband.

My research raised epistemological concerns about producing accurate data. Staff often indicated they could not fully trust inmates. A probation officer clarified that events she recounted were on the basis of taking prisoners' accounts 'at face value'. Another probation officer explained that a participant was a 'fantasist' and so she doubted the veracity of what he said unless 'proven'. Oliver felt bad admitting it, but was unsure whether to believe a gay prisoner who reported homophobic bullying, struggling to discern what was 'genuine' given his mental ill-health.

Some prisoners misled me. Jasmin claimed she was denied location on a VPU because staff wanted to 'experiment' with housing a transgender woman on main location. After further inquiries, she acknowledged that the prison's refusal was influenced by her index offence against a sex offender. Probing for additional

information often proved vital for accuracy, particularly when prisoners expressed opinions without providing examples. Zach referred to his prison experience as 'pretty neutral' yet went on to describe being sexually harassed and subjected to daily homophobic jokes. Zach also claimed that being gay he could not apply for jobs that might enable him 'to engage in sexual activity with other inmates'. He later gained one such position, explaining he had previously considered his sexuality the barrier on the basis of what another gay prisoner had said. At times there can be a disjuncture between prisoners' beliefs and reality. Some prisoners were conscious that I might doubt the veracity of their statements. Gilbert wrote, 'You probably think I'm mad and just thinking about conspiracy theories, but it's not the case.'

Brian gave an account during an interview that differed from the same situation I had observed. He suggested that Emily was kept on the FNC for longer than usual predominantly to gauge other prisoners' responses. However, at the time, discussions focused on speculations regarding whether Emily had a penis. Here, triangulation (Ritchie, 2003) enabled a more nuanced understanding of how prisons respond to transgender inmates and explain this treatment. Likewise, it was informative to contrast how staff at the men's prison described the experiences of a recently departed gay prisoner, with the much less positive account he provided via letter. Staff focused on the support they provided, for example through the LGBT group, which he did not mention, instead describing a lack of support, and being subjected to excessive force. Neither staff nor Liam's accounts appeared untrue, but presented very different pictures.

Some participants doubted the veracity of their own memories. Oliver was unsure whether he had witnessed first hand some of the information he disclosed, or whether others had told him about it. Likewise, Justin described his memories of being in a YOI as ‘patchy’. While some participants seemed to share pre-constructed opinions, others had never previously considered the questions I posed, and sometimes came to particular ideas through our discussions.

What Not to Share

My research aims to reduce inequality and injustice, and I am wary of my findings being used to further oppress vulnerable groups. It can be difficult to determine whether research will ‘do more harm to queer communities than good’ (Panfil, 2014:107). Several participants requested I did not report certain information, fearing negative repercussions. Craig, an HIV worker, explained that reporting the positive activities of an LGBT group might negatively affect provisions by fuelling arguments that inmates are treated too well. At another point, a participant asked me not to record incriminating information.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained my approach to data collection and analysis. It has explained how I gained access to prisons and individual participants, how I gathered data, analysed and reported it. I have thoroughly engaged with the ethical questions arising from my research with LGBT prisoners, and offered an in-depth account of how my social location affected the knowledge that I helped produce, and which is

presented in the following chapters. Chapters Four to Seven present my findings on the experiences of LGBT prisoners, and institutional responses to them.

Chapter 4: Being LGBT Behind Bars

Introduction

This chapter explores the experiences of LGBT prisoners. Beginning by considering the number of LGBT inmates, and how they can be identified, it then turns to issues of disclosure, explaining how prisoners construct their own identities, and make decisions about sharing them with others. Finally, I consider bullying, in terms of fear of victimisation, attitudes towards LGBT people, the prevalence of 'banter' and more serious victimisation and how LGBT inmates avoid and resist abuse.

Identifying LGBT inmates

Number of LGBT prisoners

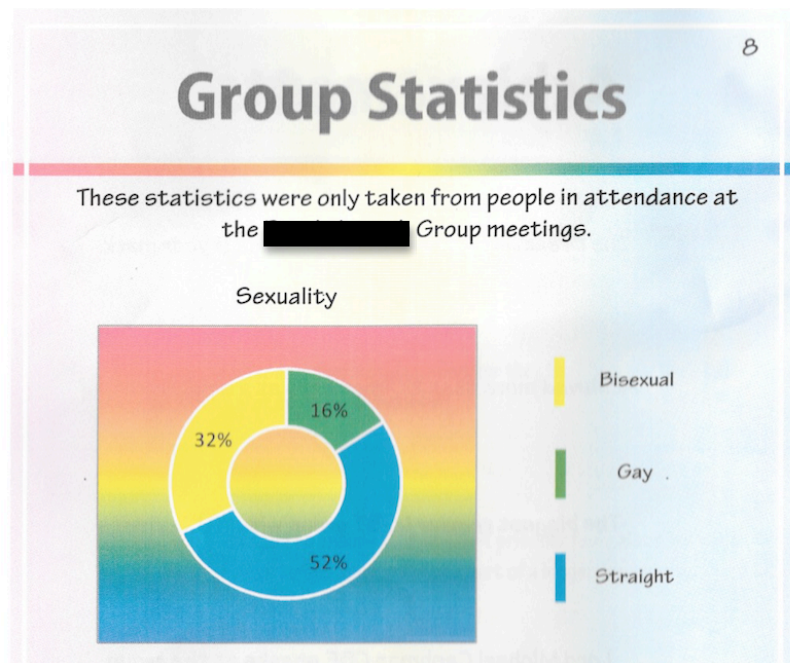
At the men's prison there were no openly non-heterosexual prisoners, however, at the women's prison, I was overwhelmed with inmates wanting to discuss their same-sex identities or relationships. Ali and Tay said the prison was 'full of lesbians', and Jessica claimed there were far more lesbians and bisexual than straight women. However, Annabelle noted that only two or three inmates were 'proper lesbians' - most being what she referred to as 'bisexual' - having relationships with women in prison but returning to relationships with men upon release. Most prisoners agreed that engaging in a same-sex relationship in prison signified non-heterosexuality. Grace suggested that 90% of inmates entered relationships, and were gay, bisexual or bi-curious. Tay claimed, 'no-one's straight in jail' explaining she could 'turn straight birds like that' [clicks fingers].

Staff often contrasted male and female establishments in terms of the openness of non-heterosexuality. Roger had never knowingly met a gay male prisoner but had encountered 'lots and lots and lots' of lesbians. A custodial manager explained that non-heterosexual inmates were rare and 'under the radar' in men's prisons, but prevalent, 'open and out there' in women's establishments. The Ministry of Justice's statistics do not reveal the number of prisoners who identify as LGB in men's compared to women's establishments (MoJ, 2018a).

Participants at the men's prison had rarely encountered LGBT inmates - Johnny had met one openly gay prisoner during 17 months in multiple establishments. Staff corroborated prisoners' accounts - during seven years of working with young offenders and young adults, an officer could only recall one openly gay prisoner, and a probation officer had only knowingly met one gay inmate over two years.

The number of LGBT prisoners varies greatly across men's prisons. Glenn noted that his current prison had more gay men than his previous establishment, where he had only met one, and Kevin explained, 'some prisons have a big [LGBT] community...yet others don't'. The strength and size of prisons' LGBT support groups can help indicate the prevalence of LGBT inmates there. Several participants referenced a Category B male sex offender prison as having a large LGBT community and support group with approximately 60 active members. Participants at this prison often claimed their group as the largest, however a similar establishment's LGBT coordinator boasted 118 members. Both groups allowed straight, cisgender

members, meaning that group size does not straightforwardly correspond with LGBT community size. Shane sent statistics regarding the former prison's group:



Adding further complications, Iris explained that some prisoners might attend under the guise of being heterosexual and cisgender due to feeling unable to come out. Furthermore, not all LGBT prisoners will attend these groups. Iris suggested that no prisoners attended from a particular wing due to its younger, more 'macho' environment. Some LGBT prisoners might be uninterested in attending. Graham noted that while around 30 LGBT prisoners attended a group at his prison, 'a significant proportion' of LGBT inmates did not attend. Attending an LGBT group did not appeal to Ben, who did not feel in need of any support the group could offer. Eric commented that being gay 'doesn't mean you want to go to the gay group'.

Several participants reported that sex offender establishments have a far greater proportion of openly LGBT inmates, as do high security establishments housing long-term prisoners. Eric, a gay man, was hesitant to stereotype, but suggested that LGBT prisoners had usually committed sex offences. However, the nature of sex offender prisons clearly influences the higher rates of LGBT inmates there. These establishments tend to be calmer and less violent and have stable populations, facilitating successful LGBT groups, and therefore a visible LGBT community. Prisoners are more able to be openly LGBT in establishments with such groups, as Sam noted – ‘more LGBT prisoners are starting to come out as there is more of a support network’. Joel suggested that in mainstream prisons inmates had to be especially ‘brave’ to disclose non-heterosexuality.

In mainstream prisons, there are more openly LGBT inmates on VPUs. Prisoners explained that it was easier to come out on VPUs since prisoners there were more welcoming of LGBT people. Kevin explained this increased acceptance as the result of there being large numbers of openly LGBT inmates already on these wings. Not all VPUs have large numbers of openly LGBT inmates - Owen met very few gay men on his VPU.

Trent suggested that the rarity of ‘gay criminals’ explained their absence in mainstream prisons, yet also speculated there probably was ‘someone gay in every prison’, even if they were not ‘out’. Participants recognized there were more non-heterosexual prisoners than those who were *openly* LGB. Becca noted, ‘you can’t have a population of 600 men and there only be two of them ever that you know

that's gay'. Participants suggested that a fear of bullying explained prisoners' discretion, Bethan suggesting that men kept their sexuality quiet 'as a survival technique'.

In the women's prison, openly transgender prisoners were rare. A mental health manager estimated that one in a thousand prisoners were transgender. During ten years, Becca knew two prisoners who had 'transitioned from men to women' and around five who 'would identify as male'. During their respective ten years in prison, Trish had met two transgender women, Linda had met four trans women and two trans men, and Casey had met 5 transgender prisoners – a range of men and women. One of the transgender men that Casey knew was intersex – he was raised as a girl but identified as a man, and stopped HRT during prison, resulting in growing a beard. Casey suggested that the number of trans male prisoners had increased such that it was 'normal' to see a trans man. However, Brian suggested they remained a 'novelty'. During 11 years in prison, Grace had met a handful of people 'going through the process of changing gender', but 'innumerable' prisoners who '*want to be a man*' – estimating she had met over 100 prisoners who 'say they identify as boys'. Jordan knew a handful of prisoners he believed identified as men but had not openly disclosed this. While participants agreed there were proportionately more masculine AFAB people in prison than outside, such inmates were still a minority. Billie could 'count on one hand' the 'butch looking girls'.

At the men's prison, an officer with 22 years experience, working mainly with young offenders and young adults, had only encountered one transgender prisoner.

Healthcare staff could not remember working with a transgender prisoner, but recalled an inmate being identified as female on their summary care records. Prisoners agreed that transgender inmates were uncommon. William noted that transgender women were 'rare' in most men's prisons, and Megan described being the first openly transgender woman at her establishment. She was the 'test case', with other transgender women arriving soon. Some participants had several transgender inmates at their establishment – Ben referenced 5 trans women at a Category B sex offender prison, Jasmin noted a dozen on the VPU at a Category A prison, and Gerry referred to 9 transgender women at a Category C sex offender prison, 'with another looking to transfer...after hearing about the support network'.

Oliver explained that while openly transgender prisoners were much rarer than openly gay or bisexual prisoners, being transgender 'stands out so much more', making such prisoners easily identifiable. William agreed that when transgender women 'live in role' they are 'highly visible in a way that LGB prisoners are not'. Prisoners, like William, explained that *openly* transgender inmates had become much more prevalent in recent years, but recognized 'no doubt they existed' before they became 'visible'.

Beyond transgender women, Nicholas referenced a cisgender transvestite and a 'hermaphrodite' who was moving to a female establishment. One participant identified as bigender, and another as non-binary. Jasmin identified as a transgender woman but simultaneously did not believe in the gender binary and identified as 'the female side of unisex'. Of Jenness's (2010:542) transgender participants in

men's prisons, 14% identified as 'male and female' and 3.2% as 'neither female nor male'. The Ministry of Justice's 2018 statistics on transgender prisoners record 27 who identify as gender-fluid, 10 as intersex and 4 as non-binary (MoJ, 2018a). I found no evidence of transgender men in men's prisons.

Discerning Sexuality and Gender

Official Disclosures

We have seen that openly non-heterosexual prisoners are far more prevalent in women's than men's establishments, and that across the male estate, prisons vary greatly in terms of the number of openly LGBT inmates they hold. This section turns to issues of visibility.

Prisons monitor sexuality (Dunn, 2013) and inmates often reported being asked their sexuality on reception. Leila was asked on her first day amongst 'a whole lot of questions on the computer', regarding issues like accommodation and health. At the prison Oliver worked at, inmates were asked their sexuality during a private nursing assessment:

They ask 'how do you identify?' And then the prisoner always says

'What do you mean?' They'll be like 'Are you gay, straight, or bi?'

Oliver explained there was a drop-down menu for nurses to record sexuality, but he was unsure of the full list of options available and had never heard nurses ask about gender.

Brian explained that staff could not ask individual prisoners whether they were transgender, but that 'if they tick the transgender box' on reception, staff could speak with them about gender. At the women's prison, an officer asked inmates their gender and sexuality upon arrival, and a few weeks later prisoner orderlies asked them too. Emily chose 'prefer not to say', to which the officer remarked, 'I think it's a stupid question too'. She chose this option due to rejecting identity categories, feeling that her gender and sexuality were 'none of their business', and because staff already knew she was transgender. Conversely, she chose to disclose mental health problems as disabilities, wanting access to support. The officer and prisoner equalities orderlies both asked:

10. Which of the following options best describes how you think of yourself?

- ☐ Heterosexual or Straight
- ☐ Gay or Lesbian
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Of course, since gender and sexuality are distinct, prisoners can be both transgender and bisexual, for example. When I asked an orderly whether prisoners could tick multiple boxes she replied, 'Oh, I don't know, we've never thought about it'. In the previous two months, safer custody orderlies had recorded 57 prisoners as straight, 4 gay, 8 bisexual and 3 'prefer not to say'. These identities were not 'already there, waiting to be counted' (Browne, 2010:233) but rather 'produced' via the categorisation process (Goodman, 2008:735). I discuss the classification of gender and sexuality further

below.

When asked his sexuality on reception, Jordan would say 'gay', rather than 'lesbian', which he considered more feminine. He did not recall being asked his gender, but had always thought of himself as gay rather than transgender. He had only recently encountered this term and felt he would never *become* transgender. Jordan believed that other people saw him as *wanting* to be a man, rather than already being one – although transgender people who have not transitioned are no less legitimately transgender (Rodgers et al., 2017). Identifying as gay was likely to further obscure Jordan's gender given that staff already tend to read masculine inmates in women's prisons as homosexual (Girshick, 2011).

Inmates were often nervous about reporting their sexuality. Some non-heterosexual prisoners, like Robert, felt unable to lie, since the nature of their offence meant this would be 'illogical'. Other prisoners, like Lucas, concealed their sexuality out of fear, reflecting existing research (Asquith et al., 2017). Although openly bisexual outside prison, Lucas said he was straight on reception at two establishments, unsure 'what to expect'. Similarly, Ben did not disclose his sexuality, 'petrified' about being in prison:

Almost immediately I was faced with an officer filling in a questionnaire asking personal questions such as 'are you heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual?' and I answered 'heterosexual' as I was too scared to answer honestly to these men.

Billie explained that first-timers were unsure what to expect, and so worried their sexuality might not be accepted by inmates or staff. Debbie recognised that asking

first-time prisoners their sexuality on their first night was 'not the right time'. The men's prison therefore stopped asking young offenders their sexuality on reception, instead distributing leaflets advising prisoners to speak with their key workers about sexuality, which led to several inmates opening up and seeking support.

Prisoners, like Linda, were unsure why sexuality was asked:

I was really scared, thinking 'why do they want to know all these questions about me?'...So no, I didn't tell them. I didn't tick any box. I was a nothing [Laughs].

Dunn (2013) documented staff failing to explain why they were gathering data on sexuality and who would have access to it. Linda was asked after a few weeks in prison, and did not want to be 'tarred with the same kind of brush' as inmates in same-sex relationships that she disapproved of. At her second establishment, Linda 'ticked the correct box' realizing that disclosing her non-heterosexuality would not have negative consequences.

Peter was 'terrified' but disclosed his sexuality on reception. Staff reassured him that 'times had changed', and he would be OK. Staff often recognized that prisoners might feel compelled to conceal their sexuality. Becca explained that even when asked in private, prisoners feared their answer would not remain confidential. Emma disclosed she was bisexual at her initial prison, confident this would remain confidential. Amber 'wasn't bothered' whether her sexuality was shared with others. Daniel suggested that having told reception staff he was bisexual, they shared this with other prisoners, resulting in bullying. Regardless of whether this was the case, it

is important that Daniel believed his sexuality was not kept confidential. Rebecca presumed staff just asked 'for statistics' and suggested that information regarding sexuality could be put to better use, for example by informing non-heterosexual prisoners of rules regarding relationships. Some establishments actively use prisoners' disclosures of sexuality - having disclosed he was gay, an LGBT representative visited Sebastian, informing him about the prison's support group.

Prisoners were not always asked their sexuality at every establishment. Nicholas was only asked at his second prison, where he disclosed he was gay – he said he would not have felt comfortable doing so at his initial prison. Conversely, an officer at the men's prison explained that inmates were usually only asked at their reception establishment, with their answer forwarded to future establishments. He suggested that staff had stopped routinely asking sexuality 'in case it offends'. Of course, asking sexuality once would not capture LGBT prisoners who conceal their identity at their initial prison, or who start identifying as LGBT during prison.

Official records regarding prisoners' identities are sometimes incomplete. In the men's prison, safer custody staff noted that some traveller prisoners were not registered as such - Becca explained that some officers used the wrong code when inputting data. She had heard that some prisoners had 'pretended' to be travellers for the purpose of attending forums, and so relied on other travellers to determine which prisoners were 'actually travellers'. The prisons literature documents staff believing that prisoners falsely claim certain identities in pursuit of benefits (Phillips, 2012).

Informal disclosure

Beyond formal disclosures on reception, staff can discover an inmate's LGBT status through other means. At the men's prison, a probation officer learned of an inmate's engagement in same-sex relationships through conversations about his offending, from which she inferred his non-heterosexuality. A prisoner disclosed his sexuality to another probation officer, which she considered the result of safety concerns.

Kevin's probation officer noted his attendance of the prison's LGBT support group – upon disclosing his sexuality, his probation officer treated it as a potential risk factor, asking about his sex life in and outside prison. Ben was required to disclose his sexuality in the context of his crime during a SOTP.

As seen above, some participants believe that staff share their identity disclosures with other inmates. Katherine claimed that an officer informed other inmates she was planning to transition, and Eric suggested that other inmates knowing his sexuality 'must have come from a member of staff'. However, he also noted that prisoners researched each other:

I did have an inmate come up to me and go...'your date of birth is that, you live at that address...you had a civil partnership in 2010'.

Likewise, at the women's prison, Charlotte noted that prisoners would 'Google people' upon release and disclose their findings to other inmates on their return. Prisoners shared information about inmates they knew from outside prison, and external news publications also revealed the LGBT status of people in prison. Edward was featured in local newspapers, read by inmates, for a crime against his boyfriend, meaning he 'had no choice' about concealing his sexuality. Similarly, headlines

revealed Bob's same-sex relationships, meaning his sexuality, which he had 'kept hidden' was now known by other inmates. When newspapers reported Katherine's desire to transition, she denied these claims, and tried to continue living as a man, on officers' advise, though still experienced 'daily turmoil' as a result.

Of course, beyond being "outed", LGBT prisoners often share their identities. Martin was 'out and proud', meaning that other prisoners soon discovered his sexuality. Liam's openness regarding his sexuality encouraged other inmates to approach him and disclose, 'I'm gay too'. Likewise, several prisoners came out to Kevin, who was openly bisexual. William made 'specific and deliberate' disclosures on a few occasions, while other prisoners learned of his sexuality through general conversation. Sean would disclose his sexuality if asked, but not 'advertise' it. Degrees of visibility are discussed later in the chapter. Inmates often shared knowledge of prisoners' sexualities, - Joel suggesting news a prisoner was gay or bisexual spread like 'wild fire'. Once prisoners assert their non-heterosexuality, this information is impossible to revoke. Tony had come out in a YOI and explained, 'no matter how much time goes by, people still talk and I will occasionally get someone asking me if I'm gay'. At the women's prison, sexuality was a common topic of conversation, Olivia explaining that prisoners often asked each other 'have you ever been with a girl?'

Sexuality can also be communicated through appearance and behaviour. At a Category C prison primarily for sex offenders I met Larry, who had customised jeans with rainbow flags, LGBT symbols and slogans. At a similar establishment, Iris noted

that some inmates wore LGBT wristbands. LGBT group representatives often wore official T-shirts. These representatives were sometimes heterosexual and cisgender, but, like Barry, were sometimes considered gay by other inmates. Similarly, attendance at an LGBT group could induce presumptions regarding sexuality. However, as noted above, the inclusion of heterosexual and cisgender allies might mean that some prisoners avoid these imputations.

Relationships

In the women's establishment, participants often imputed non-heterosexual identities to inmates in same-sex relationships. For example, Roger referred to prisoners in relationships as 'openly gay women', and Jordan suggested that prisoners and staff knew him as gay because of his long-term relationship. Charlotte worried that her relationship with another inmate would lead to incorrect imputations regarding her sexuality – she had previously identified as straight, but was 'gay for the stay at the minute':

Everybody's gonna look at me and go, 'she's gay', and I kept saying 'I'm not gay...It's just this one person for me...It won't ever happen again'.

However, being simultaneously in a relationship with a man outside prison meant that not all inmates would impute a gay identity to Charlotte. Laura, for example, suggested that prisoners who had girlfriends in prison and male partners outside were bisexual. Tracy *presumed* that prisoners in relationships were not actually attracted to women and Linda suggested that most prisoners in relationships were 'actually straight'. Billie suggested that she could discern prisoners who were 'jail

bent' because they would be with 'a butch bird' - only being attracted to women that 'look like lads'. Jordan suggested that a prisoner not keeping in touch with their partner after release was another sign they were not gay.

Prisoners and staff sometimes incorrectly presumed that close friends were partners, and therefore non-heterosexual. Friendships in men's prisons could also induce presumptions regarding sexuality. Due to associating with a prisoner who was 'very camp' and "'obviously" gay', Sebastian was asked 'THE QUESTION... "Are you gay?"' Likewise, because William tended to be friends with gay and bisexual prisoners, other inmates correctly assumed his sexuality. Gerry worried about being considered gay by association, and since he was 'hiding' his own sexuality, purposefully kept his distance from prisoners he thought might be LGBT.

Gaydar

Sexuality was also ascribed to prisoners on the basis of gender stereotypes. Prisoners often described exclamations like, 'we already knew', and 'about time' after coming out to friends and family in the community. They did not seem to mind such comments. In prison, it was also commonplace for people to attribute sexuality based on 'gaydar' – the idea that people can identify gay people through 'a sixth sense' (Cox, Devine, Bischmann & Hyde, 2016). Participants suggested they could discern sexuality by looking at somebody. Robbie suggested that a person's 'tendencies' revealed them as gay, and Trent suggested that 'body language and speech' can reveal homosexuality. These claims reflect the notion of the 'glass closet' (Sedgwick, 1990:80) – that somebody's sexuality can be determined 'without

that individual ever having articulated it' (Brown, 2011:124).

In the men's prison, non-heterosexuality was associated with femininity. Joey believed that 'camp' prisoners were gay, and feminine men made Faisel question, 'is he a bit of a fag?' Oliver suggested that a prisoner's non-heterosexuality was evident because he was 'incredibly effeminate', and Joel explained that feminine heterosexual men were often 'tarred as being gay'.

Gay and bisexual prisoners corroborated that their femininity led to presumptions regarding their sexuality. Harry explained that being 'very camp' regularly induced questions about his sexuality, and Avi explained that prisoners considered him feminine and gay because of how he walked, talked, and his tendency to smile and be 'nice and helpful'. Joel corroborated that being caring and compassionate are considered feminine, and therefore indicative of homosexuality. Martin explained in contrast, that being 'tough' and 'macho' indicated heterosexuality.

Some non-heterosexual prisoners subscribed to the idea of gaydar. Through working in gay bars, Sebastian believed he could easily determine sexuality. Eric recognised the problematic nature of such ideas, stating, 'I shouldn't say that', after commenting that a prisoner was 'obviously gay'. Oliver considered whether prisoners appeared gay as part of safeguarding. He also explained that older gay men being considered to 'look like paedophiles' placed them at risk of attack for this additional stigmatized attribute. Other factors resulted in inmates being imputed a

non-heterosexual identity. Having condoms and lubricant made reception staff ask Eric whether he was gay, and an HIV charity representative explained that being HIV positive could induce homophobia towards prisoners, despite HIV in prison usually indicating drug use.

In the women's prison, the idea of the glass closet was also prevalent - Annabelle believed she could identify 'proper' lesbians by looking at them. Here, masculinity indicated homosexuality. Trish noted that, 'the butch girls' were 'established gay women' and Grace joked, 'my gaydar's strong', explaining that lesbians were those prisoners who looked 'boyish'. Hannah suggested that her partner being butch made her 'fully gay'. Lottie used the phrase 'butch lesbian' when trying to refer to masculine prisoners, explaining, 'I don't know what to call them'. Her choice of words exemplifies the conflation of gender and sexuality.

Prisoners were aware that their own sexuality was judged on the basis of gender presentation. Amanda explained that prisoners knew she was gay because of her short hair and way of walking. Paula suggested that staff considered inmates who had short hair and wore masculine clothes to be gay, and indeed, Aidan thought that prisoners who 'look like young lads' were 'gay, but...kind of the male role'.

Sometimes attributions of homosexuality to masculine inmates were incorrect. Charlotte was wrongly considered gay because she was a 'tomboy':

They say... 'God it's the way you hold yourself Charlotte, the way you walk, the way you talk. Everything about you, in here would seem gay or boy'.

Prisoners often acknowledged that assuming sexuality was problematic. Jessica explained that the recent popularity of short haircuts for women made it impossible to assume, 'oh she's a lesbian because she's got a short haircut', and Casey agreed this was stereotyping, noting she had several straight friends with short hair. Prisoners, including Linda, suggested that some inmates wanted to appear gay, and so would play on masculine stereotypes, cutting their hair short to gain attention from other prisoners.

Some feminine gay and bisexual prisoners resented being considered straight because of their feminine appearance. As explained in the Methods chapter, staff were surprised to discover that Paula was gay. She explained that not all lesbians had 'boxer shorts hanging out and short hair'. Linda resented being told by staff and inmates, 'you don't look like a lesbian'. The conflation of gender and sexuality (Girshick, 2011) meant staff presumed that Paula and Linda were straight. Degree of femininity, fashion, and hairstyle are common attributes that people use when discerning sexuality (Cox et al., 2016). Heteronormative assumptions mean that closets keep 'springing up', even when prisoners, like Linda, are openly gay (Sedgwick, 1990:68). Aidan sometimes noticed his own problematic presumptions:

They'll say 'my partner', and loads of times I'll just assume its male, and then later on they'll say 'and she' and I'm like 'oh shit, ok'.

Grace instructed that since only 10% of inmates were straight, it was best to presume that all prisoners were 'at least bi-curious'.

Transdar?

Beyond gender presentation being considered evidence of sexuality, prisoners also made and experienced assumptions regarding gender identity. Police initially saw Jordan, a transgender man, as male:

I get thingy'd, as a boy...I can hear them on the radio...They think I'm a male, but as soon as I open my mouth, they know then that I'm not.

Here, 'thingy'd' denotes being misgendered, although in fact it is officers' later assumption that Jordan is a woman, upon hearing him speak, that is the mistake. In prison, Jordan was seen as a masculine woman. He worried that people saw his masculinity as a means of attracting girlfriends, since prisoners often tried to appear masculine, for example shaving their hair, to be 'that attractive thing for a girl'. He found this potential assumption invalidating, explaining, 'with me it's real'. Jordan suggested that ignorance of transgender identities contributed to him being read as a woman, explaining 'they see me as being gay because it's all they know'. Jordan wanted recognition as a man, and suggested that people who knew him 'should just know' he was transgender. He was not hiding his identity - rather it was concealed by other peoples' cisnormative assumptions.

Although Jordan felt interpreted as a woman, some prisoners did speculate on the identity of masculine inmates. Casey explained that the growing visibility of transgender people made prison confusing in this regard:

Years ago a butch female in prison was just that, a butch lesbian, but now obviously there's trans and then there's the women who want to be men, but they look like butches... Back then it was just that one, you're a butch lesbian, but now obviously you don't know whether they want to go through transition.

Previously, masculinity in women's prisons was only thought to signify being gay. Growing recognition of transgender identities meant that prisoners had to question their assumptions regarding gender-nonconformity. Casey identified as a tomboy and did not 'want to be transgender', however, Tracy questioned whether Casey wanted 'to be a man' based on her masculine appearance. Similarly, Jordan questioned whether Ali, who had told me she was a woman, was transgender, commenting, 'She's exactly the same as me...I feel that way anyway, because I see it in her'. Prisoners were clearly reluctant to explicitly ask each other's gender - Jessica explained that whether a prisoner was a masculine-presenting woman or transgender was 'not something that you'd ask'.

Other prisoners seemed unaware that masculine inmates might be transgender, commenting that they would have thought they were men, had they not been in a women's prison. For example, Laura explained,

There's loads of girls that look like boys, and only for the fact that you know where you are, is you know that they're girls.

Here, individual prisoners' cisnormative assumptions, coupled with the binary nature of the prison system, produce assumptions that masculine inmates are women. Casey felt recognized as a woman in prison and worried that outside she might be considered male, asking friends 'If you didn't know me and I walked past you on road, would you think I'm a lad or a girl?'

The process for admitting visitors to the prison revealed the difficulty of determining a person's gender when they are not housed in a binary establishment.

A prisoner who worked for the visits centre, Poppy, sometimes struggled to determine whether visitors were women or men, which disrupted their admissions process, whereby men receive a stamp, and women a stamp and a wristband to distinguish them from prisoners:

I was a bit delayed in giving a band to this girl...and she basically kicked off. She was like, 'I'm an f'ing girl!'...It is quite awkward...because you don't want to say, 'sorry but...[are you a man or a woman?]'



The manager corroborated the difficulty of providing wristbands, commenting, 'I've put it on a bloke before thinking it was a woman'. The wristband system was based on cisnormative assumptions that only female visitors would look like inmates in the women's prison.

Ignorance of transgender issues, and the prevalence of same-sex relationships in prison, meant that Poppy believed that prisoners wore binders to 'look like the man' in a same-sex relationship - an issue discussed further in Chapter 5. In general, prisoners continued to interpret masculinity as evidence of homosexuality due to lacking knowledge about transgender people. Prior to Imogen's disclosure, Tracy had been completely unaware that he might be transgender:

I didn't even know what transgender was. Never even heard it....I was so close to her and I didn't know for one minute... I just thought he was gay and dressed like a boy...So ignorant that.

Shortly before my fieldwork, there had been an openly transgender man at the women's prison who had physically transitioned – having had top surgery and HRT. Brian noted 'you would never, ever tell he was a female to male'. Linda confirmed that it would never have occurred to her outside prison that Ethan was AFAB. Ethan invoked significant discussion. Gemma explained that inmates would question 'why's he in a women's jail?' However, his presence in a women's prison made prisoners realise he was transgender. Likewise, Sandra, immediately stood out as transgender in a men's prison, and was amused by the confusion expressed by newly arrived inmates:

It was always funny...the first thing they'd say was 'what was a woman doing on the wing?'

The presence of transgender women was spread quickly around male establishments. Several male participants described hearing from other inmates about transgender women on others wings. In female establishments transgender women stand out to differing degrees. Emma recalled being able to tell that a prisoner was transgender because her 'Adam's apple was drawn'. When Emily arrived at the women's prison during my fieldwork she too was the subject of much discussion. Nadine noted other prisoners asking, 'oooh, have you seen her?' and otherwise making 'a big thing' of her presence. Rebecca explained that Emily's presence provided 'something interesting to talk about':

We all have an opinion about whether he's a she, he she, she he...This person's apparently still got an Adam's apple, and I think they've had breast implants and I don't know what's going on down below.

Some prisoners believed it was self-evident that Emily was AMAB, for example Tracy

described her 'man's shape'. Emily recognised that while some people found it self-evident she was 'different' others unquestioningly presumed she was cisgender.

The equality officer, explained that Emily was housed on the FNC for longer than usual to see whether other inmates would discover she was transgender, and if so, how they would respond:

Because the media hadn't put transgender we thought we could get away with it. Because it's not for us to tell anyone...So anyway, Emily was quite honest and open, she told an orderly on the first night...and then we just waited for that ripple effect.

While Brian recognised that staff could not ask questions like, 'have you got a penis?' Emily said that multiple staff had asked her 'what stage' she was at in her transition, and whether she had a GRC – a question she knew was not meant to be asked. Emily had had gender confirmation surgery, and in fact found being naked reaffirmed her womanhood to other people:

No one questions you naked. If they're confused, they can have a look and just be like, 'Oh right, yeah, no problem.'

Conversely, Emily worried that being treated differently, for example through being offered an en-suite, might reveal her transgender history through communicating 'that something's different'. Indeed, at a previous prison, Casey had discovered that an inmate was transgender because she had to observe different rules:

Even if you didn't think to look at him, 'oh that's a transgender', the prison did kind of...single them out...I went to walk in her room, and he were like, 'you can't come in here'...and obviously told me he was trans.

The Authenticity of Identities

We have seen that prisoners and staff can discover LGBT prisoners' genders and sexualities in various ways. LGBT inmates might disclose their status, be outed by others, be ascribed non-heterosexuality through being in a relationship, or be subject to gaydar or transdar. Irrespective of how other people find out, they might dispute LGBT prisoners' self-asserted identities. Several prisoners described loved ones questioning their identity. Aged five, Imogen told his grandma, 'I want to be a boy', who replied 'but you're a girl'. Ali's grandma considered her gender presentation and sexuality 'a stage', and likewise Abby's mum deemed her sexuality temporary:

I'm 31....A phase? And If I go with a girl that looks slightly butch, she's like 'well I knew you weren't gay because she looks like a boy.'

In prison, inmates and staff often question the authenticity of each others' identities. Such appraisals occur within a general atmosphere of distrust regarding portrayals of self. Prisoners often suggested that inmates put on a front, Casey explaining, 'there's a lot of fake people' in prison.

Sexuality

In the women's prison, there was widespread speculation and judgment regarding the sexuality of prisoners in relationships. Prisoners who entered same-sex relationships for the first time in prison, who were often called 'jail gay', received particular scrutiny. As seen above, prisoners often suggested that these inmates, who sometimes claimed to be gay or bisexual, were actually straight, or bi-curious at

most. Emma suggested that prisoners often claimed they were bisexual for 'something to talk about', and so was reluctant to identify herself as bisexual for fear of being seen as 'jumping on the bandwagon', when in fact she had had relationships with men and women before prison.

While terms like 'jail bent' were usually ascribed to others, and with negative connotations, some prisoners self-identified with these labels. As noted above, Charlotte described herself as 'gay for the stay at the minute', openly professing the changeable nature of her identity and that her sexual desire and behavior in prison were at odds with who she was as a person outside. The prison's LGBT lead light-heartedly challenged Charlotte's proclaimed straightness, after suggesting that she had been out of bounds to see a hypothetical girlfriend:

I said, 'I'm not gay, you know I'm not gay' and she went, 'ooh there's a bit of gay in all of us.'

At the men's prison, Joel, the chaplain, quite seriously disputed an openly gay prisoner's identity, suggesting he was 'confused', misunderstood what it meant to be gay, and was inauthentically imitating gay culture through being 'flamboyant'. When gay men conform to gay stereotypes they risk accusations of inauthenticity (Clarke & Smith, 2015).

Gender

As noted above, in the women's establishment, inmates often suggested that masculinity was a façade to attract other women. Rebecca doubted the gender (and

sexuality) authenticity of a prisoner who looked 'just like a boy' in prison, but dressed very femininely for a visit with her male partner:

That must be her natural self ...She's obviously more straight when she's on the out.

Predictably, suspicion was rife regarding transgender women's claimed identities. Joel rejected the self-declaration model of gender, explaining 'you are the sex that you are until you've physically been changed and legally recognised as changed'. He suggested that such criteria were necessary to prevent 'perverts' pretending to be women. Transgender prisoners were often conscious of such suspicion. Katherine described staff presuming she was transitioning to 'get [her] leg over', and therefore placing bets she would be returned to the male estate. Bashford et al. (2017:38) documented staff regarding applications for transfers to the female estate as 'suspect and linked to sexual offending'. In fact, Katherine was not attracted to women. Other transgender participants described presumptions regarding their sexuality - inmates assumed that Jasmin was attracted to men, commenting, 'We thought because you was changing into a woman you liked guys'. Iris explained that officers considered a transgender woman manipulative because she chose to wear men's clothes, supporting existing evidence that staff are more accepting of transgender women who present stereotypically femininely (Forder, 2017, Jenness 2010). Courtney felt 'interrogated' during her transgender case conference, where staff suggested she was not genuine and put the onus on her to prove otherwise. Courtney had a reputation amongst staff of being purposefully awkward and difficult, which might help explain some skepticism regarding her sincerity.

Officers at the women's prison suggested to Ali that a transgender woman was 'playing the system', making comments like, 'it's a lot easier to do a life sentence as a woman'. Ali was unsure what to believe, but recognized gender as self-determined, remarking, 'only she knows'. Prisoners often affirmed transgender women's identities, however others, including Owen, regarded particular inmates as insincere - he suspected a prisoner of engaging in 'pure manipulation', transitioning to avoid SOTPs. Becky, a transgender woman, also suggested that some people pretended to be transgender to avoid SOTPs, which she felt undermined the genuine claims of transgender women like her. However, she also believed that some transgender women, in the interests of avoiding transphobia, told other prisoners they were merely pretending to be transgender as a ruse. Questions regarding the legitimacy of self-asserted identities come from within, as well as outside, the trans community.

Providing Proof of Identity

Staff often wanted 'evidence' of prisoners' identities. For example, Oliver questioned how staff could 'gain proof' that inmates wanting to attend support groups were actually LGBT, not queerphobes trying to access victims. U.S. prisons have asked inmates to recall 'stereotypically gay information', to assess identity claims (Wakefield & Spivak, 2018:173), clearly a problematic approach. Oliver advised that staff were generally highly cynical, valuing 'proof' because inmates routinely lied in pursuit of advantages, like pretending to have been sexually assaulted to access single cells.

Some identities are considered more objectively verifiable than others.

Bethan suggested that some prisoners were incorrectly registered as White British when they were 'quite clearly mixed race'. Officers might incorrectly input data, and prisoners do sometimes falsely claim ethnicities to irritate staff (Earle and Phillips, 2013) however, it is inappropriate for officers to make ultimate judgments regarding ethnicity. Bethan to some extent recognised the subjectivity of identity - arranging a forum for older prisoners she 'plucked' 50 as the minimum age. Becca went further in recognising the constructed nature of old age, allowing an inmate in his late forties to join the group since he associated and lived with older prisoners. Although chronologically he was below the threshold, other factors meant Becca respected his self-identity as an 'older prisoner'. She said she would have had to review his attendance if other similarly aged prisoners jumped 'on the bandwagon'.

Prisoners often recognized that identities were contested. William explained, 'you would probably classify me as bi, but I prefer to use a less specific description such as 'open''. In the women's prison, Emma disliked the term 'bisexual', and would instead say 'I fall in love with the person not their sexuality [sic]'. Fred held a similar perspective, and so insisted he was not bisexual, which led to him being removed from a peer mentor course for 'being awkward' – his self-asserted identity not respected by staff.

Some prisoners did not have one, permanent identity - Owen described himself as 'gay (sometimes bisexual)', Larry referred to himself as 'bi/gay, whatever label you want', and Rebecca as 'mainly straight'. Some prisoners explicitly rejected

efforts to label them. Grace was 'sick of being categorized', and so sometimes responded 'I am what I am' when other inmates asked her sexuality. Emily recognized that other people considered her transgender, but would testify 'under oath' that she was not, regarding her bodily history as irrelevant. Requiring prisoners to choose from a short list of identity categories on reception will clearly fail to capture the complex reality of their genders and sexualities (Browne, 2010). Related critiques have been made of the 'crude' ethnicity categories that prisoners are required to choose from (Ibid.:117). Similarly, Alfred noted that out of the several hundred different religions in Britain, only around ten were acknowledged as legitimate for the purposes of equality provisions in prison. Prison policies and practices construct identities in particular ways that do not correspond with experiences on the ground.

Hiding Identity, Coming Out to Self and Others

So far, I have considered the number of LGBT prisoners, how other inmates and staff identify them, and whether they respect their identity claims. Now I consider LGBT prisoners' experiences of constructing their identities, and sharing these with others, or choosing not to.

Coming Out to Self or Others for the First Time

Some prisoners encountered new concepts behind bars, which resulted in them changing how they identified. Before prison, Lilly was unaware 'that there was such an identity as being transgender':

I knew of transvestites or drag queens but actually wanting to become a woman, I thought I was the only person.

During an LGBT group, Justin encountered the concept of pansexuality for the first time, and went on to adopt this identity. Gerry had experienced same-sex feelings since childhood, when he was sexually abused, and had suppressed these feelings for years. After analyzing these experiences during a SOTP, he accepted he was gay, and came out in prison.

Other prisoners had formed LGBT identities before prison, but only shared these once inside. Sam realised he was bisexual during high school, and finally felt comfortable coming out aged 22 after attending his prison's LGBT support group where he was 'surrounded' by similar people. Similarly, Robert kept his sexuality a 'dirty secret' in the community, fearing rejection from loved ones, but developed self-confidence and self-acceptance thanks to support in prison. Several prisoners first said out loud that they were LGBT during prison – which was for some a frightening and significant moment.

Through supporting a gay prisoner who had split up with his partner, Kevin unintentionally entered a relationship with him, and realized he was bisexual, before slowly coming out. In the women's prison, inmates often entered same-sex relationships for the first time. Some relationships were short-term, while others lasted several years, including outside prison. Through these relationships, some prisoners adopted gay or bisexual identities. The sheer prevalence of same-sex relationships in prison made Tracy question her own sexuality and the dominance of heterosexual identities in the community:

I could be something that I've never known...That I am bi, and I've just been brought up to fancy a man

Being in prison prompted Farah, whose case I discussed in Chapter 3, to come out – she had previously hidden her sexuality due to cultural stigma, and only told her family when facing deportation. Her initial imprisonment was related to trying to conceal her identity. She had entered a relationship with a man, to allay suspicions, resulting in an unwanted pregnancy. Following her abortion Farah self-medicated her depression with alcohol, resulting in involvement in criminal activity.

'I Can be Out in Here, But I Can't be Out When I get home'

Imprisonment allowed some people to embody and express their gender and sexuality more fully. When Jordan entered prison for the first time as a teenager he felt able to cut his hair:

I used to tie it up in a bun and put a hat on...I hated it...When I cut me hair off, I just felt like me...a weight had been lifted

It was the presence of similar others, that made Jordan feel able to express his masculinity:

*I come here to be myself, *fully* be myself, shave my hair and things like that ...There's other girls who are the same as you...Outside my mates was straight...I wasn't fully myself...When I first came here, it's like, 'this is where I'm gonna be. People are the same as me'.*

Outside prison, Jordan worried about negative judgment from family:

Whatever you do on a Friday night gets back ...It's just a bit embarrassing, 'oh your sister got off with a bird'... I'd rather do it in here, it doesn't get back...I always felt I'm an embarrassment to them...I'm supposed to be a girl, but I'm not.

For Jordan, going to prison for the first time did not change his gender identity, rather it enabled him to perform the masculinity he had always wanted to outside prison. While Tina did not change her gender presentation in prison, she found it harder being butch in the community, where female masculinity was rarer:

It's not easy being gay out there...Especially when you stand at the school gates waiting to pick your littlun up, looking like a dad. I mean I don't get no hassle or anything for it. That's probably just my insecurities because I'm used to being so comfortable in here.

Poppy recalled a woman complaining that her daughter had been coerced into cutting her hair. In reality, she had shaved her hair because she could 'express herself in [prison] the way she wanted to' – having had to conform to traditional traveller standards outside prison. Forder (2015:15) noted that LGBT prisoners from 'repressive religious or cultural backgrounds' can 'feel freer to be themselves once behind bars'. Several participants, including Graham, corroborated this:

Prison has really allowed me to be openly bisexual and religiously observant, whilst being out of the somewhat judgmental spotlight of the orthodox Jewish world. It sounds bizarre and counterintuitive, but I can be myself here in a way that I could not in the outside world...Prison is fundamentally a frame of mind. I have been imprisoned in different ways throughout most of my life - my sexuality imprisoned me for a very long time until I began to embrace it... I'm able to be me more than I really ever have before.

Avi used a similar metaphor, explaining that when he was 'physically free' he was 'mentally caged', due to hiding his sexuality:

Ironically, I now feel physically caged due to being imprisoned, but I feel mentally free, as I am open, honest and I am living a life where I am being true to myself.

Kevin recalled several prisoners telling him they could be themselves in prison, but

this was 'not possible when they get outside'. While some prisoners return to hiding their sexuality upon release, Ben hoped that being accepted in prison would help him be his 'true self' after prison.

Given routine claims in the British and international literature that prison is more queerphobic than the outside community, the fact that some inmates feel more able to express their sexual and gender nonconformity behind bars is significant.

Difficulties Understanding and Disclosing Identity

Understanding and Accepting Sexuality

Some male prisoners had been openly gay or bisexual for decades before imprisonment, and were confident in their identities. Others described psychological struggles with coming to terms with their sexuality. Rejection by family and friends before his incarceration, and other inmates in prison, meant Ken struggled with being gay. Support from staff and inmates on a unit for high risk prisoners eventually helped him learn to 'love and accept' himself. Craig recalled working with a prisoner who was so distressed due to internalized homophobia that he was misdiagnosed with serious mental illnesses:

He had none of it... he just couldn't come to terms with his own sexual orientation because of his [gangland] family background.

Craig supported this prisoner to process his guilt, and after two years he stopped self-harming. Craig explained that male prisoners who engaged in same-sex

relationships for the first time often experienced feelings of shame. Little research has been conducted into the psychological impact of same-sex relationships on straight inmates (Read & McCrae, 2016).

For some prisoners, it was their religious beliefs that created difficulties accepting their LGBT status. Even though, as explained above, Graham felt more able to be himself in prison, he still hid his bisexuality from chaplains. Their lack of overt LGBT-inclusion meant he believed chaplains would be judgmental, having been rejected and referred to conversion therapy by religious leaders in the community. Graham still perceived a 'tension' between his religion and sexuality, and believed his journey to self-acceptance would be long and perhaps 'unending'. Tom reported similar struggles with reconciling faith, sexuality and gender. Research demonstrates that religious people in the community tend to be more queerphobic, and that LGB people of faith often feel rejected and unable to come out to others in their faith community (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018a).

Other prisoners struggle to understand and accept their sexuality because of being incarcerated from a young age, confirming previous research (The Howard League, 2015). An officer described a 16-year-old boy being extremely concerned to understand his sexuality after developing feelings for his cellmate. With her support, he eventually accepted it was OK not to fully subscribe to any one particular identity category. Tony had been in prison since aged 14, and, being predominantly attracted to women, questioned whether his attraction to men was due to craving physical contact. Lee was also imprisoned aged 14, and had questioned his sexuality since

childhood, when a man sexually abused him. He had sex with other boys in a YOI, but it was not until he attended LGBT groups in the adult estate that he found support in understanding his sexuality and came out as bisexual. Lee's sexuality was fluid – during brief spells in the community he was more attracted to women, but in prison liked men. Several prisoners related same-sex attraction to child sexual abuse. Ricky questioned, whether he was 'born this way' or bisexual because of being abused, and Owen suggested that a lot of men on VPUs were confused about their sexuality due to abuse histories.

In the women's prison, inmates struggled to understand and accept their sexuality for various reasons. Like the male prisoners discussed above, Grace questioned whether being imprisoned during adolescence shaped her sexuality:

I've done so much growing, so much understanding myself in here...So I don't know who I would have been if I hadn't come to prison...It just happens that I've been out with a lot more women than I have men... I could have been heterosexual.

Others struggled to understand the significance of being in a same-sex relationship for the first time. Christine explained that women often questioned whether they were 'really LGBT', or just lonely and in need of companionship. Charlotte was sure of her feelings for her partner, but unsure what being attracted to one particular woman meant, having previously been exclusively attracted to, and in relationships with, men:

It's just her for me...So am I gay? Am I lesbian? I don't know, because I'm still asking myself...If it weren't her, Mia, it would never had happened.

Charlotte's then month-long relationship took on particular significance due to it being the first time she had acknowledged, and shared with others, a same-sex attraction. She even said she might purposefully return to prison to be reunited with her girlfriend because of the relationship's significance:

It can't all be for nothing. It can't just be the next four or five months. It can't be, because I've put it out there, to meself, to these people...It can't be just a little thing...It sounds mental this, but I'll tell you. When I get out I'll want to come back... Until it ends, until I feel there's a closure on it, *if* there's going to be closure. It can't just be 'I leave here, she's here, I leave, and that's it'. It can't just be that, Mia, I won't let it be that.

Tracy was trying to understand her sexuality after being attracted to a woman for the first time, 'but as a man':

She's the double of the kind of guy that I like.... I fancy what I see, and then I think, 'but she's a woman'...She was in my dream, but she had a willy!

Tracy questioned whether she was bi-curious, but also suggested that identity categories could not capture human sexuality, questioning, 'is there really a name for each body, are we not just whatever we are?'

For several inmates in the women's prison, queerphobia shaped their sense of self. Abby for a time convinced herself she was attracted to men and not women, due to her father's homophobia. Emma struggled with internalized bi-phobia, and negative comments from family remained with her. She considered 'bisexual' a 'dirty word', particularly in prison due to its association with women who have same-sex partners only in prison, and cheating on male partners in the community (as discussed further in Chapter 6).

While wanting to distance herself from such prisoners, Emma suggested they needed help understanding their sexuality, rather than just derogatively being labeled 'jail bent' by other inmates. Other prisoners called for education regarding sexuality. Tracy noted that the prevalence of gossip regarding sexuality and relationships contrasted with a lack of serious discussions about identity:

Nobody talks about it. It's just, 'oh she's gay, ha ha', or 'oh does she fancy her? or 'She got with her, really?'

Ali suggested that trying to understand her sexuality 'fucked with [her] head' and led to self-harm. She emphasized the need for specific venues for prisoners to disclose identity related distress, explaining that Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) reviews did not always provide a safe environment to do so.

While women's prisons *are* relatively accepting of non-heterosexuality, inmates still often enter them unsure and unhappy about their sexualities. Some prisoners suggested that the prison environment promoted self-acceptance. Casey entered prison 'confused' and 'ashamed', but grew in confidence. Grace explained there was 'no shame' regarding same-sex attraction in prison, and so suggested that her recently incarcerated partner, who currently felt 'a huge sense of shame', would soon become accepting of her homosexuality.

Understanding and Accepting Gender

While some prisoners struggled to understand their sexuality, others undertook the emotional labour of understanding their gender while in prison. After meeting

transgender women in prison, Justin reassessed childhood experiences of femininity, and recognized their gender-dysphoria. Justin was unsure whether they were a transgender woman or non-binary but sensed they would never be at ease with their body having gone through male puberty. Being in prison sparked gender related issues for Courtney – she ‘began to struggle living in the male gender’ after being incarcerated, and entered a spiral of serious self-harm, cutting her arteries, overdosing, swallowing foreign objects, and hanging herself. She eventually came out as transgender after starting anti-anxiety medication and cognitive behavior therapy.

A very small percentage of people de-transition, returning to living according to the gender they were assigned at birth. Casey described one such prisoner. He was AMAB, and had socially and physically transitioned before being transferred to a women’s prison. Some years later he decided ‘to go back to a man’, re-growing his facial hair and wearing men’s clothes. He was considered vulnerable and prevented from returning to the male estate due to having a vagina, which he found distressing and frustrating:

He started getting very aggressive with the women...Obviously he was going through his own demons ... He was going round saying, ‘I fucking hate women. You’re all females, I don’t trust you’... I was just saying, ‘I know you want to go back to a man... but not all men are aggressive’.

Newspapers recently documented a prisoner returning to the male estate after more than a decade in a women’s prison and having had a second ‘sex change’ to reconstruct their penis (Smith, 2018). This is presumably the man Casey was referring to.

A small number of inmates in the women's prison appeared uncertain of their gender, for example Ali sought reassurance that being content with her genitals meant she was a lesbian, and not transgender. Jordan knew with certainty that he was a man, and struggled greatly with having to live as a woman. He tried to address his gender dysphoria through wearing tight sports bras to flatten his breasts, though remained deeply unhappy with his body. Jordan was frustrated that he was not open about his gender, explaining, 'I'm holding back on who I really am...I'm imprisoning myself'. However, as noted in Chapter 3, he could not imagine a future in which he could be himself:

I'm too old now. I'm on drugs. I've got nowhere...There's nothing I can do about it...If my life was different, I would be a man by now. Fully...If I got out and I won a million pounds and I went to rehab...and I had a job and a car and a gaff, maybe I would be that person I want to be.

Jordan struggled seeing young people in the media transition, regretting not coming out when he was younger - he had felt that 'being gay was [bad] enough'. He also believed that his family should have known he was transgender without him making it explicit:

They knew I was tomboy. They knew I never put girl's clothes on...I just assume that they know that I'm not a girl. They brought me up...raised me for god's sake. [They] should know.

Particular experiences seemed to heighten Jordan's distress. His partner leaving him for a cisgender man seemed especially difficult given he was trans, and seeing Ethan, the transgender man released shortly before my fieldwork, made him envious:

He'd done it...Seeing him, it was like, 'that's what I want to be'...He was an actual man.

Although Jordan knew he was transgender as a child, incarceration framed his gender-related struggles – he felt able to present his masculinity in prison, however his drug misuse and crime, initiated by his gender dysphoria, in turn prevented him from transitioning. Previous British research notes the psychological challenges that transgender women experience in men’s prisons (Marlow et al., 2015), but has not explored the gender struggles of transgender men in women’s establishments.

Telling Family

Some prisoners came out to family while in prison, which they often found frightening. Abby was ‘terrified’ of telling her dad she was gay, which she did during a phone-call from prison, but it transpired that he already knew, which induced both relief and frustration that she had worried for no reason. Gerry felt able to come out given the support network he had found in his prison’s LGBT group. In some prisons, inmates provide each other informal support with coming out, whereas in others there are also LGBT representatives tasked with this responsibility. Again, Gerry had prepared for a negative reaction, but was pleasantly surprised:

My father was a ‘heavy metal biker type’ and I thought this would end my outside support network and he would disown me...I was shocked at his reaction as he was fully accepting.

Paula explained that coming out to family was especially hard for prisoners with ‘no back up’. Social norms encourage people to disclose their non-heterosexuality and even problematize non-disclosure as ‘secretiveness’ (Ricciardelli et al., 2016:1662) meaning that prisoners might feel compelled to ‘come out’ when lacking the support to do so safely. After entering her first serious relationship with a woman, Paula

came out to her family while in prison - 'a big thing...especially coming from a Gypsy family'. Homophobia is considered pervasive within the Traveller community, meaning LGB people can feel 'freer to be themselves' in prison (Forder, 2015:15). When Paula came out, her family initially rejected her, which she struggled with, only having her partner for support. Other prisoners' families continued to refuse to accept their sexualities. While some inmates choose to come out in prison, others are confronted with questions – Annabelle's mother wrote asking 'do you like boys or girls?'

For some prisoners, coming out involves splitting up with existing male partners. The family centre manager recalled a man recently returning from a visit extremely upset because his partner had revealed she was leaving him for another prisoner. Charlotte was adamant she would never tell her male fiancé about her relationship, but worried that he would be able to tell during their visit, commenting, 'I thought it was written across my face. In big red letters. **'LESBIAN'**'. Previous research documents feelings of guilt and shame regarding same-sex behaviour in prison (Morgan, 1998:81).

While in prison, Charlotte's son had come out as gay. She had initially struggled to accept his sexuality, having been raised to believe 'it was bad to be gay'. She wanted to tell her son that she was in a same-sex relationship to reassure him that it was OK to be himself, especially since he lacked support outside prison, and was using drugs as a coping mechanism. However, Charlotte felt unable to tell her son without her fiancé finding out.

Hiding Identity

Concealing a marginalised attribute can help people avoid stigma (Potter, 2015) and prisoners often felt compelled to hide their LGBT status. It is commonplace for prisoners to feel they 'can't be who they are' (Carr et al., 2016:14). Inmates often noted their efforts to 'fit in', for example trying to "dumb themselves down", or hiding unconventional interests. Some tried to adopt a more intimidating persona - Kevin tried to communicate he was 'not to be messed with', and Charlotte tried to be 'that person that you don't fuck about with'. Paula explained:

You've got to have a mask on all the time...You've got to put on a front...Let people know that they can't mug you off.

In the women's prison these fronts involved masculine presentations. Inmates there rarely tried to hide their sexuality, where in fact, non-heterosexuality to some degree conferred status. As seen in Chapter 3, Tracy was 'proud' to be seen as exploring her sexuality. Tay claimed that even prisoners who were initially fearful would come out within a few weeks after realizing prison was 'like a big family', however, as demonstrated above, some prisoners there struggled to accept and share their sexuality. Some prisoners hid their sexuality for fear of attracting negative attention to their relationship – an issue discussed further in Chapter 6. Occasionally, prisoners tried to keep their sexuality from staff for fear of discrimination.

Prisoners were more likely to hide a minoritised gender identity than sexuality. Jordan explained that he and other trans men were afraid of coming out. He worried that other prisoners would 'take the piss' or gossip behind his back, so

resolved, 'I'm just gonna be what everyone wants me to be'. While unable to disclose their identities, transgender men could express their masculinity through clothes (wearing boxers and chest binding were commonplace) and demeanour, Aidan noted prisoners looking 'like young lads...hanging around, hands down their pants'.

In men's prisons, inmates often hid their sexuality and femininity for fear of bullying. Having witnessed gay and bisexual young offenders receive verbal abuse, Tony concealed his bisexuality until he was 23. Even prisoners who had not observed queerphobia hid their sexuality for fear of it. Robert worried that coming out would elicit victimisation and had 'enough to worry about without throwing sexuality into the mix'. Gerry corroborated that prison was hard enough 'without the added worry' of verbal or physical abuse. Addison hoped to come out as transgender after her upcoming trial, which was currently all-absorbing. Neither Robert, Gerry or Addison were fully open about their LGBT status in the community, but Debbie explained that even men who had been openly gay before prison kept their sexuality quiet in prison.

First-time inmates are especially fearful of coming out, and tend to become more confident as they adapt to the prison environment. Oliver recalled that a transgender woman who had 'cut off all of her hair and pulled off all of her nails' on her first night in custody for fear of bullying grew them back upon becoming more comfortable. Having seen 'how the "odd one out" gets treated', it took Courtney a long time to come out as transgender. Jasmin 'tested the waters' before coming out

by asking other inmates their opinion of transgender people, resulting in her deciding to wait until she was in a Category B or C prison before coming out. Forder (2017:31) documents a transgender woman feeling unable to disclose her gender in several 'very rough' establishments.

LGBT prisoners felt less compelled to hide their identity in certain types of establishments. Several participants suggested it was harder to be openly gay or bisexual in YOIs, due to the increased prevalence of queerphobia. Prisoners also considered it easier to be openly non-heterosexual in long-term establishments. Barry explained that gay and bisexual men were more expressive in such establishments, owning pink slippers and toothbrushes. He suggested that inmates in long-term prisons felt more able to display their sexuality since they had 'more important things to be fucking worrying about than what someone thinks'. Other inmates suggested it was easier to come out in long-term establishments because inmates there were more accepting of non-heterosexuality.

Several prisoners, including Gerry, suggested that inmates in sex offender establishments were more LGBT-friendly. He only felt able to be 'officially "out"' at his most recent establishment; a sex offender prison with an active LGBT support group. Having concealed his sexuality at three previous prisons, Robert felt able to come out at the same establishment, where there was a notably different atmosphere and he did not fear abuse. Lucas was at the same prison, and meeting an LGBT representative during his induction made him feel sufficiently safe to disclose his sexuality. Likewise, Shane only felt 'safe and happy' to come out when

he was transferred to a sex offender prison with an active LGBT support group. Iris explained that inmates at this establishment could come out as LGBT because of the scale of the existing openly LGBT community there. Dunn (2013:6) referred to a 'cycle of invisibility' for LGBT prisoners – at some establishments there appears to be a cycle of *visibility*.

While certain types of establishments encourage hiding or concealing LGBT identities, particular areas within prisons also foster different degrees of openness. Kevin felt compelled to hide his sexuality and act tough on the landings, but inside the cell he shared with his partner, 'the masks would come off'. He also felt able to be himself in a gay friend's cell. Corroborating Forder (2015), prisoners felt more able to be themselves at LGBT groups. Iris noted that prisoners were more physically affectionate at support groups, for example sitting on each others' laps, and Eric explained that inmates who acted 'butch' on the wing felt empowered to adopt a 'theatrical role' during groups. Eric considered it important to provide a space where prisoners could express themselves, yet noted the risk of them continuing their confident displays onto their prison wings. Staff therefore tried to 'calm them down' before prisoners left the group. While some LGBT inmates felt more able to express themselves within the chapel, others, like Idrees and Tony, felt particularly compelled to hide their sexuality in religious settings, fearful of their faith community discovering their non-heterosexuality.

Beyond fears of bullying and religious judgment, other LGBT prisoners hid their identity for fear of being considered risky. Kevin worried that disclosing his

bisexuality, having entered prison 'a straight 16 year old boy', would raise questions regarding his sexual behavior in prison. Owen explained that ignorance of LGBT culture meant that staff sometimes misinterpreted common behaviours like casual sex as 'offence paralleling behavior', and explained that an ex-public school gay man was wrongly considered dangerous:

His flamboyance was re-labelled as 'histrionic', his camp regal manner re-termed 'grandiose', he was just being a funny queen, but they just saw him as a psychopath.

Degrees of Visibility

There is no simple dichotomy of hiding or being open about an identity. Curtis explained: 'some men are openly gay or bisexual, others totally hidden and all points in between'. Iris noted that some prisoners would 'hide *a bit*' or did not want to be 'too obvious' [emphasis added]. Several prisoners contrasted being open about their sexuality and 'advertising' it. Amber would reveal her sexuality if asked, and occasionally mentioned it during conversations, but said she did not display it 'on a name badge'. Similarly, Emma noted that she was open, but did not wear 'a rainbow coloured t-shirt' with 'I'm bisexual' written on it.

Without openly communicating their sexuality in such ways, some prisoners were ascribed heterosexual identities. Paula objected to inmates and officers presuming that because she did not 'broadcast' her sexuality, she was straight. While being in the closet is seen as 'an individual's lie', in fact closets are 'built around' LGBT people by heteronormative and cisnormative assumptions (Warner, 1999:180). This can be seen in Robert's explanation that he 'let people believe' he

was straight – he did not actively hide his sexuality, but rather did not correct incorrect assumptions.

The women's prison chaplain, Alfred, did not recognize the closeting effect of hegemonic assumptions; only considering it necessary for people to reference their sexuality when directly relevant to a conversation:

I don't agree with people actually coming up and telling me what they are. I don't go around saying 'I'm heterosexual', so I don't see why somebody has to come to me and tell me they're gay.

Alfred fails to recognize that he does not need to make his sexuality explicit because of his heterosexual privilege. He considered the sexual nature of Pride events offensive and a 'disservice' to the LGBT community. Through coming out, LGB people experience 'sexual shame' - straight people do not have to make explicit their sexual desires in the same way (Ibid.:21). Having to state their sexuality means it can become a more significant identity marker for LGB than heterosexual people. Ben wanted to be considered 'a regular person whose sexuality is [his] own business', and so ticked 'prefer not to say' on forms, and did not attend his prison's LGBT group. For some people sexuality is 'an anchor of subjectivity' (Crenshaw, 1993:1297), whereas Ben wanted to present his as incidental. Ben nears social ideals regarding the perfect level of gay visibility - people should not hide their sexuality, or shout about it, but present as 'an authentic individual who just happens to be gay' (Clarke & Smith, 2015:4).

Difficulties Concealing Identity

Some prisoners did not mind concealing their sexuality or gender in prison. Tony was

happy to keep his sexuality 'quiet', considering it 'no one else's business'. Similarly, both inside and outside prison William operated a 'need to know' policy, considering sexuality 'irrelevant outside of close personal friendships or relationships'. Jasmin found it 'easy enough' confining her gender presentation to her cell, explaining that it was her body rather than clothes that gave her gender dysphoria.

Other prisoners struggled having to conceal their gender or sexuality. Colin found it 'incredibly strange' hiding his sexuality, upon the advice of staff, having been openly gay in the community. Nicole worried that concealing her gender for too long would mean she lost her nerve about coming out, and so discounting staff advice that she come out gradually, one day stepped out of her cell in women's clothes and make-up.

Prisoners disliked feeling deceptive. Kyle felt he had to 'pretend to have a different identity', whereas Stanley was open about his sexuality because of being unable to face the prospect of constantly being 'on guard'. When Eric's sexuality was revealed without his consent, he found not having to live 'a complete lie' a silver lining:

At the beginning I was actually creating this imagery of I had a partner, or a wife, but in the end I didn't have to do that.

In Goffman's (1963:138) terms, Eric would rather be 'discredited', his stigmatized attribute known about, and engage in 'tension management', than 'discreditable', and have to engage in 'information control'. Some prisoners went to great lengths concealing their sexuality, for example, Nicholas spoke in a lower pitched voice -

stereotypes construct gay men as sounding more 'dynamic' and 'like women' (Gaudio, 1994:31).

Such efforts could prevent GBT prisoners from recognizing, and therefore supporting, each other. Edward noted that gay and bisexual prisoners were only identifiable when they were camp or being bullied. He struggled having little contact with other gay people in prison, and therefore being 'forced' to socialize with straight people, who he did not usually associate with. Within 'mixed contacts' marginalised people can be more insecure and anxious due to their heightened awareness of their supposed 'inferiority' (Goffman, 1963:12-13). During his induction, Sebastian looked around the wing every day, hoping to spot another gay man. Robert also unsuccessfully searched for similar peers; later learning that a shy man at his prison had been bisexual. Colin found the struggle for gay prisoners to identify each other frustrating, lamenting, 'We all have to be so careful not to be out that we don't even know when there are others here that we could speak to!'

Authenticity and Exaggeration

While some prisoners try to conceal their sexuality for fear of victimisation, in fact amplifying gender or sexuality can be a better means of avoiding bullying. Several participants suggested that flamboyant and theatrical gay prisoners were more accepted. An HIV worker explained that 'out and proud' prisoners tended to be left alone, while those who were 'kind of closeted', or unconfident about their sexuality got bullied. Trent corroborated that prisoners who were 'open and happy and

proud' were left alone, while inmates who were suspected of being gay were victimised.

The acceptance of openly LGBT prisoners is partly related to prisoners valuing authenticity. When Megan first transitioned, prisoners initially mocked her, before acknowledging her strength, commenting, 'You have a lot of balls going through with what you want'. Robin explained that prisoners who are 'honest' about their sexuality are more respected, and Glenn believed it was better to be upfront with cellmates than have them learn his sexuality through gossip. Prisoners value honesty and sincerity highly (Morgan, 1998), though 'confident authenticity' can be dangerous, since not all identities are accepted, as attested to by the lack of openly gay prisoners (Crewe, 2009:433).

Robert worried that joining an LGBT support group would make inmates who knew him as straight think 'he had been lying to them' by not correcting their assumptions. Robert's fears that his sexuality might be incongruous with other people's presumptions reflects Goffman's (1963:3) underexplored account of stigma as the outcome of a 'discrepancy between virtual and actual social identity' - that is to say, a difference between who a person is expected to be, and who they transpire to be. Any problems that other prisoners have with Robert transpiring to be gay lies in their incorrect imputations of heterosexuality.

Two straight, cisgender men described warming to LGBT prisoners due to their overstated, stereotypical behaviour. Robbie recalled a gay prisoner garnering acceptance through openness:

He says, 'Oh I'm just phoning me fella'...We were a bit shocked at first. But fine. And it became a little bit of a joke, 'Listen, I'm homosexual...It's not a disease', and it was broadcasted in that way... He got on with everybody and he was a cracking fella...He made a joke of his sexuality...I used to walk around with me underpants up to me armpits, enticing him, messing about...And he'd go, 'ooh you're not my type, you're too pretty'.

While this prisoner was apparently accepted, he requested a single cell, worried about accusations of watching cellmates get changed. Again, indicating that certain areas of prisons are more conducive to being visibly LGBT. The gay prisoner's use of humour indicates his sexuality was not entirely accepted – humour is a means of deflating tension, and so its presence itself indicates unease (Jönson, Siverskog, 2012).

Barry described a transgender woman who 'broke the ice' in a similar way with over-the-top flirtation:

He [sic] always used to come on the yard and he [sic] fancied one of me mates and he [sic] let it be known all the time, and it was quality...Like, 'I've got my eye on you'.

Barry explained that nobody bullied this prisoner. While he also believed that transgender inmates should be able to wear gender-affirming clothes, his continual misgendering implies a lack of understanding of, or dedication to, transgender rights.

Not all participants appreciated camp exuberance. Joel found gay men irritating when they 'show off' and are 'over-the-top'. He saw flamboyance as a defence mechanism:

It's like trying to prove who they are. I just accept you're gay. I haven't got a problem with that.

Exaggerated sexual and gender performances might indeed be a subconscious means of self-protection, allowing LGBT inmates to set the terms of their engagement– by inviting other prisoners to laugh with them, LGBT inmates might avoid being laughed at. Camp performance can be a means of entertaining others, and a way 'to rob people of the power to ridicule' through re-appropriation (Skelton, 2000:190). Through flaunting and owning their subjugated identities, LGBT prisoners might turn the very traits that could elicit victimisation into a form of entertainment, therefore gaining some degree of acceptance. By playfully engaging with their own stigmatised attributes, marginalised people can display other 'marketable characteristics', like humour and honesty (Jönson, Siverskog, 2012:56). However, their identity being the focal point of interactions with others might become wearing and limit their ability to interact as equals.

Bullying

Fear of bullying

LGBT prisoners were often afraid of being targeted by other inmates, and as demonstrated above, often therefore concealed their identities. Some inmates worried about being victimised because of having endured abuse in the community.

Bob kept this sexuality 'secret' due to severe bullying during his childhood - the similar socio-economic background of prisoners to those who bullied him on his council estate prompted concerns that he would have similar experiences behind bars. Other prisoners feared bullying because of frightening tales. Peter arrived in prison 'terrified' because of popular cultural 'horror stories'. Based on his impression of prisons from films, Edward requested housing on a protection wing as soon as he entered prison, fearful of being bullied by mainstream prisoners, and 'beaten up or raped in the showers'.

Stanley was also concerned about gay men being assaulted while showering. His safety concerns proved 'unfounded' at his first prison, but justified at his second:

On a daily basis I was abused verbally, and that was not just the other inmates, but officers as well. On a couple of occasions I was bullied into doing acts with other men...I personally know of at least two other inmates that were raped in the showers (I didn't use the showers, choosing to use my cell).

Rape in communal showers is a recurring theme in popular cultural representations of prisons. Oliver explained that in men's prisons, LGBT prisoners invariably 'don't want to shower with anybody else'. Fears of prison rape are not exclusive to non-heterosexual men – straight men also fear being anally raped (Sabo et al., 2011). Beyond popular cultural representations, some LGBT prisoners feared victimisation based on individual stories. Harry's solicitor advised him not to reveal his sexuality since prisoners were 'beaten up or worse' for being gay or bisexual. Glenn explicitly researched the experiences of LGBT prisoners in an attempt to prepare himself for a

custodial sentence. Reading 'horrific stories' about gay men being bullied, beaten up or sexually assaulted made him extremely anxious:

I wish I hadn't went looking for these stories because they caused me a lot of stress and worrying for nothing.

Other prisoners recognized their fears were disproportionate. Robert had experienced 'absolutely nothing but support' from other prisoners and felt he had let his 'whole life be ruled' by a problem that only existed in his head. Similarly, Sebastian had been very anxious about other inmates discovering his sexuality, but found their standard response was 'I thought so...I've got gay mates'. Ben had expected prison to be very homophobic, but found this was not the case.

However, because prisoners were so afraid of bullying, they sometimes judged their actual experiences according to a very low barometer. Bob had feared being 'a victim of hate crimes', and so reported that 'luckily' most prisoners were 'accepting...if not a little ignorant'. He went on to describe inmates making sexual jokes, flashing their genitals, and wolf whistling, behavior that made him very anxious. Zach also constructed negative experiences as relatively favorable. He recounted similar sexual harassment from other gay men, and 'relentless' sexual jokes from inmates and officers, yet also commented, 'things could be a lot worse', and felt the need to 'give credit' to staff for making him feel as comfortable as he did.

Some prisoners feared extreme physical violence. Katherine worried about being stabbed by transphobic prisoners, and Oliver recounted an inmate that was so

afraid of extreme victimization he often cried during their meetings. Oliver considered his fears disproportionate, but recognized that the low probability of life-threatening homophobic violence occurring would not be sufficient to console him were he in prison. This inmate later died by suicide in prison. Beyond direct experiences of bullying, fear itself can be damaging. The very expectation of LGBT discrimination can increase mental ill-health and suicide ideation (Kelleher, 2009), and, as seen above, fear of bullying limited prisoners' basic rights like access to showers.

In the women's prison, inmates often arrived fearful of bullying, again based on preconceptions of prison from TV programmes. Sometimes, prisoners' fears revolved around gender and sexual nonconformity. Charlotte worried about the prevalence of masculine inmates, imagining 'loads of women all dressed in dungarees with shaven heads'. Lottie's main concern was that she would 'be stripped in the shower and attacked by lesbians' – a fear she now considered 'ridiculous'. Rebecca held similar fears:

I literally thought that you'd get raped in the showers...because that's all I'd heard.

Popular cultural representations of women's prisons routinely feature butch lesbians sexually assaulting straight prisoners (Chesney-Lind & Eliason, 2006, Millbank, 2004). In men's prisons it was LGBT prisoners who were afraid of sexual and physical violence, whereas in the women's prison straight, cisgender prisoners held such fears based on stereotypes of the 'voyeuristic, predatory dyke' (Rowe, 2014:412).

Attitudes towards LGBT prisoners

Some participants suggested that queerphobia in men's prisons reflects prejudice in society, but most believed that prisoners are particularly discriminatory. Martin explained that while 'outside society has become more liberal' prisons seemed 'stuck in a 1950s time warp'. Imagery regarding prisons being 'backwards' was commonplace. Prisoners' less progressive attitudes were explained by their socio-economic backgrounds, and the all-male nature of prisons. Joel suggested that prisoners were 'behind the rest of the world' because of coming from deprived areas that 'breed' disrespect. Likening prisons to a 'rough housing estate', William suggested that inmates were queerphobic because of being 'ignorant and poorly educated'. People who lack formal educational qualifications are indeed less accepting of LGBT people (Clery et al., 2017). Becca noted that homophobia prospers in any all-male environment, suggesting that increased acceptance in men's sports teams in the community would have to precede change in prisons.

On the whole, participants agreed that over the last few decades, staff and inmates had become more accepting of LGBT people. However, some participants added qualifiers. Owen believed that increased acceptance was confined to masculine-presenting prisoners, explaining that gay men who were 'one of the lads' were now accepted, while 'effeminate' men were not. There was a sense that attitudes towards transgender people lagged especially far behind. Oliver suggested that transphobia was more prevalent because of transgender people being less common and therefore much less understood. Indeed, while 'the vast majority of prisoners' were 'incredibly supportive' of Tom's sexuality, they found it more

difficult accepting their gender. Staff and prisoners alike displayed a poor understanding of transgender people, routinely misgendering them and using inappropriate terminology. However, a lack of understanding is widespread in the community too. Robbie suggested that the 'ridicule' and 'odd crude joke' that a transgender woman received in prison was 'part of life on the out as much as it is on the in'.

Participants suggested that certain types of prisoners were particularly likely to be queerphobic. Bob's experiences of homophobia inside and outside prison always involved young people, which surprised him given that he presumed older people were more likely to be homophobic. Other prisoners, like Owen, agreed that older men were more often homophobic, and indeed acceptance of same-sex relationships decreases with age (Ibid.). Robert explained that older prisoners were less likely to engage in homophobic bullying because they did not feel the need to 'prove themselves' in prison through victimizing others. Martin suggested that prisoners in London were more accepting than those in the North of England due to their increased likelihood of knowing openly gay people. Several prisoners suggested that inmates classed as vulnerable were more accepting due to having experienced prejudice themselves in prison. Other prisoners, like Lilly, suggested that vulnerable prisoners' greater familiarity with LGBT inmates, who were often housed amongst them, made them less judgmental. William explained that sex offenders tended to be 'older, more mature and better educated; thus less ignorant/prejudiced'.

Several participants suggested there was greater acceptance of same-sex relationships in women's prisons than the outside community. Abby commented:

It's actually somewhere where it's okay to be gay... No-one really questions you about it...it was different outside. Everyone's straight. That's the way it should be.

Prisoners felt that most inmates were accepting of non-heterosexuality, though Christine explained that some older inmates were 'sort of homophobic'. Some prisoners demonstrated hetero-normative views during interviews. Jessica considered bisexuals 'strange' and greedy', and biphobia appeared pervasive. Jessica also demonstrated a conditional acceptance of gay women, explaining, 'It would only bother me if they come on to me, then I'd be like, 'Whoa, no, no, no!'' Similarly, Lottie's hetero-normativity was clear in her discussion of the prevalence of homosexuality:

I don't feel I'm *surrounded* by lesbians, put it that way. It hasn't been like, 'eugh', it hasn't been an issue.

In the women's prison, there were also more regressive attitudes towards transgender than gay people, though transphobia did not appear more pronounced than in the outside community. Only two participants displayed explicitly negative attitudes towards transgender prisoners. As noted above, Ali was influenced by officers to believe that transgender women were 'a bit creepy', only transitioning to enter relationships with female prisoners. Casey and fellow inmates became less accepting of transgender women, especially those with penises, having witnessed aggression from the man who de-transitioned, noted above. Casey recognized that this particular prisoner's actions should not inform her judgment of all transgender

women, but explained that in reality, people do 'tar everyone with the same brush'.

Participants were often uninformed about transgender issues, routinely using terminology incorrectly, for example referring to transgender women as 'transgender men', and struggling to know which pronouns to use. Some prisoners did not even recognise the term 'transgender' or know what it meant. Gossip regarding newly arrived transgender prisoners was widespread, though Linda noted this was usually neutral and 'to be expected'. Although, as noted above, Roger had witnessed some negative comments, he proposed that in general prisoners were accepting of difference, and 'understanding and caring in a way that maybe you wouldn't expect'.

Conflicting Values

Participants suggested that religious prisoners and those from certain cultural backgrounds were more often homophobic. Staff and inmates noted that Black and Asian communities were underrepresented amongst openly LGBT prisoners, which reflects the outside community, where Black and Asian people are less likely to identify as gay or bisexual (ONS, 2017). Joel suggested that inmates from these backgrounds suppress their sexuality due to cultural, family and religious pressures. Only three of my sixty-eight letter participants reported being non-white, and all experienced difficulties expressing their sexuality - Idrees as a result of 'being a Muslim and from Afghan's culture', Avi because of his 'strict and traditional family background' and Desmond because of 'African culture'.

Colin received verbal abuse from a non-British prisoner, who commented, 'at least in my country we still lock them up for life, or better yet, kill them'. Nicole said that all prisoners respected her name and pronouns, except foreign nationals who made 'nasty comments'. Other inmates reported transphobia from Muslim prisoners. Linda noted that 'a really strict Muslim' found transgender people 'strange', and Robert cited a Muslim prisoner as describing transgender people as 'disgusting' and unnatural. LGBT prisoners often reported hostility from Muslim inmates. A Muslim inmate at Robert's prison ripped down an LGBT sign-up sheet because he did not want 'fucking queers' outside his cell. Other Muslim prisoners ordered an inmate to end his friendship with Martin because he was openly gay, and 'kicked in' Martin's door as a 'warning'. Likewise, Edward lost friends due to 'relentless' pressure on them from fellow Black and Asian prisoners to stop associating with a 'faggot'. He explained these prisoners' homophobia as a result of their religious beliefs, be they Muslim or Christian.

Several prisoners, including Robert, recognized that queerphobia 'is not the preserve of Muslims', and he referenced a Christian chaplain being sacked for homophobic rhetoric. Christian prisoners told Becky she would be 'done in' if she attended church. Becky explained that Christians tended to be more transphobic than Muslim prisoners who had grown up in the UK, but that new converts to Islam and Muslims from 'poor countries' were particularly prejudiced. Stanley acknowledged that not all religious prisoners are queerphobic, noting that only one particular Muslim prisoner was homophobic towards him. Indeed, as noted above, some Muslim prisoners are gay themselves.

Some prisoners suggested that religious beliefs provided an excuse for queerphobia. Owen considered it 'utter hypocrisy' for Muslim prisoners to use their religion to justify bullying gay prisoners when they engaged in drugs, gambling and prostitution rackets. Martin suggested that white English converts were particularly quick to bully gay prisoners in order to gain approval from Muslim peers. However, he also claimed that such prisoners had 'entrenched homophobic attitudes' even before imprisonment, and only joined Islam to be 'part of a feared gang'. Jasmin suggested that while Black prisoners justified transphobia as necessitated by their culture, and Muslims as dictated by their faith, 'in truth it's just gang mentality and individuals using race or religion to justify their personal hate'.

LGBT prisoners appeared particularly nervous of queerphobia from Muslims because of their perception of them as a powerful group. In recent years a significant tension has grown between Muslim and non-Muslims in some prisons (Crewe, 2016) and non-Muslim prisoners simplistically perceive Muslims as having disproportionate power (Earle and Phillips, 2013). Barry referred to Muslims as a 'formidable force' in long-term establishments, and Avi claimed that Muslims controlled his establishment's regime, gym times, movement times, and diet. Several prisoners, including Owen, noted that Muslim inmates were trying to introduce what they considered queerphobic practices, like banning nudity in communal showers. Prisoners often suggested that queerphobia from religious inmates was too readily dismissed. Gordon claimed that staff condoned Muslims bullying gay prisoners due to accepting that Islam 'forbids homosexuality'. Indeed,

Dunn (2013:7) documents staff excusing homophobia through 'reference to religious teaching or "cultural" norms'.

Any Excuse Will Do

Participants routinely suggested that any prisoner who stands out as different, in whatever way, is vulnerable to victimisation, corroborating existing research (Carr et al., 2016). Joel explained, 'If there's something different about you, a bully will pick up on it... It doesn't matter what the subject is'. Relatedly, some participants suggested that homophobia was not necessarily the root cause of homophobic bullying. Becca explained:

There are certain people that will pick on people regardless of what it is that they're picking on...It might not be that they're homophobic, they're just a bully.

A probation officer corroborated that a prisoner with a reputation for bullying targeted a particular inmate's sexuality, not due to 'a personal vendetta about sexuality', but rather because 'any excuse will do'. To express anger, prisoners sometimes reference their target's minoritised attributes, as Bethan explained, 'If somebody's lashing out...they'll pick something. I don't think it's actual, for instance, racism or ageism'. Likewise, Oliver saw homophobia as 'the go to' insult against gay people.

Tactical Discrimination

Some prisoners pretend to be prejudiced for instrumental reasons. Charlotte played the 'racist card' to avoid a progress move:

I was scared of coming off the Wing, and made a racist comment about Pakistanis...I thought if I made this comment, they would say 'right you ain't going nowhere'...But they didn't.

I did not encounter prisoners making queerphobic comments on this basis, but it is conceivable that they might. Other inmates engage in discrimination to gain social approval. Edward explained that prisoners engaged in homophobic bullying 'to look big in front of their mates', and Martin suggested that newly arrived prisoners joined in bullying him to 'attain a sense of belonging'. Robert suggested that younger prisoners in particular bullied inmates who stood out in a bid to prove themselves as men. Joey explained that prisoners try to be 'part of the pack' in order to avoid victimisation, and so tend to condone rather than call out queerphobia, since doing so would single them out. Indeed, Colin 'didn't feel safe enough' to challenge other inmates expressing homophobic views. When Kevin first met transgender prisoners, he 'went along with the majority', worried about losing their respect, and so was hostile towards them. When he next encountered transgender women, having matured, he felt able to befriend them without fear of others' disapproval.

Bullying

Verbal Abuse

Several participants reported no experiences of queerphobia in men's prisons. However, verbal abuse in men's prisons is commonplace. Kevin was regularly called 'cocksucker', 'faggot', and 'puff', and on a daily basis Stanley was called 'batty boy' and 'poffta'. Adding to this list of homophobic slurs, Tony was called a 'shit stabber', Daniel a 'shit pusher' and 'fudge packer', Dennis a 'gay boy', 'fag' and 'bum boy' and

Kyle a 'bum bandit' and 'rentboy'. In terms of transphobia, Courtney was called a 'freak show', 'tranny' and 'creep'. Katherine received 'queer', 'poof' and 'cock in a frock', and Lilly was called a 'chick with a dick'. Jasmin was called 'batty man' and 'chitchy man' – homophobic insults - noting that prisoners often conflated gender and sexuality. She explained that anybody expressing femininity risked being the brunt of "'gay" jokes'. Queerphobic comments caused some prisoners great distress. Ken self-harmed as a result of regular verbal abuse, and the strain of homophobic comments resulted in Kyle and his partner in prison breaking up.

Homophobia and transphobia did not always take the form of overt insults. William noted that a transgender woman was subject to sexual comments, 'cat-calls' and 'wolf-whistles' due to her 'very convincing female appearance'²⁷. Some prisoners imitated how Avi walked, or said stereotypically gay phrases like 'Hey Girrrl' and 'Go girlfriend'. When he was playing snooker, another inmate joked, 'You like playing with balls'. Sam was regularly asked whether he found other prisoners attractive, and Zach received 'relentless jokes' about his sexuality:

'Have you been sucking your pad mate off?' 'Was the banging last night you and your pad mate?' 'I bet you and (whoever) enjoy being padded up together'. 'How big is your pad mate's cock?' 'Have you seen your pad mate naked yet?' 'How does your pad mate taste?' 'You look happy this morning, did you get fucked last night?' 'Do you walk like that because your pad mate's cock has been up your arse?'

Prisoners made sexual gestures and noises to Idrees and would walk in front of him revealing their bottoms. Other gay and bisexual inmates reported prisoners 'flashing' them, for example, inmates asked Sean 'has my ball come over your

²⁷ Again, note the implication that her femininity was put-on.

fence?’ before exposing their testicles. While some of the verbal abuse described above was overtly intended as aggressive, sometimes prisoners constructed queerphobic comments, jokes and gestures as ‘banter’. Banter is a part of ‘lad culture’, which involves making jokes and ‘espousing politically incorrect views’ (Phillips and Young, 2015:461). Joey explained that most insults in prison centre on an individual’s marginalized attribute. He was called an ‘old cripple’ due to his age and leg injury, but explained this was ‘just banter’:

It’s just lads’ mentality – same as on a building site or in a big warehouse... It’s all ‘lads night out’, but it’s 24 hours a day. It’s all ego. It’s all, ‘I’m bigger and better than you’.

Trent engaged in ‘gay banter’ with other straight prisoners, for example ‘messaging about in the showers’, making jokes about seeing each other naked. He did not consider this homophobic. Curtis described ‘occasional ‘hilarious banter’ about ‘dropping the soap’, which he found hurtful. What might seem like an inconsequential joke to straight prisoners can be distressing for gay and bisexual inmates.

Bob tried to ‘laugh off’ sexual jokes, comments and flashing. Although he considered these actions homophobic, he did not consider them malicious, explaining, ‘prison is a very testosterone filled place and “joking” and “teasing” is seen as the “norm”’. Stanley recognised that although prisoners thought they were just ‘taking the piss’, he did not experience it in this way, explaining, ‘Sometimes it’s not just banter and it’s not a laugh... It gets tiresome’. When Glenn challenged another prisoner’s ‘childish comments’, he was told, ‘It’s just jokes’, to which he

responded, 'I don't find it very funny'.

Sean responded to homophobic jokes 'with a dirty look and a bitchy comment', including 'If you put as much effort into your criminal career as you do with your jokes it is no wonder that you are in prison', 'Hopefully you catch something as awful as your personality' and 'I'd laugh if I wasn't filled with pity for how inconsequential your life is'. He recognized that his retorts might seem 'out of line' but explained he had a 'reputation' to uphold. His callous comebacks might make the homophobia he received appear part of a mutual exchange.

Owen felt compelled to 'go along with' the 'jocular comments and banter' he received. He did not consider these comments homophobic, and in fact interpreted some of these displays of bravado as a means for prisoners to explore their own sexualities. However, he found the 'constant reminder' of his difference tiring:

Comments range from being called a 'ginger fairy' ...to several lads who keep saying 'real men fuck men' to me; to one bloke who went as if to put his testicles in my mouth as I lay back on a weightlifting bench. It is always quasi-sexual but in good humour.

In the women's establishment, there was not the same culture of 'banter' from straight, cisgender prisoners about LGBT prisoners' identities. Charlotte recounted accidentally offending a gay woman by making jokes like 'get me some sugar and I'll fuck you'. Given the pair ended up in a relationship, these jokes might be better construed as flirting than homophobia. Overtly queerphobic slurs were very rare, although, as explained above, prisoners did make biphobic comments about, and sometimes to, 'jail gay' inmates. Homophobic slurs were very occasionally used

during arguments, for example Trish explained that an inmate might say ‘friggin dyke’ if she had fallen out with a gay woman, again as the default insult, rather than out of deeply-held views.

Prejudiced comments *about* transgender prisoners were relatively common, as Tracy explained, with reference to Emily:

People were laughing...giggling, sniggering, like ‘there’s that man’... and ‘has he got a cock?’

Despite such gossip, no prisoners made transphobic comments to Emily’s face and she became fully integrated into the women’s prison population, and on the whole, well-accepted. Transgender men had similar experiences.

Being Ostracized

Alongside verbal abuse and banter, some LGBT prisoners experience exclusion. This might take the form of being denied provisions – Stanley was regularly served less food, and inmates took food from Eric’s plate. Other non-heterosexual prisoners were denied companionship. Kyle described being ‘ostracised’ and Edward was left ‘lonely with very few friends’. Prisoners would mock anyone he socialised with, suggesting they were having sex, leading potential friends to distance themselves. When Jasmin began socially transitioning, for example by wearing nail varnish, prisoners she had previously been friendly with began avoiding her. Certain kinds of prisoners appear more likely to ostracise LGBT inmates. Iris suggested that the ‘younger, more laddy, more powerful’ inmates would not associate with LGBT

prisoners. Joey explained that while most prisoners accepted a gay traveller, other travellers excluded him:

He wasn't included in anything. He couldn't play pool...He couldn't play table tennis. People just wouldn't allow him into their social circle.

Physical Assaults

Physical assaults against LGBT prisoners appear relatively rare, however some participants reported such incidents. For example, Harry had objects thrown at him because of his bisexuality, and a prisoner threatened Eric with a knife while he was showering because he was gay. Transgender women in men's prisons appeared particularly vulnerable to attack. Jasmin also reported a knife incident in the showers:

When I started wearing make up it began to kick off...Someone tried to slash my face in the showers.

Jasmin also received death threats, and Sandra was attacked on multiple occasions in men's prisons. Becky reported being 'spat at and regularly attacked, even on the VPU'. She was once punched in front of staff who suggested she was to blame for wearing women's clothes. Some participants suggested that queerphobic violence was more commonplace in YOIs. Lee started self-harming after being beaten up by other young offenders. Justin was threatened daily and attacked 5 times in 13 months at a YOI, but experienced no queerphobia in the adult estate. AJ suffered a homophobic group-assault and worried of even worse treatment in adult prisons.

Non-Consensual Sex

Several participants experienced varying degrees of unwanted sexual attention. A prisoner repeatedly grabbed Tony's bottom and genitals as a 'joke', which he did not find amusing. Several prisoners described unwanted sexual advances. Upon discovering that Glenn was gay, an inmate asked whether he would 'suck his cock', and another prisoner was misinformed that he was 'putting out'. Unwelcome sexual propositions seem quite commonplace, and Owen explained that 'effeminate' men are particularly likely to be targeted by straight prisoners for sexual favours. Some of these advances involved pressure, and even explicit coercion. Straight prisoners serving long sentences asked Sam for sexual favours 'in return for not getting a beating', and pressured Bob into having sex. Some of the men who asked Nicole to perform oral sex were 'very nasty in trying to get it'.

A prisoner raped Dennis, as he had other gay inmates:

I was in his cell and he started to feel me up and one thing led to another and he raped me. I said 'stop' and he never.

Liam was spiked with spice, and so does not remember being raped, but the next morning 'had a bowel movement which consisted of blood and semen'. He was unhappy with the treatment he received from staff, as explained in the next chapter. While some staff might be negligent, others appear too quick to presume that gay inmates are being sexually assaulted - Eric resented assumptions that his requests for condoms indicated he was being abused. There is a tendency to assume that sexual relationships between male prisoners are inherently coercive (Ricciardelli et al., 2016).

Several gay and bisexual prisoners received unwanted sexual advances from other non-heterosexual inmates. Kevin noted a predatory culture in his establishment's large LGBT community, where older prisoners regularly propositioned much younger inmates. He was concerned about adults and young offenders being housed on the same unit, having discovered that an older man was exchanging canteen items for sex with a young offender who felt 'trapped' but unable to refuse. On his VPU, Zach, who was 19 and looked very young, was subjected to older, gay, 'serious sex offenders' being 'lecherous' and 'touchy-feely'. He experienced their groping as sexual harassment, and told them as much, which failed to stop their behavior. As soon as he arrived on his VPU, Ben experienced grooming:

I was approached by an older creepy bloke...Asking if I was gay, needed help with any toiletries, if I wanted to do stuff, and he pointed out where his cell was. He tried to lift my jumper to see my body

He sensed other prisoners were playing 'mind games', trying to turn him against other inmates and gain his trust. As well as pressuring other non-heterosexual inmates into sex, gay and bisexual men might target straight inmates. Ben explained that some gay prisoners offered to pay straight inmates for sexual acts, and that some straight prisoners would 'offer a gay person the chance to "suck them off"' in order to clear debts.

Malicious Accusations

Some non-heterosexual prisoners clearly make inappropriate sexual advances. However, others are subject to malicious accusations. Sam explained that straight,

cisgender prisoners disingenuously claimed to be afraid of 'being touched or flirted with' by gay or bisexual inmates. Owen explained that gay men on VPUs, particularly older gay men, are considered predatory. He claimed it was commonplace for prisoners to 'cry rape' after consensually trading sex with gay men for canteen due to their 'embarrassment and shame':

A young lad I knew agreed to allow an older gay prisoner give him oral sex for payment of five ounces of tobacco...Friends began to take the mickey ... His version of events changed from admitting he'd enjoyed it to it being merely functional and not nice...The older man only gave him one ounce and the lad was furious. His friends then encouraged him to 'fleece' the older man and the lad went to staff to allege sexual assault.

A homophobic chapel orderly maliciously accused Kevin of slapping his bottom, which resulted in him being moved to a higher security establishment. Stanley also received a 'scurrilous accusation of sexual assault', which was ultimately dismissed. Owen explained that gay and bisexual men were particularly at risk of such accusations, which could hinder their chances of progression or release. He was therefore 'extremely careful' in his behavior, noting 'even lending a friend some tobacco can leave men open to allegations of grooming'.

Avoidance and Resistance to Bullying

Vulnerability and Protective Factors

How vulnerable LGBT prisoners are to bullying depends on how their marginalised gender and/or sexuality intersects with other axes of identity. Being young, a first-timer in prison, and lacking powerful friends can make LGBT inmates particularly vulnerable. Prisoners might avoid bullying through physical prowess and appearing

intimidating. Gender conformity is also influential – hegemonic masculinity in non-heterosexual men, and stereotypical femininity in transgender women can protect them from (at least certain forms of) victimisation. Prisoners who are mentally unwell can be particularly vulnerable to queerphobic bullying.

Several participants identified being young as rendering gay and bisexual men more vulnerable to queerphobia, and fearful of bullying – Oliver referred to these inmates as ‘absolutely terrified’. In particular, youthfulness was associated with being targeted for sexual exploitation. Younger prisoners are most vulnerable to coercive sex (Donaldson, 2001) and several prisoners attributed sexual pressure to their young age and appearance. Owen explained that young non-heterosexual prisoners were assumed to be ‘sluts’, and Ben attributed unwanted sexual attention to being much younger than other inmates, and ‘fresh faced’. Being in prison for the first time places inmates at greater risk of bullying. Eric suggested that having never previously been in prison helped explain why he was targeted for homophobic bullying, and gained respect over time.

First-time prisoners are perhaps particularly unlikely to have friends that can help them avoid bullying. A probation officer explained that having friends in custody and being ‘well-known in the criminal sub-culture’ were protective factors, and several inmates suggested that having a network of friends could prevent LGBT inmates from being targeted. Paula felt safe as part of an established group of prisoners:

I feel safe in that click, and it's because we've been in and out and we know a lot of people.

It is not only close friends who stand up for prisoners being bullied. Olivia explained that prisoners intervened when 'the odd idiot' made transphobic comments, and Annabelle and Hannah recounted using their status to protect prisoners being bullied. When Owen received homophobic abuse, this was 'countered by massive support from all sorts of men'. Having powerful friends, however, does not guarantee protection from homophobia, as Tony explained:

When I was at work or my friends weren't there some people did try to test me by making comments but once they realised I was happy to stand up for myself this lessened.

As noted in Chapter 1, prisoners can avoid victimisation by looking 'willing to fight' (Sabo et al., 2001:11), and Joel explained that non-heterosexual inmates could ensure their safety through physical stature:

I've seen some very strong muscular guys that are gay and you wouldn't want to go up against them because they'd beat the crap out of you.

Physically imposing non-heterosexual men were not immune to verbal abuse. Being a 'big bloke' meant that Daniel avoided the physical violence he saw other gay men endure, but sometimes received homophobic slurs. Beyond muscles being intimidating, Owen found body building 'a way of gaining respect from straight hard men', with whom he established a certain 'camaraderie'. Prisoners who were not intimidatingly large could avoid bullying through proving fighting prowess. After many fights with homophobic bullies, Liam gained a reputation as a 'rough puff', and

so other prisoners stopped bullying him. A probation officer corroborated that prisoners who 'stand up for themselves' usually avoid bullying.

In the women's prison, Charlotte explained that if she were 'a vulnerable person', she would not have openly revealed her relationship with another prisoner, but she knew she was protected by the 'fear factor', explaining, 'I wasn't scared of what people might think...Nobody would fuck with me'. Several prisoners, like Tay, explained they fostered safety through sticking up for themselves. Lottie explained that levels of passivity and aggression determined prisoners' 'position in the hierarchy'. Inmates explained that displaying weakness led to prisoners being targeted, and so inmates like Laura tried to hide their 'quiet and shy' demeanor to avoid victimisation.

In men's prisons, levels of confidence and sociability also structured which LGBT inmates were victimized. Ben suggested that quieter and shy LGBT inmates received some bullying, while 'outgoing and carefree' prisoners were more accepted. Bob suggested that his anxious nature rendered him a target for sexual pressure from straight inmates. Oliver contrasted a transgender woman who was vulnerable because of being unconfident and withdrawn, with another transgender woman who was more self-assured and therefore popular. Jasmin corroborated that prisoners who seem to have 'thick skins' were less targeted than timid inmates.

At the women's prison, Grace suggested that a transgender woman was ostracized and received cruel comments because of being 'very private and slightly

odd'. However, she also considered her too quick to interpret other prisoners' behavior as prejudice:

She was so self-conscious. Every small comment, every look that was slightly too long, I could see it affected her.

Emily also noted the tendency of people with minoritised identities to read prejudice into scenarios. She chose never to assume that when other prisoners were uninterested in associating with her it was due to her being transgender. Beyond her insecurity, Grace explained prisoners' rejection of the transgender woman as resulting from her looking 'like a man'. She was tall, muscular and balding, with 'massive tits'. In contrast, Grace explained that a good-looking transgender man was popular and well-liked. Other prisoners, including Emma, noted that Ethan 'sailed through' his time at the women's prison due to being attractive and confident. The gender conformity of transgender prisoners was clearly a factor in their treatment, as Owen explained:

If men can see themselves fancying a trans person they are much more likely to 'accept' them, although I don't see that acceptance as being that of any sort of equal.

He recalled a 'rough' transgender woman being 'the butt of jokes', while a more feminine inmate was 'really treated like a woman', had a stable, consensual relationship 'and seemed to enjoy' being in prison.

Similarly, non-heterosexual men could avoid bullying through embodying masculinity. Ben explained that 'straight acting' prisoners who attended the gym were more accepted than camp gay and bisexual inmates. Ben's footballing talent

earned him respect from inmates he suspected would otherwise 'dish out verbal abuse'. Sporting prowess can earn prisoners respect (Sabo, 2001), however LGBT people often avoid the gym and team sports in prison (Forder, 2015) and outside for fear of discrimination (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018d). A probation officer suggested that a young bisexual prisoner's long, curly hair and thin body-type helped explain him being bullied, noting, 'He didn't look like a lot of your stereotypical shaved hair, going to the gym all the time types'. Outside prison, gender non-conformity makes non-heterosexual people more prone to victimization (Button & Worthen, 2014).

LGBT people are disproportionately affected by mental ill-health (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018b), and several participants suggested that being mentally unwell made LGBT inmates particularly vulnerable to bullying. Oliver noted that a mentally unwell gay prisoner behaved 'extremely outlandishly' and would tell prisoners who mockingly asked why, that his behavior was a coping mechanism to deal with homophobic bullying. Oliver explained that this prisoner was also a drug user, and so frequently in debt. He regularly complained of homophobic abuse, but Oliver suggested he might actually have been targeted due to a range of other factors besides his sexuality. Similarly, a probation officer suggested that a bisexual prisoner was not targeted specifically due to his sexuality, but because of a range of characteristics; his age, mental ill health, and tendency to talk openly about past relationships with prisoners and his offending. She summarized that his 'presentation in general' induced victimization.

Martin explained his bullying as the result of being different in multiple ways – his sexuality, but also his social class. Several staff suggested that ‘personality’ determined non-heterosexual prisoners’ treatment. Bethan suggested that a gay inmate had fights partly because of his sexuality, but also because of being ‘a needy, attention seeking person’. A probation officer suggested that another prisoner’s sexuality invoked no problems, and rather he was bullied for informing on other inmates.

When somebody is socially located at the intersection of multiple marginalized attributes, discrimination might originate ‘from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them’ (Crenshaw, 1989:44). It can therefore be difficult to pinpoint exactly why an LGBT prisoner is being bullied. Furthermore, even if LGBT prisoners are targeted solely as a result of a different attribute, such as mental ill health or drug misuse, this bullying could be considered indirectly linked to their LGBT status, since queerphobia makes LGBT people more prone to mental illness and drug use.

Resilience

How affected LGBT inmates are by bullying depends on their resilience. Inmates often claimed to be the type of person who was unaffected by bullying. Nadine explained, ‘that’s just the way I am, I don’t worry about things’, and Amber claimed, ‘I’ve always been one of those people...not bothered what people think’. For Curtis, homophobic jokes were apparently ‘water off a duck’s back’ since he did not dwell

on negative experiences. These prisoners recognized that other inmates were more affected by bullying. Sam considered himself 'immune' to homophobic abuse, but explained others were not, describing an inmate who self-harmed due to homophobic slurs and false accusations that he was trading cigarettes for sex.

Prisoners understood variations in resilience in multiple ways. Avi suggested that how prisoners reacted to the prejudice they received was important, explaining that those with a negative outlook were more affected by bullying. Stanley suggested that not being 'ashamed' of his sexuality made him more resilient. Goffman (1963) explains that people with stigmatized attributes can protect themselves by disavowing the norms they transgress. Stanley also suggested that lacking friends or support systems could make queerphobic bullying 'too much' to cope with, and although Colin had contemplated suicide, he recognized he was relatively 'lucky':

I am educated, have friends that visit me and send me in money. I have a good job in the prison and am on track to get D cat...Others may not be able to cope as easily.

Lottie suggested that prisoners who had lived a 'rough life' prior to imprisonment could cope more easily with the 'cruel' way that prisoners treated each other, commenting, 'that's normal to them'.

Fighting back

Research tends to neglect LGBT responses to victimization (Panfil, 2014), and some prisoners reacted to queerphobia through actual or threatened violence. In the

women's prison, a Probation Officer explained that staff assessed whether Emily's 'tolerance levels would put anyone at risk' since her index offence was related to her 'feeling discriminated against as a trans woman'. Grace recounted a mentally-unwell transgender woman assaulting a prisoner who called her a man, leading to her being sectioned. In response to transphobic bullying, Lilly made a weapon to protect herself from potential attacks. Staff found her weapon, and after an adjudication transferred her to the VPU, where she was much happier. She had wanted to stay in the general population as a matter of principle, believing that she should be able to be openly transgender and 'live a normal life', but recognized that she would have responded violently to transphobia from other prisoners. Besides accepting moves to VPUs, some prisoners describe concealing their sexuality to prevent responding aggressively to queerphobia (Crewe, 2009).

Tony responded to biphobic slurs through 'aggression', since staff were uninterested unless prisoners 'were fighting or on the verge of fighting'. Liam responded with violence because he felt vulnerable and officers 'had a shrug offish approach'. He also wanted to 'prove not all gay people can't fight'. Panfil (2014) documents gay men literally fighting to dispel stereotypes of weakness and passivity, which helped prevent future homophobia. As Liam matured, he tried to tackle homophobia via other means, commenting, 'instead of fighting with my fists I decided to learn about equality and diversity'.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with three main topics. Firstly, it assessed the number of LGBT prisoners, and how they can be identified. Some LGBT prisoners come out of their own accord, whereas others are 'outed', or attributed minoritised genders and sexualities based on stereotypical assumptions. I demonstrate that LGBT prisoners' claimed identities can be subject to assessments of authenticity by staff and other inmates – further illustrating claims made regarding transgender women in the British literature (see Bashford et al., 2017; Emerton, 2018) and building on existing research by examining other sub-groups of the LGBT community.

Next, I considered prisoners' experiences of coming out to themselves and others – a topic largely unexplored in both the British and international literature. Some people first come to recognise themselves as LGBT during prison, and might struggle to understand and accept their identities. Other prisoners had long-identified as LGBT, but been unable to openly express this in the community, corroborating Forder's (2015:15) claims that some inmates 'feel freer to be themselves once behind bars'. I have explained that closets are built around some LGBT inmates via other peoples' cisnormative and heteronormative assumptions, while other LGBT inmates actively conceal their minoritised identities. Hiding an LGBT status can be psychologically difficult, and while some prisoners consider this necessary for their self-protection, I demonstrate that openness can at times garner some degree of acceptance and respect.

Finally, this chapter considered bullying. In men's prisons, newly-arrived LGBT inmates are often profoundly afraid of bullying, which I explain can itself negatively affect their wellbeing. Extending the limited British literature, which documents the existence of bullying, I suggest why prisoners engage in queerphobic bullying - out of prejudice, due to broader desires to marginalise other inmates, and to gain status. LGBT prisoners sometimes experience social marginalisation, verbal and physical abuse. British research notes that LGBT inmates might experience unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion (see Banbury, 2004) and I demonstrate that they are also vulnerable to false accusations of these behaviours. Banbury (2004) demonstrated that certain types of prisoners were more vulnerable to sexual victimisation, and I demonstrate that more broadly LGBT prisoners' other attributes can mitigate or enhance their vulnerability to bullying in general. I also explain that the intersection of systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989) can impede identifying a single cause of bullying. Corroborating previous findings (Forder, 2017; Carr et al., 2016) I relate that some LGBT inmates actively fight back against their attackers, in part because staff fail to challenge queerphobic bullying. Having already touched on institutional responses to LGBT inmates throughout this chapter, the next chapter provides a thorough engagement. I consider how staff, policies and practices shape LGBT experiences on the ground.

Chapter 5: Institutional Responses to LGBT inmates

The previous chapter considered LGBT prisoners' experiences in terms of their decisions regarding disclosing their identities, other prisoners' reactions to them, and their responses in turn. This chapter explores how practices by staff shape the experiences of gender and sexual minorities.

Healthcare

LGBT people might require specific healthcare services, like genital reconstruction surgery. They can also be more reliant on other, general healthcare services, due to being disproportionately affected by particular illnesses, like HIV. LGBT people tend to have worse healthcare experiences, avoiding accessing services for fear of discrimination (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018b).

Some transgender women in men's prisons reported receiving gender-related healthcare, like hair reduction cream and hormones. In the women's estate, transgender women who had had gender confirmation surgery had access to vaginal dilators as required. However, transgender prisoners often struggled with access to healthcare. Prisoners were nervous about coming out to healthcare staff, who were often uninformed, and did not provide prisoners with information or support. Prisoners had long waits for diagnoses before they could access treatment on the NHS and struggled with private access. Jasmin was prohibited from buying her own electrolysis equipment, and unable to access hormones either, attempted auto-castration:

I cut open my own scrotum...But I lost too much blood and my vision began to go greyscale...so I stitched myself back up using dental floss. It took about 3 months to heal and I told no-one at the time because they would consider self-surgery as self-harm

Without access to healthcare, female transgender prisoners are at risk of performing life-threatening operations themselves (Brown, 2010). When, after a lengthy complaints process, Jasmin was able to purchase electrolysis equipment, she was unable to use it, having been segregated for her own protection.

Unable to access treatment via official means, Becky for a time had estrogen smuggled into her men's prison, and resorted to castrating herself using a prison razor. Although she was glad to have rid her body of testosterone, she had not foreseen the ensuing medical issues, including 'almost unbearable hot and cold flushes', weakness and headaches. Corroborating previous findings on GICs (Emerton, 2018, Bashford et al., 2017) Becky had been refused a diagnosis of gender dysphoria and accompanying treatment by a GIC who did not consider her experience of living as a woman in men's prisons as sufficient evidence. Her inability to challenge the GIC's decision made her suicidal.

Escorts to GIC appointments could be problematic. Escorting officers were overtly transphobic towards Becky, which was particularly problematic given they insisted upon accompanying her into the consulting room. In the women's prison Emma suggested that Ethan, a transgender man was unable to attend pre-arranged

surgery appointments since prisoners are not allowed to know in advance when escorts are happening. Brian suggested Ethan's surgery was cancelled due to resource implications - two officers would have had to escort him to Brighton for his operations.

LGBT prisoners are more likely to experience sexual assault, and provisions for survivors can be inadequate. Liam described his treatment in the aftermath of being raped as 'inhuman'. He was moved to healthcare in conditions he 'wouldn't even keep a dog in', and with a history of self-harm became suicidal. He was not prescribed anti-retrovirals, and so worried about contracting HIV, and was not referred to a sexual assault forensic examination centre. Liam continued to encounter his rapist around the prison.

LGBT people are at increased risk of mental ill-health and while assessing vulnerability, Oliver and his colleagues treated being LGBT as a risk factor, referring them to a day care facility usually reserved for prisoners with a diagnosed mental illness. This provision was informal, and Oliver believed that mental health nurses in other establishments would not do the same. It would be preferable to provide support for LGBT inmates that is not intended for mentally unwell prisoners. LGBT prisoners might disproportionately require access to sexual health provisions, which are discussed in Chapter 7.

Housing

Accommodation can make a fundamental difference to LGBT prisoners' experiences. While some LGBT prisoners are housed on mainstream wings, others are considered by staff, or deem themselves, to need a safer environment. As noted in the previous chapter, prisoners in VPUs tend to be less openly hostile towards LGBT inmates. However, some prisons do not have VPUs. Jason's former establishment moved prisoners between wings if they encountered problems. At his current establishment, a category C sex offender's prison, a lack of VPU was unimportant since prisoners were 'calm and well behaved'. Establishments without VPUs sometimes used wings for enhanced and/or older prisoners to keep LGBT prisoners safe. Other establishments used segregation as a temporary measure before moving LGBT prisoners to establishments with VPUs. Oliver criticized the 'institutionally crap' arrangements for keeping transgender prisoners safe at his establishment – 'a wing designed for paedophiles, a detox unit or segregation'. Different types of separate housing have different symbolic effects (Emerton, 2018), and none were designed with the intention of supporting LGBT inmates.

Some establishments try to make LGBT prisoners safe through providing single cells. Some transgender women in men's prisons were given en-suites, enabling private showering, however others were refused these requests. Oliver informally tried to secure them for all LGBT prisoners. He recounted an 'effeminate' gay prisoner being given the option of a single cell on the mainstream wing, or a shared cell on the drug free wing, which provided 'a nicer environment'. This man took his own life at a subsequent prison, and Oliver worried that not meeting formal

single-cell requirements might have been a contributing factor. As noted in the previous chapter, staff are hesitant to grant single cells - cynicism is core to prison officer culture (Arnold, 2016), and inmates do sometimes lie in pursuit of advantages (Crewe, 2016).

While some LGBT inmates are unable to access the single cells that might help keep them safe, others are prohibited from sharing cells. Daniel, reported that gay and bisexual inmates could not 'double up' with other prisoners and Sean claimed that staff made extra checks on openly gay prisoners' cells when other inmates were in there, 'incase any sexual activity is going on'. At Ben's establishment, gay prisoners could not share with other gay men, due to presumptions they would have sex. Oliver corroborated that officers assumed that housing gay men in the same cell would result in a sexual relationship. He considered this presumption homophobic, and resulting in inferior treatment for gay prisoners - inmates from other minoritised groups, like Travellers, were housed together to provide informal peer support. In contrast, at the women's prison, Abby noted staff presumptions that if they 'put two butch girls in together, nothing will happen'. This is based on the narrative that same-sex relationships mimic opposite-sex relationships with one masculine and one feminine partner. Indeed, as noted in Chapter 1, a women's prison in Virginia established a 'butch wing' to prevent relationships (Girshick, 2011:203).

Some LGBT prisoners requested housing on VPUs. Upon arriving in prison, Edward immediately requested housing on a protection wing, for fear of being

assaulted or raped. Due to an 'undercurrent of threat', Jason would have requested placement on a VPU had his prison had one, and Bob applied to move to a mature attitude wing due to verbal abuse and sexual harassment. Aaron noted that three gay prisoners, who had all been in prison previously, had recently requested housing on his VPU due to safety concerns. Jasmin requested but was refused placement on a VPU, where there were several other transgender women, because her index offence was against a sex offender. For her own protection, she was confined to her single cell on a mainstream wing for between 22 and 24 hours a day, which she experienced as 'being punished' for transphobia against her, before being moved to segregation, and then the healthcare unit.

In other cases, LGBT prisoners are housed on VPUs due to staff recommendations. A probation officer in the men's prison noted that LGBT inmates were sometimes separated from the mainstream population in anticipation of victimisation, which she disapproved of. Katherine suggested that staff were too quick to transfer transgender women to protection wings rather than dealing with transphobia. Some participants suggested that staff should be able to guarantee LGBT prisoners' safety on mainstream wings. Becky explained that staff advised transgender prisoners only to leave the protection wing for visits.

LGBT prisoners were sometimes housed on VPUs without their consent. Staff pressured Eric to transfer to a VPU, and he had to fight hard to remain in the mainstream population, unwilling 'to be stigmatized as a vulnerable prisoner'. Oliver noted that LGBT prisoners were reluctant to be housed on VPUs, not wanting to

socialise with paedophiles or be conflated with them. Courtney felt unsafe being housed alongside sex offenders, and so damaged her cell, preferring to be housed on segregation than a VPU. Some prisoners resented being moved to VPUs because of losing their jobs and other privileges.

Some female transgender participants had achieved transfers to women's establishments. Sandra finally felt able to be herself after transferring to a women's prison three years after gaining a GRC in prison. Like the escort process to GICs, transfers between establishments could be improved. Katherine found the presence of male prisoners being simultaneously processed on reception unsettling, and received a bra, prosthetic breasts, and make-up only twenty minutes before leaving. Katherine, housed in Scottish prisons, found waiting one year between coming out as transgender and being transferred to a women's establishment an 'endurance test', and other prisoners had much longer, and sometimes seemingly indefinite, waits.

Becky felt hopeless about transferring to a women's establishment, unable, as noted above, to access a diagnosis of gender dysphoria and associated treatment. She considered PSI 2016, which improves the decision-making process regarding prison allocation, as a 'ploy' to justify discrimination. She believed that increased flexibility in allocation decisions would only benefit prisoners serving short sentences, who had public backing, or had been receiving hormones in the community. For life sentenced prisoners like herself, who transitioned during custody, she felt it was worthless.

As noted previously, Emily, a transgender woman, arrived during my fieldwork at the women's prison, and was held on the FNC for far longer than cisgender prisoners with similar risk profiles. Brian suggested that she was held there longer predominantly out of concerns for her safety – the construction, discussed in Chapter 1, of transgender prisoners as at-risk. However, staff discussions at the time centred on whether she had a penis, and during our interview, Debbie reiterated staff interest in 'where Emily was up to with treatment'. Upon discovering Emily was '15 years post op' she explained, 'none of the risk factors that could have been there were there'.

Brian hinted at concerns over Emily's anatomy by framing her sharing showers as a 'decency issue'. He explained that staff did not want to segregate Emily, or house her on the unit for mentally unwell people, and so she was housed in a single room with access to a private bathroom. Brian explained that staff had tried to do what they considered best for Emily, however, she was not consulted, and did not want different treatment. A probation officer suggested that Emily should have been treated like any other woman, and recognised she was 'sick' of unnecessary focus on her transgender history. She was critical of the prison's approach to Emily's housing, regarding the decision-making process as based on fear and ignorance, rather than equality. She recognised that keeping Emily on the FNC for so long could have been daunting and isolating, and indeed, Emily reported feeling unable to make friends or settle.

Staff informed me that a transgender woman seeking to transfer from the men's estate had recently been rejected. The probation officer explained that other women's establishments would better suit her – those with more single dorms and staff supervision, given she had a penis. Brian incorrectly believed that women with penises were never allowed in women's prisons. Debbie was concerned about receiving prisoners with penises due to the risk of prisoners becoming pregnant, and the ensuing media reaction. Staff anxieties reflected those commonly documented regarding transgender women with penises having consensual or coercive sex with other women (Rodgers et al., 2017), however, staff, like Paige, also mentioned the risk to them from other prisoners' interest in their genitals.

Paige believed that transgender men with vaginas were categorically prohibited from being housed in men's prisons. Jordan worried about physically transitioning due to the prospect of being sent to a men's prison, where he would become the 'bitch of the wing':

I wouldn't survive in a man's jail...They wouldn't bring me here [to the women's prison]. There's no in between. I reckon you should have a transgender jail.

Other LGBT inmates suggested prisons should have LGBT wings to prevent victimisation. Transgender women have advocated separate transgender prisons (Forder, 2017), and some prison staff advocate 'clustering' transgender inmates to ensure prisons had sufficient expertise (Bashford et al., 2017:52). The men's prison was certainly ill-equipped to support transgender prisoners. Becca explained they had recently refused a transgender woman, suggesting that her arrival would have

induced a 'meltdown' since staff were unequipped to deal with transgender prisoners. In fact, minutes from an equality meeting there revealed that 'no one seemed sure of how to deal with' a transgender person visiting an inmate there. Uncertainty regarding how to treat gender-ambiguous prisoners was noted in Chapter 4.

Cisnormative/Heteronormative Environment

Even the best housing would fail to safeguard LGBT prisoners from the cisnormativity and heteronormativity embedded in prisons. LGBT inmates are subjected to daily, often unintentional, micro-aggressions, for example assumptions about their gender or sexuality, which might appear minor, but cumulatively can have harmful psychological, social and physical consequences (Pierce, 1974, Potter, 2015). Some micro-aggressions comprised verbal statements, whereas others were written into institutional documents. At the men's establishments, prisoners running the induction explained how 'your Mrs can cancel visits', and the prisoner compact agreement that inmates signed on induction included a heteronormative agreement not to 'make insulting comments about other peoples' families, *girlfriends*, mothers, etc.'

Accusations

As noted in Chapter 4, some inmates made false accusations of sexual grooming against gay and bisexual men, and prisoners experienced similar hetero-normative allegations from staff. Gordon claimed that staff accusations made being gay in

prison 'a total nightmare'. He explained that gay prisoners were monitored excessively, and staff would automatically consider any interactions they had with younger prisoners as instances of grooming. Oliver corroborated that officers assumed that gay prisoners would 'come on to' other inmates, explaining that staff would avoid housing 'influential' gay men with, younger more vulnerable men due to misguided fears of sexual coercion. In Chapter 1 I noted the persisting idea that prison rapists are themselves non-heterosexual (Mogul et al., 2011).

Staff accused Shane of exchanging sex for cigarettes – a false allegation he considered homophobic, given that no heterosexual inmates incurred such accusations. Justin was unhappy with staff reactions to a homophobic prisoner accusing him of having a sexual relationship with another inmate. He saw homophobia in staff's presumption that he and his friend were indeed a couple, and was concerned they had recorded this on their files. Staff often suspect gay men of having sexual relationships. Owen felt unfairly treated due to psychologists' 'antiquated' attitudes towards homosexuality. They informed prisoners on a SOTP that abusing boys was more damaging than girls, which he considered rooted in the idea of 'moral corruption - that sex with boys makes them homosexual'. Staff reported him for being 'manipulative' after he correctly insisted that the age of consent between men was 16.

Misgendering

The prison system, split into the male and female estate, is inherently cissexist, which is reflected in formal procedures and informal language.

Forms, such as this escort form, only offer binary gender choices:

PROTECT - PERSONAL PERSON ESCORT RECORD FORM RISK INDICATOR							
PERSON/DETAINEE IF NOT FOR RELEASE - TICK		☐	REASON				
FROM		TO		DATE OF TRAVEL	/ /		
SURNAME				NUMBER			
FORENAME				DOB			
ALIASES				RELIGION			
MALE ☐	FEMALE ☐	ETHNIC CODE		UNDER18 ☐	D.Y.O		P.o.P.O.

During fieldwork, it seemed that every other word from staff was 'lads' or 'ladies' depending on the establishment. In the women's prison, where two transgender men remained unknown to staff, I was acutely aware of the pervasiveness of gendered language, and Imogen found it offensive when officers said 'ladies', preferring terms like 'everyone'. Some uses of gendered language were clearly intended to be inclusive. A member of healthcare staff explained:

We don't like to say 'sexual health', we like to say 'female health,' because it's open to everybody as women, so we don't want to target same sex relationships.

Imogen, a transgender man who had not disclosed his gender to other prisoners or staff, recalled a mental health worker instructing him to join in with prisoners painting their nails. When he replied, 'that's not for me, it's too feminine', she replied, 'you're a woman'. Imogen felt 'angry and hurt', considering the comment

insensitive, commenting, 'you can tell I'm boyish...she should realise that there are transgender people'.

While it had not occurred to this worker that Imogen might not be a woman, it had not occurred to either transgender man that they could use masculine pronouns, as Jordan's reply to my question regarding pronouns reveals:

Oh I don't, whatever you...I'm a girl aren't I now? So just say 'her'. Do you know what I mean? I would like someone to say 'him', but I've not been addressed like that.

During interviews, even supportive staff routinely misgendered transgender inmates – in particular, transgender women with penises were referred to as men. Staff used terminology that demonstrated unfamiliarity with transgender issues. Brian used 'sexuality' instead of 'gender', 'transformed' instead of 'transitioned', referred to 'the operation' and a woman who 'used to be a man', and used the phrase 'female to male' – a term often considered outdated in the trans community (Vincent, 2018b).

Some transgender prisoners experienced deliberate misgendering. Staff refused to call Sienna by her name and pronouns until she had received an official diagnosis of gender dysphoria. When an officer asked her to leave her cell using the title 'Mr', Sienna refused, insisting her gender was respected. When placing Sienna on report, the officer noted, 'I told him until we had something official then that was how we would address him'. Here, institutional bureaucracy is placed before the needs of the transgender prisoner. Jasmin had to pursue the complaints and legal

systems before staff acknowledged her legal name change. Ben's establishment did not recognize transgender women's rights to use female names until June 2016, long after the initial PSI. Some transgender women reported staff respecting their pronouns. Lilly considered staff changing her door card title to 'Miss' as them going 'the extra mile'. Upon entering a VPU, she felt safe and welcome being greeted with her chosen name. Respecting prisoners' genders is not difficult, and makes a significant difference to their wellbeing.

Access to Appropriate Resources and Treatment

Transgender and gender-nonconforming prisoners often struggle to access appropriate clothes. In the women's prison, the standard provision of 'knickers' affected transgender men and masculine women. Ali explained that boxers were not consistently available on reception, and suggested the prison 'stock up':

They're big granny knickers that they give you. Big flowery things... They say, 'oh we've no boxers' and that's been happening for time now. So you have to just keep washing yours until you have that first visit, every night...They give you packs of free knickers so why can't they give packs of free boxers?

By refusing to wear knickers, and instead washing her boxers each night, Ali resists the establishment's normative gender order. The prison allocated knickers when prisoners, like Casey, requested additional underwear. After explaining, 'I don't wear these', staff ordered boxers from a local men's establishment. The automatic provision of knickers conveys normative messages regarding gender expectations. Having to wear feminine underwear can be deeply uncomfortable for both transgender, and gender nonconforming prisoners. Working on reception, Lottie

daily had prisoners very upset at the unavailability of masculine clothes, which she considered a welfare issue. She proposed there should be a 'butch box':

We'd go out with a pink blouse and they'd go, 'I aren't wearing that'...and we'd just have to keep rooting through ... And then the nighties...I mean it's bad enough for us to having to wear them, they're horrible... 'Haven't you got any pyjamas?'...Never seen boxers there...Just horrible knickers...They just get really upset...agitated...The officers couldn't give a shit. They just want you to get them the clothes, and get them out.

Lottie noted that the issue of reception only stocking feminine clothes had been raised numerous times by inmates at meetings with staff, but remained unresolved. It is not clear why this was the case, however, a reception officer told me it was not 'a big issue' to only provide knickers on reception, since inmates could order boxers through the diversity department.

Prisoners could purchase masculine clothes from catalogues, but Lottie described this bureaucratic process as 'an absolute nightmare':

The worst thing is the clothes come, they don't fit, and then the prison have got to send it back. They charge you, they don't want to do it, it's just a massive hassle.

Indeed, Tracy described Imogen's struggle to purchase a bra. He had very large breasts, and wanted to try wearing a bra in the hope it might ease his gender dysphoria:

She couldn't afford it, she bought it and then she got the wrong size...So it all went wrong.

Prisoners could also have clothes brought in on visits. Poppy noted regular deposits of boxers, men's shirts and jeans, and tight vests made from 'spanx' material, which

she suggested were to ‘flatten their boobies’ to look like ‘the boy’s part of the relationship’. Breast binding is more likely associated with gender presentation and/or identity than sexuality.

The lack of gender-appropriate clothes particularly affects prisoners without loved ones to send money (which enables purchasing items from catalogues) or to bring in clothes. The prison had recently established a shop, where inmates could buy donated clothes very cheaply. While the majority of clothes were feminine, they stocked some masculine items, including boxers, shorts, t-shirts, shirts and men’s pyjamas.

In the women’s prison, Brian referenced rumours that Ethan ‘had a penis...a sex toy’. He explained that the establishment had explored whether they had to provide a synthetic penis, since it was ‘part of his sex life’, but resolved not to, since female prisoners were not allowed ‘sex toys’, and Ethan was unlikely to have a sexual relationship, given he was married. Transgender men often use prosthetics for ‘packing’ – giving the appearance of having a penis (Rood, Maroney, Puckett, Berman, Reisner & Pantalone, 2017:710). The presumption that Ethan would want a synthetic penis to enhance sexual pleasure, rather than affirm his gender, evidences a lack of transgender awareness.

In men’s prisons, some transgender women reported sufficient access to clothes and accessories. Lilly had women’s clothes brought in on visits, and a wig professionally fitted. At one establishment, staff ordered Nicole clothes and make-

up from a women's prison, while in another she could also receive clothes and make-up through the post. Even before transitioning, Nicole's partner sent her women's underwear and nighties in the post, which she wore surreptitiously, letting her cell-mate presume 'it was a sexy thing between couples'. An LGBT charity that ran a prison's support group introduced a policy of asking prisoners on reception whether they wanted men's or women's clothes. When transgender women did have access to gender-affirming items, but chose not to consistently wear them, this aroused suspicion regarding their gender authenticity.

Confirming previous findings (House of Commons, 2016, Bashford et al., 2017) other transgender prisoners struggled with access. Jasmin's establishment was initially 'extremely difficult and reticent':

Clothes, make up, everything, even though allowed under the rules
I've had to fight through the complaints and legal system.

Jasmin tried to express her gender through creating her own nail varnish. Her establishment later introduced female items on the canteen sheet, enabling her to purchase make-up and toiletries. While progress, she considered this provision insufficient, noting the lack of women's perfume and make-up to suit different skin complexions. In Scotland Courtney waited two months after coming out to access women's clothes and cosmetics. Days later, she was returned 'to the beginning of the flowchart', enabling the Scottish Prison service to treat her as somebody *proposing* to transition, a status invoking less rights (see SPS, 2014). Unable to access gender-affirming items, she became suicidal.

Corroborating previous research (Emerton, 2018, Forder, 2017) some transgender women's gender presentation was limited to certain areas. Oliver explained that transgender women could wear make-up, but only wear women's clothes underneath men's clothes, due to concerns that other prisoners would assault them. Jasmin could only wear skirts on her wing, and considered the prison's justification of this being 'a decency issue' as 'backwards'. She questioned why female staff could wear similar clothes without being considered 'indecent' or seen as placing themselves 'at risk of assault'. She worried that clothing restrictions would prevent her from qualifying as 'living in role' for the purpose of accessing medical treatment, legal recognition, and transfer to the women's estate.

When segregated as a punishment, Becky was denied access to her own clothes, and provided an 'oversized male prisoner grey tracksuit' – when she complained staff told her 'it's unisex', seemingly breaching PSI 07/2011 which stipulates that transgender women should be able to wear women's clothes regardless of any IEP restrictions. Beyond segregation for punishment, when Jasmin was segregated as a means of protection from other inmates she was left without make-up or women's clothes for ten days. She was still not allowed tweezers, and only allowed a razor once a day. While on constant watch for two weeks, Courtney was denied shaving materials due to her suicide risk, and officers responsible for keeping her safe called her a 'bearded lady'. Prisons have previously denied transgender women tights due to the risk of them being used as a ligature (Emerton, 2018). Providing suicidal prisoners with razor blades is of course highly risky, however involuntarily growing a beard would undoubtedly increase transgender

women's suicidal thoughts.

Having come to identify as bi-gender through a prison's LGBT group, Tom found it difficult being unable to express their female gender through clothes and accessories. Tom was frustrated at not having the same rights as transgender women, having spent three decades suppressing their femininity. Tom tried to buy 'gender neutral' clothes but struggled given limited access to clothing catalogues. The 'narrow terms' of the original PSI (Lamble, 2012:10) were replaced with a broader definition of transgender, theoretically allowing Tom access to gender-affirming items. However, the new PSI is not consistently implemented across the prison estate (Bashford et al., 2017).

Transgender prisoners often lacked guidance regarding gender dysphoria and transitioning. Katherine's equality and diversity officer lacked knowledge of how to support her transition, having not received training in transgender issues. Nicole lacked support at her initial establishment with legally changing her name, and Jasmin's prison made it difficult for her to access information regarding GRCs, leaving her to rely on external prison charities. She cited another transgender woman having to spend significant time and money to gain a GRC, and secure transfer to a women's prison.

Gender-appropriate searching procedures are important for transgender prisoners, but several staff displayed a lack of understanding and acceptance. Joel suggested that male staff searching a transgender woman's lower half, and female

staff searching her upper half contravened prison rules 'because he was still a man'.

An officer at the men's prison laughed while describing a similar scenario, suggesting

he found it amusing or awkward. Oliver described staff at another men's

establishment as searching a mentally unwell transgender woman respectfully. He

had been asked to observe to ensure appropriate treatment:

They were saying...the bottom half had to be checked by a man because she was still a man...Those officers were really good...What she'd used to tie down her penis with, she then started looping around trying to hit officers with, and I was thinking, 'that's really aggravating', because she obviously hadn't washed for a while as well.

Courtney had to wait 8 weeks between coming out and being searched by female

staff. Good provisions can significantly improve prisoners' lives, as Nicole explained,

having transferred prisons:

Things are completely different, a 100 times better. They have sorted my name change, got me all the relevant help I have needed, they have a well run LGBT group which I am a part of. I have access to everything that you'd get in a female prison. I get private showers and I now have my own cell and my mum is able to send me clothes and make up...and I'm not excluded from any activities because of my gender.

The initial section of this chapter has considered how prisons address the healthcare

and housing needs of LGBT inmates. I have demonstrated that staff efforts to keep

prisoners safe and secure sometimes conflict with LGBT prisoners' own preferences

regarding their treatment, which can at times cause severe distress. Prisons struggle

to fit LGBT inmates' requirements within their existing, cisnormative structures.

Their solutions, such as housing inmates on VPUs, are attempts at short-term fixes

for individual prisoners, to the underlying issue of queerphobia. This first section

also demonstrates the impact of cisnormative and heteronormative staff assumptions. Officers regard horizontal relationships between non-heterosexual inmates and their peers through the lens of the potential for consensual or coercive sex, impacting provisions such as cell sharing. Their risk-aversion also limits transgender women's access to gender-affirming items, based on the potential for harm from themselves and others, as documented by Emerton (2018).

Prisons stock clothes for inmates based on cisnormative assumptions that, for example, women's prisons only house female inmates who wear women's clothes. Staff and prisoners alike appear to view gender-affirming items, such as binders and packers, through the lens of sexuality rather than gender. Misgendering is rife in the binary prison setting. It is routine, usually unintentional, and embedded in everyday modes of address. At times, staff misguidedly choose gendered language in their efforts at inclusivity, for example referring to 'female health' rather than 'sexual health'. Cisnormativity and heteronormativity are also embedded in prison forms. Prisons often fail to provide transgender inmates access to guidance on transitioning, demonstrating and reinforcing the cisnormativity of these institutions.

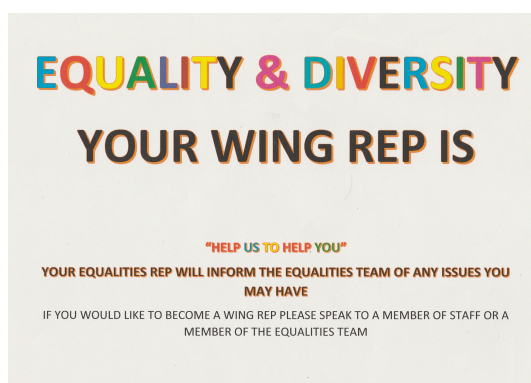
Available Support

Peer Representatives and Support

LGBT prisoners can gain peer-support through a range of prisoner representative schemes. Prisoners were often more comfortable speaking about their problems with peer supporters than staff. Sam valued the guaranteed lack of repercussions

with fellow inmates, and Barry found peer support more meaningful, since prisoner volunteers *want* to help, while staff have 'got to do it'. Christine explained that peer supporters could spend substantial time listening to prisoners' problems, while staff did not have the time. Some prisoners suggested that gender and sexuality related issues in particular were easier to discuss with fellow inmates than officers.

Some establishments had prisoner equality and diversity representatives, who prisoners could approach to represent their interests to wing officers, or at regular equalities meetings. Trent valued such meetings for enabling access to governors, who had more ability than wing staff to implement meaningful change. Several LGBT prisoners were equalities representatives. Peter met newly arrived LGBT, ethnic minority and disabled prisoners on his wing, outlining the establishment's relevant provisions and trying to alleviate any fears. Aaron also represented 'all minorities' as a wing representative. The posters advertising the equalities representative at the men's prison demonstrated the all-encompassing nature of the role:



Prisoners often valued speaking to peer supporters who shared their minoritised attribute, and so having one prisoner represent all marginalized prisoners might be insufficient. Curtis sensed his wing's diversity representative was 'uncomfortable with homosexuality', but suggested that this did not hinder his professionalism in dealing with sexuality-related issues. However, Eric felt 'stigmatised' for his sexuality by Black African equalities representatives. Previous researchers have called for specific transgender representatives alongside general equalities representatives (Marlow et al., 2015). Barry noted that even at prisons where identity specific representatives were available, they were not accessible 24/7, leaving prisoners only able to access general Listeners during the night.

When prisons did have LGBT specific representatives they were usually attached to LGBT support groups. These representatives often wore specific t-shirts, making them visible to other inmates. Richard was an LGBT representative, but had not had any LGBT inmates seek his support, given the high levels of acceptance at his establishment. However, the mere presence of LGBT representatives like Richard can be beneficial – several prisoners including Richard noted that having LGBT reps made them feel safe to come out. Several LGBT representatives found their positions rewarding and providing a sense of pride.

A particular category C sex offender prison with a large, active LGBT support group had a particularly good LGBT representative scheme. All but one wing had an LGBT representative, and most had two or three. Representatives helped manage and advertise the support group, and met all new prisoners during inductions. They

were trained in sexual health, and could provide condoms and lubricant, and supported prisoners struggling with identity, coming out, bullying and accessing support.

Shane explained that all representatives at this prison were LGBT, since non-LGBT representatives had in the past felt uncomfortable, and less able to offer support. In another establishment, Barry, a straight, cisgender man, had volunteered to be the LGBT rep since no other prisoners wanted this position. He wanted to promote LGBT rights since his cousin had died after contracting AIDS, and a neighbor had been killed in a homophobic assault. Barry recognized that being LGBT would enhance peer support, questioning, 'who better to answer a gay guy's questions than a gay guy?' However, he supported also having diversity representatives with hegemonic identities, commenting, 'that's *diverse* isn't it?'

LGBT prisoners often used additional peer support schemes, like the Listeners service. Barry explained that all peer supporters were considered approachable, given inmates knew they wanted to help others. Indeed, prisoners approached Aaron, who was responsible for assisting new inmates, with diverse problems, including those related to sexuality. As a Listener, Colin asked staff to promote that he had particular experience of, and therefore expertise in, sexuality and HIV related problems. However, he was unimpressed with how staff exploited his position. A SO asked him to advise a gay man to be less 'open' on visits, after being targeted with homophobic slurs and somebody defecating in his kettle for kissing his partner. Eric explained that since equality and diversity positions are a privilege, prisoners

‘couldn’t challenge the system too much’.

Both staff and prisoners can determine the quality of peer support. When Nicholas told Listeners he was gay, they advised him to hide his sexuality to prevent homophobic bullying, leaving him very nervous. At the women’s prison, there was no equality representative scheme (which prisoners criticized), however safer custody orderlies had equality and diversity responsibilities. They assessed new prisoners’ equality and diversity needs, and explained they could approach safer custody staff if they experienced discrimination. Emily found their screening inadequate – the prisoner did not cover all of the listed questions, or provide comprehensive information on available support. She felt the prisoner was uninformed on diversity issues, commenting, she ‘looked like someone who shouldn’t be doing that job’. The prisoners conducting the interviews had received no training.

Christine agreed that some orderlies lacked the necessary empathy for prisoners to feel able to open up. Ironically, Brian suggested that other prisoners saw Christine as a bully. It is therefore questionable why she was allowed to work there. Abby suggested that equality representatives should be prisoners who other inmates got on with, and some prisoners said they would not request support from safer custody orderlies since they were bullies. Previous research documents the risk of peer supporters using their position ‘to bully, exploit or abuse potentially vulnerable prisoners’ (HMIP, 2016.:5). Overall, peer supporters had a good reputation for maintaining confidentiality. However, some prisoners lost faith in

peer support schemes having heard representatives sharing prisoners' problems. Laura said she would prefer speaking to staff about personal problems, believing that peer supporters would gossip.

William explained that institutional commitment shaped the quality of peer support schemes – he considered some establishments as having a 'tick-box' approach, where equality representatives existed only on paper, for auditing purposes. Casey had no training as a diversity representative, and simply put prisoners who approached her with problems in touch with the equalities officer. Barry likewise lacked training, and considered himself unable to provide 'proper help', though did feel helpful in allowing prisoners to 'offload'. At a Category C sex offender establishment, LGBT representatives, who interviewed for their positions, were trained on specific topics including the Equality Act and transgender awareness. They also had training in peer mentoring and stress and conflict management. LGBT reps there helped staff review equality and diversity policies, impact assessments and statistics.

Beyond formal peer support schemes, LGBT prisoners, of course, can support each other informally, which they often do. Kevin and his bisexual cell-mate established a 'gay friendly cell' and other prisoners supported each other to come out to loved ones, and report victimization.

Equality groups

Some establishments have LGBT support groups, while others do not (Dunn, 2013).

The largest and most successful groups occur in Category C sex offender prisons. As relatively calm environments, housing long-term inmates for significant periods of time, these prisons provide favourable conditions for the establishment and longevity of LGBT groups - the oldest group I encountered was established in 2001. LGBT groups are often run in collaboration with HIV/LGBT charities, which provide advice and information to inmates, and sometimes one-to-one support. Craig's charity informed LGBT prisoners of their rights, and supported staff to meet them.

Support groups are usually held monthly, and enable LGBT prisoners to meet and socialize. They sometimes organize events, including talks by guest speakers and film screenings. One establishment held particularly large-scale events, facilitating visits from LGBT celebrities, and a comedy performance on sexual health. The groups often have themed discussions - Stanley's establishment had recently discussed coming-out experiences, and tried to match prisoners to facts about themselves; an exercise in reserving judgment. Stanley's favorite aspect of the group was the quiz, run by a different prisoner each time, and offering prizes.

Some groups distribute newsletters – the one at Gerry's establishment included groups members' coming out stories, book and film reviews, poems and reproduced newspaper articles on LGBT issues. Stanley sent a copy of his prison's magazine:



Welcome to the eighth edition of the Inside Out newsletter.
Inside this issue:

Page 3	Transgender survey
Page 4 - 5	Inside Out - Exclusives
Page 6 - 9	Other News (General)
Page 10 - 11	Religious News Events
Page 12 - 13	Headline LGBT Politics
Page 14	Music Industry News
Page 15	Puzzlerz Page
Page 16	Help And Support Information

This impressive publication contained a range of interesting articles –from a YouGov poll regarding the prison allocation of female transgender offenders, to homophobia in football. It provided contact details of LGBT support organisations and a list of the establishment’s ‘LGBT Supportive Prison Officers’.

Prisoners spoke very highly of LGBT groups. Several prisoners described having been lonely in previous establishments, but finding a community after joining prisons with an LGBT support group, where they felt safe to be themselves without fear of discrimination, and grew in confidence and self-esteem. Sam felt ‘relieved and relaxed’ after his initial group meeting, where he discussed problems telling friends and family about his sexuality. Now at a local prison, he was helping staff replicate this group, with assistance from the SO who established it. This officer regularly visited establishments, encouraging them to create groups similar to the one he ran. However, as suggested above, other types of prisons have less favorable

conditions for LGBT groups. Sometimes prisoners take the initiative to establish groups. Colin wrote to the officer designated for supporting gay prisoners suggesting they established a group, which they did.

LGBT groups often helped prisoners understand their identities. Justin realised they were pansexual following a group discussion on different sexualities, and found a talk by a transgender speaker influential in understanding their own gender. The LGBT group at Tom's establishment was explicitly intended to support prisoners questioning their identity. Tom had recognized from an early age they were both male and female, but had previously identified as a gay man, believing that being transgender required permanent transition. Through their LGBT group, Tom encountered non-binary and fluid genders, and began identifying as bigender. Tom found the group's support in helping them understand and accept their gender 'extremely important'. While groups can help prisoners understand their gender and sexuality, the information they provide appears variable in quality. A pamphlet created for a successful LGBT group's 5th year anniversary incorrectly defined gender fluid people as those 'who can pass as either gender but still identify as their birth gender'.

Some groups only allow LGBT members, whereas others include straight, cisgender allies. As his group's coordinator, Gerry had recently extended membership to such prisoners 'subject to an appropriate motivation' like having LGBT family. LGBT prisoners did not report problems with this. Another prison's LGBT support group regularly invited prisoner representatives from different

minoritised communities to try and increase their understanding and acceptance of LGBT prisoners. Eric acknowledged this practice carried risks, suggesting that Muslim prisoners might target inmates they had identified as LGBT. Indeed, Craig explained that on one occasion, a group of extremely homophobic travellers attended with the explicit intention of identifying people to assault. Eric explained that staff reiterated the instruction, 'what is said in this room, stays in this room'.

Whether LGBT groups invite other prisoners to educate them, there is a clear need for LGBT-specific groups. At a generic equalities forum, where prisoners discussed and reported equality-related issues, Owen felt unable to promote LGBT prisoners' concerns since discussions were 'dominated' by Muslim prisoners, who had what he considered a homophobic agenda, including efforts to prohibit nudity in communal showers. Beyond conflicts between LGBT prisoners and other marginalized communities, different subsections of the LGBT community can feel underrepresented. One prisoner complained that his prison's LGBT group discussions focused almost exclusively on issues facing transgender prisoners.

As explained in Chapter 3, I had been informed of a support group at the men's establishment, but by the time of my arrival the two gay prisoners comprising the group had left the prison. The minutes from the initial meeting had sounded positive. Both prisoners had approached Bethan regarding homophobia and wanting to educate their peers on LGBT issues, and several action points were agreed – advertising the support group while maintaining confidentiality, exploring implementing an LGBT representative, making contact with another establishment

who had particularly good sexual health provisions, and contacting external LGBT groups to discuss involvement in the support group, and delivering presentations to the wider prisoner community. The now defunct group was unadvertised, meaning that LGBT prisoners were unaware this potential support existed. Dunn (2013) reported insufficient publicizing of LGBT groups, for example relying on word of mouth. As a local prison, where inmates stayed for relatively short periods, even with good advertising it might be difficult to establish a long-standing group. When the prison was a YOI there was a longer-lasting provision. A youth worker offered one-to-one support, and held group sessions.

As noted in Chapter 3, the women's prison's governor had informed me they had an 'LGBT support group'. In practice, it differed greatly to the peer-support groups described above – the prison held a forum every other month, intended as a means for prisoners to report issues regarding gender and sexuality. It was one of several groups dedicated to protected characteristics, merging 'sexual orientation' and 'gender reassignment'. The group appeared to be run more to satisfy institutional requirements than out of an active commitment to LGBT rights. Brian explained that they ensured the group occurred regularly because otherwise the prison would fail its audit. The same issue dominated each session – couples being separated. Christine was responsible for inviting prisoners. She invited approximately 15 prisoners, and tried to include different inmates each time to ensure a range of perspectives. Prisoners were invited regardless of their gender or sexuality, however some prisoners considered being invited as communicating that staff presumed they were gay.

Beyond those prisoners explicitly invited, Christine claimed ‘everybody’s welcome as long as they’ve got a valid point’, however the forum was only advertised to specific inmates via appointment slips, meaning others were unaware it was occurring. Several prisoners, including Emma, were highly critical of prisoners being ‘randomly’ invited. She explained that prisoners were almost invariably unaware of the forum’s purpose, and uninterested in the issues, only attending to ‘get a couple of biscuits on a Friday afternoon’. She advocated openly advertising the forum, to attract prisoners with a genuine interest in the topics. Prisoners’ views on the forum varied. Grace considered them a good means of raising problems, but most prisoners agreed they rarely produced change.

Several years before my research, the prison had held an LGBT support group, run by an external charity. Inmates also recalled similar groups at other establishments - Abby was a sexuality representative, helping run and organise peer-support groups. There was a clear demand for similar provisions at the women’s prison. Some inmates, like Imogen, recognized the existing forum as ‘just a jail thing’, and so were uninterested in attending, since it did not provide the opportunity to discuss personal problems and access individual support. Prisoners explained that an LGBT *support* group would provide a much-needed space for prisoners to be themselves, and offer peer-support. Ali explained this was important, since prisoners can struggle with understanding and accepting their sexuality, and Emma believed it would benefit prisoners entering same-sex relationships for the first time in prison. Prisoners explained there was currently no opportunity for serious discussions regarding gender and sexuality.

Several inmates at the women's prison called for LGBT-specific counseling alongside peer support groups to address prisoners' un-met needs regarding questioning their gender and sexuality. Linda was receiving training to facilitate a sexual diversity course, which might help address this gap in provisions. However, prisoners also wanted support from professional LGBT counselors. Current mental health practitioners might be ill-equipped to deal with LGBT-related issues. When Imogen told his psychiatrist about the nail varnish incident, described above, he did not engage with Imogen's gender, which he found disappointing, explaining, 'I wanted to talk about the way I was feeling...it's a big part of my problems'. Imogen felt like a 'misfit' and 'freak'. He had used drugs since age 11 to cope with his gender dysphoria, which was complicated by his schizophrenia and religious upbringing. He explained, 'half of me thinks it's the devil and a demon and the other half of me thinks I'm just transgender'.

Craig provided one-to-one support in men's prisons, helping inmates with identity-related problems, including straight prisoners experiencing shame and confusion after sleeping with men. He used the term 'heteroflexible' to help them understand the apparent disjuncture between their identity and behaviour, explaining, 'you're heterosexual really, but you're a bit flexible because of your situation... We all get horny, sex isn't always about loving somebody, it's a physical function'. There is a clear need for one-to-one work in prisons by LGBT specialist counsellors.

Visible Institutional Support for LGBT Rights

Pride events

While at the women's prison there was no LGBT peer-support group or counseling, there was a large annual Pride event, which I attended. The atmosphere was care-free, inmates had decorated the prison, and there was loud music and karaoke. Prisoners danced to the music, relaxed in groups, had barbecue picnics and threw wet sponges at governors in the stocks – a particularly carnival-esque reversal of power dynamics. One prisoner described the event as 'a day of getting on and being happy'. Laura explained that it was the largest celebration of the year, commenting, 'They don't do anything like that for Christmas!'

Some prisoners took drugs – a custodial manager described some inmates as 'off their heads', and Brian agreed, though he did not appear to mind, commenting, 'it's been a day to remember, it's been good'. Prisoners enjoyed the novelty of Pride, a welcome break from normal prison life. Facilitating an enjoyable day was beneficial in itself. Prisoners looked forward to Pride, and an administrative worker in safer custody, Sophie, explained that instances of self-harm and violence always fell in its aftermath.

I saw pictures of the previous year's events, where inmates wore fancy dress – dressing in the colours of the rainbow flag. Ali and her friends had been allocated orange, and planned on being Umpa Lumpas, but ended up being the 118 Running Men - characters from an advert that do not wear orange, and are unrelated to LGBT issues. The Pride event I observed did have some LGBT content. A transgender

celebrity attended, giving a speech about transitioning. Brian had invited her as an LGBT role-model, but predominantly because 'the women love a celebrity'. Prisoners like Emma were excited that staff usually managed to 'get someone famous in'. There was a range of stalls, some advertising general prison services like DARS and education. The stalls were located away from the food, activities and music, and so few prisoners approached them. The women's health stall therefore tried to engage prisoners, covering a healthcare assistant, who was already wearing fancy dress, in leaflets about safe sex, and sending him into the prison grounds. One member of staff commented, 'if they're not coming to us, we'll send him out there'. Despite this effort to disseminate information, few prisoners appeared to engage with staff, instead taking the opportunity to relax with friends.

There were two stalls from external LGBT charities. One provided leaflets, and enabled prisoners to request information. They had spoken to a handful of prisoners, including one woman seeking help for her son, who had recently come out and lacked family support. The other stall also had activities - prisoners could make loom bands and participate in cake-decorating and colouring competitions. These activities were intended to facilitate prisoners engaging in conversations regarding gender and sexuality. The charity workers could have informal discussions with prisoners, and refer them to organisations for more specialist advice or on-going support if necessary.

A few prisoners, including Emma, suggested there should be more focus on promoting support for LGBT people in and outside prison. However, a lack of overtly LGBT-oriented provisions might have been a conscious choice. Brian explained, 'it's not

gay pride, it's pride'. Some inmates, including Grace, a bisexual prisoner, praised the lack of explicit LGBT focus:

They didn't just mention it to the people who are gay or lesbian or transgender, it's for everyone. They changed the name from 'gay pride' to 'pride on the inside' ...Everyone can feel they're able to participate

Most prisoners still regarded Pride as having an LGBT focus. Linda considered it a means of fostering inclusion and educating prisoners on LGBT issues, and Trish saw Pride as communicating the acceptance and celebration of LGBT people. A significant number of prisoners considered this message hypocritical and tokenistic. Billie explained that commitment to equality and diversity was 'either all or nothing', and suggested that current provisions were inconsistent and contradictory. Ali considered the prison solely celebrating Pride as an insufficient means of supporting LGBT prisoners:

If you're gonna do summat like that, then why not have groups?
Don't just do it once a year.

Tay took particular issue with homophobic officers celebrating Pride:

All the officers walking around in pink shirts - half of them can't even stand lesbians...Fucking hypocrites.

Several prisoners suggested that Pride was an attempt to *appear* LGBT friendly.

Olivia suggested that staff ran Pride so the establishment would 'look the part', and

Abby noted it was 'nice for the cameras'. Likewise, Ali commented:

They can't be all for Gay Pride and get put in the paper for raising money when really they couldn't give two fucks.

While LGBT inmates considered Pride a means of generating positive publicity, staff

wanted to conceal the event. Brian had instructed the transgender celebrity not to promote it, fearing negative media stories. However, pictures of past events were on display in the establishment, which prisoners might consider an effort to impress visitors and inspectors.

The main reason that prisoners saw Pride as disingenuous was the establishment's approach to same-sex relationships. Olivia considered it contradictory that staff 'don't allow relationships but promote gay pride'. Abby deemed the Pride celebrations a 'mockery', questioning how the prison 'dare' run the event, since 'when that day's over there's still girls getting shipped out cos they're in relationships'. One inmate questioned:

What's the point in them celebrating gay pride, when they're not really for it? They're against it, cos if you're in a relationship and you're in a room, they split you up²⁸.

The first Pride event at the women's prison was established through the then-active LGBT support group. The charity who ran this group, held one of the stalls at the event I attended. She explained that the group had learned about the history of Pride, and were excited to run their own. In part, she explained the event was stimulated by discontent regarding what LGBT prisoners considered the homophobic policing of affection. In other words, the Pride event might have been an attempt by staff to affirm their support of LGBT *identities* in the context of policing same-sex *behaviors*. Ironical, given that some prisoners now considered the latter as undermining the former. The charity representative explained the original event had

²⁸ In Chapter 7 I discuss prisoners' conflation of relationships with sexual identities.

an 'LGBT flavor', but was also inspired by feminism, since during planning meetings prisoners had discussed the significance of being women and experiences of sexism and abuse.

The charity worker considered the first Pride inclusive and successful. A bin cart was decorated to serve as a float, and there was a talent show and poetry competition. However Brian took a different view:

We had a little crappy golf buggy driving around with a poster on...and a woman at the front, a 'lesbian activist' she called herself, just shouting 'we're out, we're proud, we're gay', and that was it.

The more political, feminist aspect of the original Pride had clearly been lost. The event I attended was organised predominantly by straight, cisgender staff, rather than a group of LGBT prisoners led by an LGBT charity worker.

Considerable resources were expended on the event I attended. Brian was keen to emphasise that there was no budget, and it was run with the support of volunteers and outside agencies. He noted that a nearby men's prison had provided a truck and scaffolding, and another establishment had sent LGBT-themed artwork produced by inmates there. However, he acknowledged that some staff were paid overtime to work, meaning the event was costing the prison.

Debbie, the new head of safer prisons and custody, had reinvigorated Pride. The previous year, funding and staffing issues were cited to explain a slightly scaled-back event, but given her senior status, Debbie was able to implement a much larger

event in spite of the same barriers. Debbie had previously run Pride events at the men's establishment. They involved sports competitions, films, a float decorated by the prisoners, and a DJ. Debbie explained that making the event fun was necessary for ensuring participation amongst young offenders. Leading up to the day itself, English students had written LGBT-themed poetry, and the drama class had produced a play about a gay boy being bullied. The idea of a float touring the prison had come from local members of 'Gays and Lesbians in the Prison Service' (GALIPS) organising prison officers' participation in the local community's annual Pride Parade, which Debbie explained was as a means of 'showing the service off to be an employer that supports equalities'. Originally organized by GALIPS, the float quality had deteriorated due to cost-cutting, so Debbie took it upon herself to raise money to hire a vehicle and make matching t-shirts. She then involved prisoners in decorating the float, and arranged for it to tour the establishment during their own Pride event.

After Debbie left, prisoners still made decorations for a float, but it only appeared in the community's Pride parade, not touring the prison itself. Becca, who helped organise it, regretted only having held external events for staff rather than activities for prisoners. She described Debbie as 'a splash of colour in the dreary grey world of management' – motivated and ambitious, and the 'driving force' behind LGBT events. Her infectious enthusiasm, and governor-grade status, enabled her to organise an ambitious event. After she left, SOs in safer custody tried organise a similar event, but could not overcome the security and resource barriers to hosting it without senior managements' buy-in.

Staff clearly enjoyed their annual involvement in the local Pride, Bethan explaining she felt 'famous' on the float. Prison officers' involvement in community Pride events can foster useful connections with LGBT community groups - through engaging with officers at community events Craig had established HIV initiatives in prisons. However, prioritising a float in a community LGBT parade, staffed by predominantly straight, cisgender officers, over activities for prisoners does give off the rather unfortunate impression that staff prioritised their own enjoyment and promoting an LGBT-friendly public image.

The large-scale event that had previously occurred in the men's prison also raises questions about the symbolism of Pride. In the community Pride began as an LGBT protest against persecution, and while events are now more celebratory, often commercialised, and regularly attended by straight, cisgender people seeking a fun time, they still enable the LGBT community to come together and be visible en masse, and can be liberating (Johnston, 2005). At the men's prison, there was only ever less than a handful of openly LGBT prisoners, and straight and cisgender inmates and staff would have dominated the event.

The men's and women's prison's large-scale Pride events were not reflected in similar events for other marginalized groups. Brian justified Pride being a larger event with reference to prisoners' commitment to celebrating it:

The women asked us to do it...Pride's an event because everyone wants to get involved... To them it's just a big party day.

Barry contrasted Pride events at a former establishment, suggesting they paled in comparison to other celebrations, like Black History Month and Ramadan, where prisoners ate nice food. His establishment celebrated Pride through inmates making a banner in education to be put on a float intended solely for external consumption. He was not enthused by this, preferring special food that inmates could, literally, consume themselves. Pride and LGBT History Month are only two of several dozen equality and diversity events that prisons could celebrate each year. Not all establishments celebrate these LGBT events, in the same way that others do not celebrate Age Awareness Week or World Mental Health Day.

Prisons celebrate LGBT calendar events in different ways. One sex offender prison celebrated their LGBT group's 5-year anniversary with a daylong event. Games and raffles raised money for the charity that ran the LGBT group, who sent representatives, alongside GALIPS representatives and staff from nearby establishments. The charity distributed information on HIV, safe sex and available support. The prison's governor unveiled a new logo for the group, and there was a display of personalized photos and messages from high-profile LGBT people and allies, with announcements of upcoming visits from other celebrities. The same establishment held a World AIDS Day, which Lee said would feature a band, rugby match, and guest speakers. Not all prisons ran whole-day events requiring the prison's usual regime to be cancelled. Another sex offender prison held smaller-scale events for National Coming Out Week, International Day against Homophobia and LGBT History Month. The prison's active LGBT support group organized the activities themselves. For LGBT history month they ran two film screenings, and a session

where LGBT prisoners recounted their coming out stories and experiences in previous establishments. The charity football match they had planned was cancelled due to staff shortages. These events were open to all prisoners, and, as Gerry explained, intended to 'educate others and improve understanding and acceptance'. They also clearly benefited LGBT inmates - attending made Jason, a very shy gay prisoner feel much better in himself.

Displays

Beyond events, establishments communicated support for LGBT prisoners through poster displays. At the men's prison, an officer noted there were always equality and diversity posters on the wings, in the governor's corridor and staffroom. However, the discipline officer suggested that diversity events were not widely advertised, estimating that only a fifth of staff and inmates would be aware of any ongoing celebration. My fieldwork coincided with LGBT history month, and there was a display in the governor's corridor, but not in areas visible to prisoners or most frontline staff. Inmates and staff alike were unaware that it was LGBT history month. Becca was scathing of efforts to mark this occasion with 'a few posters on a board outside the governor's office':

Prisoners can't see that... I think it's terrible...How many of [the staff] do you think's even read that? It's just all for HMIP.

Joey agreed that poster displays, even in areas that prisoners could see them, were a 'box-ticking exercise'. He considered posters inconsequential, explaining 'It doesn't change - people still get in debt, people will still be racist'. He suggested that posters

would be more effective if they were colourful and involved ‘comedy’ – he recalled his gay friend, discussed in Chapter 4, gaining acceptance through exaggeration and blunt humour, and suggested a similar approach should be adopted. On reception at Oliver’s establishment a poster stated ‘homophobes shouldn’t be left alone with children’. He considered this particularly effective since prisoners are emotive about their children and it was ‘the only huge poster when you walk in’ – he noted ‘a tiny one next to it saying, “if you’re at risk of harming yourself, tell somebody”’. Beyond potentially increasing acceptance amongst straight, cisgender prisoners, newly arrived LGBT inmates reported feeling more comfortable after noticing LGBT posters.

When a youth worker ran an LGBT group at the men’s establishment, as noted above, non-heterosexual young offenders created slogans, which were turned into high-quality posters and put up throughout the establishment. Debbie explained they were powerful because of being clearly designed by a young person. I saw two in the visits centre, saying ‘Gays have rights too’ and ‘Don’t judge gay people by their cover’. At Dennis’s establishment, equality champions pressured the prison to display LGBT posters, which they eventually did. Some LGBT support groups advertised themselves via posters – Gerry’s group advertised itself, its events, and external LGBT organisations via eighteen noticeboards. In some prisons, inmates could display LGBT flags in their cells, whereas at others they were not allowed - Shane suggested that staff disallowed his flag due to holding prejudiced attitudes.

Library Resources

Some prisons had good LGBT cultural provisions. Craig's charity helped a prison library create an LGBT section, and Sean borrowed gay, BDSM-themed erotica from his prison's library, attracting dirty looks' from other inmates, which he found amusing. Some prisoners described good access to LGBT magazines, though some felt the need to be more discrete than Sean, collecting magazines in envelopes. As noted above, some LGBT groups produce their own magazines.

At the women's prison, Emma regularly borrowed LGBT-themed books, recently reading *The FingerSmith*, *Tipping the Velvet* and *Orange is the New Black*. The library did not stock LGBT magazines, and Emma found it difficult ordering new books. She wanted more LGBT-themed provisions, and a dedicated LGBT section. Casey was disappointed at the lack of LGBT DVDs, wanting to learn more about the LGBT community, having spent a decade in prison. Tracy wanted to learn about transgender issues to support her friend who had come out via my research. With no relevant resources in the library, I donated two books.

Corroborating Dunn (2013), several non-heterosexual men complained about double standards accessing magazines. At Shane's prison gay lifestyle magazines were considered 'top shelf material', but he noted that straight inmates could buy equivalents. Similarly, several officers requested he remove pictures of male celebrities in underwear, calling them inappropriate, but condoning other prisoners displaying 'scantily clad women'.

As we have seen, gender and sexuality related provisions vary between establishments. LGBT inmates value the existence of peer support schemes. Visibly advertised LGBT representatives can make prisoners feel safe to come out, perpetuating the cycle of visibility described earlier. Such schemes can suffer from a lack of training, exploitative prisoners, and inappropriate direction from staff. Those equality groups that provide socialising opportunities and support can foster confidence-building communities where inmates can explore their LGBT identities. These groups can be hard to establish, particularly in local prisons, and establishments must grapple with questions regarding their parameters – whether they should be openly advertised, and inclusive of all inmates irrespective of gender and sexuality.

Celebrations of LGBT calendar events like Pride provide an enjoyable break from prison life and can help connect inmates with support services. Events differ in scale, the extent to which LGBT prisoners have input, and how much they focus on LGBT issues. The events I have documented in prisons connect to ongoing debates regarding the changing nature of Pride events in the community, including (particularly relevant) whether police and prison officers should march in community parades (Mackley-Crump, 2018). If Pride events in prisons are organized by mainly heterosexual, cisgender staff, and predominantly attended by non-LGBT people, including those who are queerphobic, are they really LGBT Pride events at all? Prisoners themselves questioned the meaning of Pride events in the context of a lack of wider LGBT-related provisions, and policies on relationships. Likewise, prisoners and staff questioned the motivation for LGBT poster displays. Cultural

provisions are variable; LGBT inmates appreciate access to resources that help them feel connected to the outside community, but also note the prevalence of heteronormative double standards.

Staff

Specialist Equality and Diversity Officers

In recent years, cuts have led to a reduction in the numbers of dedicated equality and diversity staff (Dunn, 2013). Where they do exist, their quality can vary. Some prisoners spoke highly of their prisons' equality officers. One officer visited Peter on his second day in custody, offering reassurance and details of available support. Graham described his establishment's equalities officer, who oversaw the LGBT group, as 'brilliant'. However, Oliver explained it was only 'by chance' the equality officer at his prison really cared about minoritised groups.

At the men's prison, the equality and diversity officer was uninformed about LGBT issues, and lacked motivation to learn. She reported holding the role for 'a few' months (another officer estimated it had been five or six) and openly admitted she had done no equalities work to date, blaming a lack of training. She understood that she was responsible for dealing with DIRFs, but had never done one, unsure how. Previous research documents Equalities Officers not receiving sufficient training to carry out their jobs (Edgar & Tsintsadze, 2017, PPO, 2018). Presumably another member of staff was dealing with any DIRFs. She also knew that officers could place prisoners on report for discrimination, but was unsure of any other practices, or the prison's wider equality and diversity strategy.

She appeared to lack commitment to the position, which she had been allocated, rather than applied for. She explained that her predecessor was often frustrated at being unable to make time for equalities work, which did not concern her. Due to staff cuts, equalities officers often have less time and fewer resources to complete their jobs (PPO, 2018). This officer was meant to dedicate a few hours each day to equalities work, but was needed to make up numbers on the wing:

Because I don't know what I'm supposed to do anyway I'm not actually worrying about it...I do see my original job as being equally important. Being on the units is important to me.

She was on restricted duties in safer custody during my fieldwork, and spent considerable time seemingly idling about, doing no work at all. Previous research has noted diversity officers' ignorance of sexuality (Dunn, 2013) and unfortunately this officer did not appear adequately informed regarding any identities.

At the women's prison, Brian applied to be an equality officer, having had a long-standing interest in equalities, and was enthusiastic about his work, which was full-time and ring-fenced. However, he lacked awareness of transgender issues, consistently using incorrect terminology, as noted above, and believing that transgender women with penises were not allowed to be housed in women's prisons. The safer custody department, where Brian worked, was responsible for all aspects of equality and diversity. However, prisoners were ill-informed about their work, Paula incorrectly believing they only supported foreign national prisoners.

Each senior manager at the women's prison was appointed a protected characteristic - Paige was allocated the responsibility of LGBT lead without consultation. She had received no training or brief for the role, explaining that initially 'there wasn't even a diary put out' listing LGBT calendar events. We had first met during LGBT History month, when she was unaware of this annual observance. She had received no guidance on how much time to dedicate to equalities work, but spent approximately one day a month. She held forums every other month, and had helped arrange the Pride event, alongside a music performance by a transgender woman, who also hosted a question and answer session 'on being transgendered [sic] and gay'.

Prisoners were largely unaware of who equalities staff were. Casey did not know who to approach in the event of homophobia, explaining that at a previous prison the equalities officer was widely-publicised. I saw a poster in the safer custody department, however it was out of date, advertising a now-departed member of staff. Ali knew that a particular governor was responsible for LGBT inmates, but did not know who they were or what they did. Despite attending an LGBT forum, Linda remained unaware that the prison had an LGBT lead. Some prisoners did know Paige was the LGBT officer, and described her as understanding, and genuinely concerned about LGBT rights. In contrast, Emma criticized the new protected characteristic lead for gender, who ran a forum I observed:

She could have read up on a couple of things...made herself aware of what was happening.

Similarly, Lottie suggested the governor who ran the age forum 'couldn't care less'

about it'. Other prisoners corroborated that while some protected characteristic leads were proactive, others fulfilled the minimum requirements of their positions reluctantly. I met equality staff in other establishments who were clearly personally committed to improving life for LGBT inmates, and who went above and beyond their duties to support them.

Disparities in Staff Commitment

Beyond equality and diversity officers, some other staff were particularly dedicated to LGBT issues. Some prisoners, including Jasmin, noted that particular officers did 'far more than required' to support them. As seen above, Oliver tried to secure single cells for all LGBT prisoners, and he suggested that his presence, along with a former gay manager, meant his establishment's wider mental health team were particularly attuned to LGBT issues. Oliver's sexuality motivated his support for LGBT prisoners, and enhanced his ability to secure provisions for them. He re-established a lapsed LGBT group, knowing that he would attend one if he were in prison. He used his 'gay card', to trump straight, cisgender staff's opinions, explaining, 'you probably don't understand the complexity of this as much as I do, or how that would feel'. Oliver took disclosures of homophobia particularly seriously in cell-share risk assessments. He recognised that his active involvement in the LGBT community made him more sensitized to LGBT issues, and recognized that if, for example, he were not white he might consider racism on a par with queerphobia.

Some staff are not personally invested in LGBT equality. Becca considered the men's prison senior management team, which was all-male, to be subconsciously biased towards LGBT people, and uncomfortable engaging with LGBT issues. She believed that advancing LGBT equality required hiring senior staff who were openly LGBT, women, and/or personally committed to LGBT issues. Joel was critical of people who were 'very gay rights' advocating a middle ground between them and gay bashers. Iris noted that some officers were less invested in enabling prisoners to attend LGBT support groups, and proposed that staff who were more discipline than care-oriented were uninterested in interacting with any prisoners, 'let alone' LGBT inmates.

Positive relationships with staff can facilitate LGBT prisoners seeking support, while negative relationships can hinder this. Olivia only discussed problems with officers she had good relationships with, and Laura considered some officers supportive, but others 'horrible for the sake of it'. Some prisoners distrusted and disliked all officers. Paula kept her distance, explaining, 'if they take a disliking to you, you're fucked'. Other prisoners agreed they would not speak to any 'screws' regarding personal problems, believing officers saw them as inferior. Prisoners often complained of favoritism, for example Trent suggested that staff took equality-related complaints from 'big lads' more seriously because they were intimidating.

Several participants explained that while some staff actively tried to support inmates, others only wanted to do the bare minimum required of them. The men's prison head of equalities identified three types of staff – those who 'bend over

backwards' to help, those who obstruct equalities provisions, and those who are 'not bothered either way'.

Some Staff are Queerphobic

While some staff are uncommitted to actively supporting LGBT prisoners' rights, or uninterested in helping prisoners more generally, others are queerphobic. At the women's prison, several prisoners recounted incidents of staff homophobia. One officer had always led Billie 'a dog's life', and one day called her a 'dirty dyke'. It transpired that his wife had left him 'for a butch bird', and so Billie believed he had taken this out on her. In the women's prison, queerphobia from staff was usually more tacit. Billie sensed that other male officers were particularly hostile to her and other masculine inmates due to being intimidated by them. Paula suggested that a SO treated her friend unfairly because of wrongly presuming she was gay:

She went 'are you homophobic or something?' He went, 'that's none of your fucking business', and you could tell he was.

Another prisoner believed an officer was homophobic because he had a reputation for breaking-up relationships, and staring at couples. She commented, 'he just doesn't like girls with girls, you can tell'. Prisoners often noted they could identify homophobic staff even when they did not make explicitly discriminatory comments. Brian identified a few longer-serving colleagues as homophobic through their comments on newspaper articles:

'The gays have done this, the gays have done that...That bloody pride [in the community]...What a waste of money'. You just listen and pick things up.

He also noted that some officers would not participate in the prison's Pride celebrations. He explained that officers who were actively involved were read as gay by other staff, and so more homophobic officers refused to wear pink shirts to avoid homosexual suspicion.

At the men's prison, Becca explained that some male staff clearly felt uncomfortable with LGBT people, but explained, 'no-one's ever going to go, "I'm homophobic"'. Letter correspondents reported subtle discrimination. Kyle noted that staff treat prisoners differently, and distance themselves upon discovering they are LGBT, and Shane noted 'dirty looks' from officers. Several inmates in men's prisons reported staff condoning, or even joining in, with homophobic 'banter'.

At the women's prison, Emma described a male officer having sexual 'banter' with prisoners. Upon overhearing an inmate discuss her girlfriend, he commented, 'when you came in you told me you were on solids only'. She explained that he only made such jokes to inmates he knew would find it funny. Iris recalled staff making 'gay jokes', for example teasing cleaners that they were having sex with each other. Iris explained that these officers joked about all topics, and would be 'horrified' if they were considered homophobic. Humour can construct and affirm hegemonic, heterosexual masculinities (Arnot, 2003) and have 'disciplining effects' through communicating gender and sexuality norms (Kehily & Nayak, 1997:84) regardless of intention. Some prisoners found such jokes offensive - Annabelle took issue with a male officer's 'dirty talk', such as, 'when you're having sex with your nan and the sweat drops off her back'. Lottie was deeply offended when an officer asked her and

another inmate, 'which one's knob and which one's head?' and when staff joked 'see you next time' to prisoners being released. I overheard sexual jokes between male and female officers at the men's prison – as noted in Chapter 2, controversial humour is central to officer culture (Arnold, 2016).

Beyond jokes, some LGBT prisoners, like Stanley, are subjected to straightforwardly discriminatory comments:

It was always done at Bang up and when only I could hear... 'Batty Boy'. They'd always open me last, lock me up first, leave my post til last, lose my apps.

Staff made 'snide comments' regarding Tony's relationship with another inmate, and officers told Sam that being bisexual was 'greedy'. Jasmin noted that when staff made inappropriate comments about her gender, these went unchallenged by other officers, corroborating previous research (see Bashford et al., 2017). Several participants suggested that transphobia amongst staff was more prevalent than homophobia. Sienna described an officer saying, 'this is a male prison, get used to being called "Mr"'. Again, transphobia was sometimes perceived but not blatant. While most staff were reasonable with Becky, she believed they were only paying 'lip service to political correctness'. She suggested that staff only saw transgender women as women when they had physically transitioned, explaining, "people judge us on what they see and hear... If it looks like a duck.... it is a duck."

Stanley suggested a cultural basis for his discrimination. 'Batty Boy' is a homophobic term in Jamaican Patois (Smith, Roofe, Ehiri, Campbell-Forrester, Jolly

& Jolly:2003). Participants suggested that queerphobic officers tended to be older and longer-serving, frequently using terms like 'old-fashioned' and 'old-school'. Several participants, like Owen, suggested that officers behaved in problematic ways due to lacking knowledge, often related to their demographics and training, rather than due to 'hostility or malice'. Oliver noted officers conflating homosexuality and HIV, and suggested their attitudes reflected those of 'tiny white towns in the middle of nowhere in the 1980s'. Several participants suggested that officers' insufficient training on gender and sexuality made them more queerphobic than other staff like probation officers and nurses. Justin only felt able to tell programmes and health care staff about their gender dysphoria, and Craig recalled a SO's disclosure that prison officer positions attracted 'the wrong kind of people':

They're ex-army, they're full of machismo, they're sexist, they're racist, they're homophobic.

However, some officers are clearly advocates of LGBT rights, and non-uniform staff can also be queerphobic. LGBT prisoners had varied experiences with chaplains in particular. Tom noted that a Pentecostal chaplain was recently sacked for 'homophobic hate-sermons', and while more conservative chaplains made negative comments regarding their gender, others were very supportive and helped Tom to consider their faith, gender and sexuality as 'harmonious'. When two chaplaincy staff told Shane it was immoral to attend chapel because of his bisexuality, their colleagues were sympathetic and supportive of him. The men's prison chaplain felt unfairly pressured to accept homosexuality, which he considered against his religion. He insisted that his beliefs did not make him homophobic, defining homophobia as actively discriminating against people. He was adamant that he treated people

equally. However, merely knowing that the chaplain considered same-sex relationships immoral certainly made me feel uncomfortable. As noted in Chapter 3, Becca was concerned about the governing governor's attitudes, questioning, 'If he's got this massively Christian attitude, what does he think about gay people?' Irrespective of his actions, she considered his outlook important.

Officers' Gender and Sexuality

Prisoners often had preferences for staff with particular genders and sexualities. At the women's prison, Ali considered male officers more relaxed about same-sex relationships, and lesbian officers more fair and understanding than straight female officers. She would prefer speaking to female staff regarding sexuality-related problems. Other inmates agreed that lesbian officers treated same-sex couples more fairly, however, Ali explained they could not advocate too strongly for couples due to perceptions of bias. Perhaps this explains Emma's suggestion that lesbian officers were usually more 'hard arse' about relationships.

Charlotte believed that the prison's LGBT lead, like her, was 'closet gay', which she suggested made her suited to the job. In men's prisons, there was also a sense that a shared LGBT status was preferable for working with LGBT inmates. Lilly, a transgender woman, suggested that a member of staff being openly gay meant he could better support LGBT prisoners. Oliver suggested that him running the LGBT group, as a gay nurse, was preferable to a straight officer, and Mo felt that being

openly gay made LGBT inmates he worked with more comfortable discussing sex and sexuality.

Not all LGBT staff actively support LGBT prisoners. Indeed, not all LGBT officers are 'out', which might limit the degree to which LGBT prisoners feel they can trust them, or the degree to which LGBT staff feel able to actively support LGBT prisoners. Participants agreed that high proportions of female officers were openly gay or bisexual in both men's and women's establishments, but that openly non-heterosexual male officers were rare, particularly in men's prisons. Participants suggested they were afraid of coming out. Joey noted that, like inmates, staff also 'wear masks', and suggested that gay male officers wanted to avoid standing out. Craig explained that it was easier for staff from external organisations to be openly gay, since they don't have to work there everyday and there was no hostility between them and prisoners. Similarly, Oliver suggested that healthcare staff could more easily be openly gay, being quite 'innocent' in prisoners' eyes. Staff who might otherwise provide support for LGBT prisoners might conceal their identity for reasons of self-preservation.

At the women's prison, most inmates could not name any gay male staff, whereas others had heard gossip that Brian was gay. Brian explained that while lesbian officers were easily identifiable by their appearance, the fact that he did not wear a pink shirt and have a moustache meant he was not so often read as gay. Brian considered himself the only gay male member of staff, and it took him several years to feel comfortable in the prison's masculine environment. It also took several

years to shed his reputation as 'the gay one' amongst colleagues. He refused to answer prisoners' questions regarding his sexuality, wanting to avoid being known 'as the gay officer', and not sharing any details regarding his 'private life'.

Some LGBT staff choose to conceal their sexuality, and others are ascribed straight, cisgender identities - Oliver's wedding ring induced this assumption amongst prisoners. Oliver considered another male nurse wearing an LGBT rights badge as an important visible commitment, but did not wear one himself due to the greater risks of working with mentally unwell prisoners. An officer at the men's prison suggested that communicating sexuality in such ways was unprofessional:

I don't think the staff here are blatantly saying, 'oh by the way I'm this way inclined.'... Going around with a little coloured wristband...I think the people here are too professional to do that...What you do outside is nothing to do with everybody else... It doesn't affect them while they're in here.

This officer ascribed to conservative conventions that 'separate personal and the professional' (Lewin & Leap, 1996:21) and consider sexuality and professionalism 'polar opposites' (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009). LGBT staff might not feel able to be open about their identities, and might not be visible to LGBT prisoners.

Some straight, cisgender staff suggest that personal circumstances make them attuned to LGBT issues. A probation officer suggested that knowing black and gay people influenced her interactions with minoritised prisoners, commenting, 'It's just something that I know and that's part of me'. Similarly, a nurse explained that having a gay granddaughter meant she had no problems interacting with LGBT

prisoners, and treated them equally. During fieldwork, the two staff most actively involved in LGBT issues were straight and cisgender – the SO who ran an active LGBT support group became passionate about LGBT rights after a gay family member was seriously assaulted.

The above identifies that staff knowledge of, and commitment to, the LGBT community is highly variable. A lack of time and training can increase the likelihood of a tick-box approach to equality provisions, whereas having certain demographics, and being integrated in the LGBT community, can promote officers' commitment. Not all LGBT officers are especially supportive of gender and sexual minority prisoners - some feel unable to be 'out', and others lack a particular interest in LGBT activism. Officer humour risks crossing over into queerphobic bullying, even when staff would not consider themselves prejudiced, as other staff clearly are.

Submitting Complaints

In all establishments, prisoners can submit complaint forms and DIRFs to report mistreatment. Zach was surprised that means of reporting homophobia were even available in prisons, and Grace believed there were sufficient avenues for LGBT prisoners to complain about mistreatment, noting the existence of LGBT forums, the IMB and PPO as well as DIRFs. As explained above, in some establishments prisoners could also report queerphobic discrimination to prisoner LGBT or equality representatives, and to specific staff. Prisoners can also pursue court cases as a

result of discrimination, however, this can be very difficult – Jasmin had to represent herself given legal aid cuts, finding the process ‘mentally exhausting’.

Several participants had submitted complaints, or said they would if they experienced discrimination. Although prisoners can and sometimes do use DIRFs to complain about fellow inmates (Edgar & Tsintsadze, 2017), several participants suggested inmates only used this process to report staff, dealing with prejudice from peers in other ways, for example speaking directly to officers. However, at the women’s prison, an inmate had submitted a DIRF following another inmate insulting her with discriminatory terms regarding a range of her characteristics, including her sexuality. At the men’s prison, a doctor submitted DIRFs *on behalf of* prisoners. After a gay inmate disclosed verbal abuse from another inmate to his doctor, they submitted a DIRF – the result being the equalities officer reiterating the zero tolerance policy on discrimination, and staff monitoring the offender’s behavior. It is unclear whether the gay prisoner consented to the DIRF being submitted, and the outcome of the process on the ground.

Billie had submitted two DIRFs– once when an officer repeatedly entered her room in the early morning trying to catch her and her partner having sex (discussed in Chapter 7) and once when, as noted above, an officer called her a ‘dirty dyke’:

I reported it, because I won’t put up with nothing like that, not in prison where I’m supposed to be safe

Billie felt her complaints were taken seriously in that the diversity manager arranged to meet her immediately. However, since she could not *prove* the officer’s

homophobic slur, he received no formal sanctions, and Billie criticized the prison's tendency to just verbally reprimand discriminatory staff. She believed this officer should have been suspended, but considered her complaint as preventing future discrimination:

The only other person that was there...was the girl that I was with. They're not gonna just take mine and her word for it... So it was swept under the carpet, but I knew that that would happen, that nothing would come of it, but I still made me stand...I never had an issue with him after that...It was enough that he knew that I would push it.

Prisoners often explained that it was impossible to substantiate complaints. Even overt discrimination tends to come down to prisoners' claims against an officer's, and the threshold of proof for discrimination is often too high (Ibid.) DIRFs at the men's prison demonstrate a lack of investigation into complaints, not drawing on, for example, CCTV or witness statements. Some discrimination is subtler. When Gordon and other gay men complained about staff's accusations of grooming, which might well be rooted in heteronormativity, they were informed, 'you used the incorrect forms...it's not discrimination'. The DIRF process is unequipped to deal with subtle forms of discrimination (Ibid.). Lottie noted that it was difficult to report low-level bullying, like being ignored or 'whispered about', and that staff shortages meant officers were unfamiliar with prisoners and the dynamics between them, making it hard to establish when bullying was occurring.

Like Billie above, prisoners tended to agree that staff took fellow officers' accounts as more legitimate than prisoners', regularly referring to the DIRF process as 'bias'. Trent explained that submitting DIRFS about staff was pointless, since other

officers deal with them, and 'they're a gang'. Indeed, some officers do prioritise protecting their colleagues over impartially investigating discrimination (Ibid.). Several prisoners suggested that nothing would come of submitting a DIRF or complaint. Amber believed that complaints were put straight in the bin, and Daniel did not report bullying, believing 'nothing would get done about it'. Oliver recognised that failing to provide single cells to all prisoners reporting sexual assault meant that survivors, who were often LGBT, did not come forward for fear of being returned to their perpetrator's cell. Stanley suggested that 'latent homophobia' amongst staff meant complaints from sexual minorities were fruitless.

Some prisoners associated DIRFs with racism in particular, and interestingly, general complaint forms asked 'does your complaint have a racial aspect?' rather than referring to additional protected characteristics. Gordon, suggested that complaints regarding racism and religion were taken more seriously:

A complaint from a gay prisoner will never be taken seriously. It's always 'you're in jail, put up with it', or 'do the crime, do the time'. Muslim prisoners' complaints will always be answered correctly.

Others, like, Billie disagreed, suggesting that complaints of racism would also be 'swept under the carpet'.

According to analysis of DIRFs at the women's prison, there were sometime consequences for prisoners found to have been discriminatory. A prisoner was placed on basic after calling another inmate 'a dirty fucking lesbian', and the establishment was planning to establish diversity awareness training for offenders,

potentially addressing the root cause of queerphobia. Besides whether complaints lead to sanctions against, or reeducation of, perpetrators, is the question of support for victims. An analysis of DIRFs at the men's prison reveals LGBT inmates who are victimized not being offered support or guidance.

Some prisoners did not report bullying for fear of retaliation. Paula explained that reporting discriminatory staff 'puts shit on your head' and makes 'officers turn against you'. Katherine believed that staff revealed her transgender status to other inmates as retribution for complaints about mistreatment. Similarly, after complaining about being unable to purchase an electrolysis kit, Jasmin's gender was revealed:

They refused to answer my complaint, sent it back to the wing and staff and prisoners 'somehow' became aware that I'm transgender.

The literature documents prisoners in general fearing retaliation, and being negatively sanctioned for reporting discrimination (Ibid.). Eric's complaints regarding access to condoms, lubricant and sterilizing tablets were mishandled, and induced reprisals. He waited months for replies, and sometimes his complaints 'disappeared'. He could not escalate complaints to the PPO due to lacking a paper trail. Eric therefore complained to MPs and charities, and threatened legal action. The resulting negative attention from external organisations led to retaliation:

The governor turned around and said 'I hope this doesn't affect your visiting rights'... The next time I had a visitor they got searched, they said a sniffer dog could smell marijuana.

Eric took searching his visitor and enforcing a closed visit as a 'warning'. Other prisoners feared less malicious negative outcomes. When Dennis's partner complained about homophobic bullying, staff offered to move him to a different wing, which Dennis considered tantamount to punishment. Dennis received better treatment after being raped, when the perpetrator was moved wings. Kevin had some faith in the complaints system, supporting another inmate to report sexual exploitation. However, he felt unable to report verbal abuse from other inmates. He worried that staff would discover and put an end to his relationship, and also feared 'being known as a snitch'.

Several LGBT prisoners worried that reporting queerphobia from other inmates would result in further victimisation. Some prisoners, like Jordan, explicitly distinguished reporting bullying from 'grassing', however, complaining clearly did sometimes invoke negative repercussions. Martin considered reporting homophobia his 'biggest "mistake"':

I got labelled a 'grass' and the bullying became infinitely worse and it never stopped! I had to be moved wings for my safety, but the trouble followed ... Eventually after a year of moving prison wings the authorities there realised that things would not change and they moved me to another prison.

Some prisoners were concerned about the confidentiality of complaints. In the leaflet that Colin helped staff produce, encouraging LGBT prisoners to report discrimination, they emphasized confidentiality – explaining that complaints would only be read by a named officer, and reiterating they could 'be sealed and placed in the general postbox and will not be opened'. However, Paula had seen other

inmates remove applications from postboxes, so distrusted that complaints always remained private.

A lack of faith in the fairness of the DIRF process, the utility of complaining, and the confidentiality of the system help explain why so few DIRFs were submitted at the men's prison. However, according to equality meeting minutes, staff there also worried the process was inadequately advertised, planning to create posters to place on each wing.

Tackling Queerphobia

Beyond official complaint mechanisms, sometimes prisoners report discrimination to officers, and sometime officers observe it. Several prisoners noted that staff only verbally told off inmates making queerphobic comments, rather than recording it, or imposing sanctions. However, other prisoners described queerphobia being taken very seriously. The prisoner who bullied Ken was placed on an 'anti-bullying document', and an 'absolute zero tolerance' policy existed at Phillip's prison, which staff upheld. Lucas's prison had a similar policy, with bullies punished through the IEP system, and placed on Violence Reduction basic for at least two weeks. Beyond inter-prison differences, Curtis was confident that homophobia would be handled appropriately on his current wing, but believed staff on a previous wing would have been dismissive, having observed 'appalling levels of misogyny'. An officer at the men's prison suggested that officers now challenged and reported queerphobia much more than in the past, and so overtly prejudiced comments were waning.

Becca corroborated that prisoners understood that homophobia would not be tolerated.

While it is positive that queerphobia from inmates is more regularly challenged, the way that officers do so is important. Staff responded to transphobic slurs and rape threats against Courtney with the instruction, 'keep the noise down'. Sam noted that staff told prisoners their comments were 'causing offence to others, and that it should stop'. Describing queerphobia as 'causing offence' differs from labeling it 'offensive', and Ali suggested that certain staff considered homophobia 'an opinion'. Gordon suggested that Muslim prisoners' homophobia went unchallenged because staff recognized Islam as prohibiting homosexuality, corroborating Dunn's (2013) findings that discrimination can be excused on religious grounds.

Prisoners, like Edward, often considered staff dismissive of verbal abuse, telling him 'It's what you get when you're in prison, it's only banter'. Officers did not respond appropriately to the homophobic 'jokes' aimed at Idrees:

Some of the officers find it funny and they start laughing...They think it is not physical violence, so they don't give that much attention.

Staff were present when inmates made homophobic jokes at Bob's expense, and again, let these occur:

Nothing happened...Prison is a very testosterone filled place and 'joking' and 'teasing' is seen as the 'norm'.

On the contrary, staff at the men's prison suggested they were quicker than inmates to perceive discrimination. The equality officer explained that prisoners accepted language that officers did not, such that staff considered some prisoners as being offensive, when they were 'only messing about'. Another officer explained it could be difficult to determine whether prisoners were being insulting, or engaging in 'banter'. Debbie suggested that young offenders used 'gay' as an insult, without realizing this was homophobic. Even when such terms are not always intended as homophobic, they can still be experienced as such (Blanchard, McCormack & Peterson, 2015).

When queerphobia goes unchallenged it can escalate (Ibid.), and several prisoners suggested that if staff responses to bullying were inadequate, they would punish the perpetrator themselves. Tony noted that staff only responded to bullying when prisoners were physically fighting, or 'on the verge' of it. Staff failed to challenge homophobic comments towards Liam, and so he often got into fights, which staff responded to with excessive force:

Feeling I was in danger I would defend myself...Officers had a shrug offish approach. Almost like what do you expect? I experienced frequent restraints, excessive use of force. Then the officers would openly brag about it.

Staff who failed to challenge discrimination often indicated there was little they could do to prevent it. Martin was transferred to another wing after being bullied, but on his new wing, officers continued ignoring homophobic abuse, questioning, 'what do you suggest we do about it?' Eventually, he was transferred to another establishment. Several prisoners believed that perpetrators should be moved

prisons, rather than the victims of queerphobic abuse. Trent suggested that staff could do little beyond transferring prisoners, commenting, 'You're in prison...What are they able to do?' Katherine explained that it is easier for staff to move the victims of transphobia to protection wings than to stop prisoners being transphobic.

Staff responses to queerphobia often resulted in negative consequences for LGBT prisoners, and sometimes verged on victim-blaming. An officer at the men's prison constructed 'effeminate' prisoners as the problem, explaining they 'cause issues for the other lads' by 'making them feel uncomfortable', which can result in prisoners being 'threatening towards them'. Reception staff advised Colin to hide his sexuality to avoid bullying:

They asked if I had any reason to feel unsafe, I told them I was gay - and they said 'well, you're not going to go around telling people that, are you?' I said 'no', to which they replied, 'well then, you're not going to have a problem'.

Rather than implementing measures to ensure Colin's safety, staff constructed his sexuality as the problem. As seen above, staff responded to homophobia by encouraging a prisoner to be more discreet on visits, and establishments have restricted transgender women's gender presentation to prevent bullying. The idea that LGBT people should hide their identity to avoid putting themselves at risk is prevalent in other settings (See Raboin, 2017).

There is some evidence of prisons addressing queerphobia through promoting acceptance and fostering good relationships between LGBT and straight, cisgender prisoners. Harsh punishments for perpetrators of queerphobia might

signal that it is unacceptable, however such approaches are not solutions to queerphobia, failing to address the causes of victimization (Lamble, 2008). When Ben's establishment started allowing transgender prisoners to socially transition, they proactively distributed information to help other prisoners understand this. At a women's prison, Katherine worked with education staff and a transgender charity to explain her transition and experiences in the male estate. This workshop helped other prisoners understand her, and broader transgender issues. At Phillip's prison, inmates engaging in queerphobic bullying were required to undertake diversity training – a practice explored by the women's establishment, as noted above.

Such efforts might not be straightforward, or entirely progressive. Joel advocated teaching respect and tolerance, but cautioned it was difficult to change the perspectives of people who had long-standing queerphobic beliefs. He also suggested that trying to reduce queerphobia might emphasise LGBT inmates, resulting in more bullying, a concern shared by a probation officer. In Daniel's LGBT group, inmates were taught 'how to get inmates that don't like what we are to like us'. LGBT prisoners should not be responsible for changing queerphobic attitudes.

Approaches to queerphobia are inconsistent across the prison estate, reflecting the broader inequality of provisions for LGBT inmates documented throughout this thesis. Staff risk tolerating queerphobia by dismissing it as 'banter', or labeling it as offense-inducing, rather than offensive. When queerphobia goes unchallenged it can escalate, sometimes resulting in the victim being punished for responding violently. Approaches to discrimination verge of victim-blaming when

LGBT identities are constructed as the problem. The final section of this chapter outlines some of the institutional barriers to support for LGBT inmates.

Understanding the Institutional Barriers to Support

As noted above, some staff regard queerphobia as an instance of teasing, which they consider inherent to interactions between prisoners. Some staff were clearly unaware of the issues created by the heteronormative and cisnormative nature of prisons, and did not recognise LGBT inmates as needing support. At the women's prison especially, the prevalence and openness of same-sex relationships meant officers often overlooked prisoners' struggles. Debbie, for example, suggested that LGBT counselling was more necessary in men's establishments, since in women's prisons same-sex sexuality was 'very acceptable' and prisoners were 'proud to be in a relationship or to talk about their sexuality'. The visibility of relationships in women's prisons obscures the very real struggles that some inmates have with their gender and sexual identities.

Training

Corroborating previous research (Howard League, 2013, Dunn, 2013, Poole et al., 2002), staff were often uninformed regarding LGBT issues, and several prisoners explicitly called for staff training. Jordan and Billie suggested that certain officers should spend time with LGBT inmates, perhaps attending a support group, or playing sports together. Katherine was told that officers had received training before her arrival at a women's prison, which she considered inadequate given the 'lack of care

and understanding' they demonstrated. Some prisons have better approaches - Sam suggested that staff at one establishment responded particularly well to homophobic bullying because of receiving regular training on sexuality.

While officers learn about equality and diversity in their initial training, updates are important. The men's prison's training coordinator explained that staff inductions covered equality and diversity, but it was 'only a presentation crammed into a short time'. Staff could also do five national Civil Service e-learning modules - Equality and Diversity essentials, Disability Awareness, LGB and T awareness, Mental Health and Race Awareness. However, this training is insufficient, and often completed reluctantly.

The training coordinator, like most staff, completed all modules on the same day, and despite this being less than twelve months ago, could remember little about it. She explained that uniform staff struggled to complete the modules, lacking time on computers, facing interruptions by prisoners, and because the computer system was slow and often crashed. She explained that staff shortages were also influential, commenting, 'if you're training them then they're not on the wings'. Frontline officers are most in need of equality and diversity training given their daily interactions with inmates. She explained that other modules took priority for officers. Training on equality and diversity is not mandatory (Edgar & Tsintsadze, 2017), unlike on security issues, like control and restraint training. At the men's prison only 19% of staff (including both administrative and operational) had completed the LGBT training, and only 8% had completed all five modules.

Staff were sceptical of the effectiveness of the training available. Bethan doubted the efficacy of e-learning, explaining, 'Your mind wanders... I just don't think you retain it'. Despite being genuinely interested in equality and diversity, she found the training boring, and suggested that most officers tried to get it over and done with. In the past, she had attended 'Challenge it, Change it', a daylong refresher that she found more engaging, interesting and effective. Civil Service E-learning replaced this in 2013 (Ibid.), which she considered a cost-cutting exercise. Roger was also critical of online training, deeming it an ineffective 'tick-box exercise':

There's no discussion. There's no thought. You're just trying to get through it as quickly as possible...So you can click the answers and say, 'there you are, I've done it.'

Some staff are better equipped than others regarding LGBT issues. Probation officers suggested their training and day-to-day practice placed greater emphasis on equality and diversity. One probation officer described training for officers as 'a million miles away' from what she had received, where diversity was 'drummed into' staff. Another probation officer suggested this reflected differences in the nature of their roles - while probation staff actively supported prisoners, officers focused on the 'basics' of safety and security, ensuring prisoners were unlocked and given food. However, ensuring LGBT prisoners' safety requires treating them respectfully and tackling discrimination.

Probation staff might be better equipped than officers to support LGBT inmates, however they are not always well-prepared. At the women's prison a probation officer had done no refresher training in years, and had never received

training on supporting transgender prisoners. She therefore educated herself in preparation for working with a transgender woman:

I did generally a bit of background reading on trans people, and their experience in the prison system...The information was relatively limited, and I think it was based on an American study.

There are significant differences between prisons in the United States and the UK, and so extrapolating from American prisoners' experiences is problematic. I sensed that not all probation officers would take the initiative to read up on minoritised groups.

Aidan suggested that even staff in the women's prison's equality and diversity department were unable to go beyond 'the basics':

I'm not 100% confident people there have the knowledge and skills to deal with anything complex...If you've got a disability I'll get you a wheelchair...That's it really. If you speak a foreign language, I think I've got the telephone and I can call a translator... It's more diverse than just those things.

Some staff appeared complacent regarding their capacity to support LGBT inmates. The men's prison equality officer suggested that staff not being prejudiced equated to them being equipped to provide appropriate support. The chaplain there, Joel, explained that prison staff were more knowledgeable regarding equality and diversity issues than other organisations, noting, 'if you worked in the local supermarket you wouldn't learn all these different terminologies'. Ironically, Barry suggested that officers were so poorly trained they were probably 'stacking shelves in Tesco's or Morrison's a couple of months ago'. Being tasked with looking after

LGBT prisoners with humanity is a much greater responsibility than scanning groceries, and so necessitates far more equality and diversity knowledge.

Joseph's organisation provided free staff training on LGBT and HIV awareness. He believed that most officers were 'genuinely motivated' to support prisoners, but lacked the necessary knowledge. This organisation incentivized its training through providing establishments with accredited awards. Mo also delivered free HIV training, which he considered essential, given staff often held misconceptions and prejudiced attitudes, for example thinking that HIV could be contracted through shaking hands.

The government has committed to providing 'training, guidance and awareness materials' on working with transgender prisoners (PSI 17/2016:24). Given the issues outlined above, this is unlikely to be sufficient. At the men's prison, Becca suggested that a 'massive culture change' was necessary to appropriately support transgender prisoners there. Establishing LGBT understanding and acceptance is a long-term challenge.

Resources

Even when staff recognise the need for support, and have the necessary skills to provide it, they can lack the time and resources to do so. Aidan noted that an officer was qualified to run a domestic violence programme but had insufficient time to deliver the group. LGBT group sessions, and one-off events, were often cancelled

due to staff shortages. An equalities officer had long intended to establish an LGBT group, and now his establishment had recruited a few new officers, he was beginning to conduct work beyond his standard prison officer duties:

I am beginning to be left alone to carry out my equalities duties [but] we've fallen so far behind with these duties it's going to be a struggle getting back on track.

He had hoped that a local LGBT sexual health promotion service would make regular visits to the group he hoped to establish, but explained this was difficult due to funding restraints. LGBT charities have also suffered from austerity, reducing their capacity to work in prisons.

Beyond specific provisions, LGBT inmates rely on general prison services, which are also lacking. Nicole struggled to access mental health support after being raped, due to a lack of provisions in the prison. Lottie explained that staff being busy made them irritable, and therefore inapproachable, discouraging prisoners from requesting support. Joey explained that because a prison was so understaffed, officers were unable to support a gay prisoner being ostracised:

They don't have time to treat anyone preferentially. You got pointed in the direction of a wing mentor but that was about all they could do.

There is a very real staffing crisis in British prisons (Bashford et al., 2017) and resource constraints can exacerbate the tendency of officers to 'resort to "the basics" of the job' (Arnold, 2016:280), hampering proactive support for LGBT inmates.

A Lack of Confidentiality

As explained in Chapter 4, some prisoners feel it necessary to conceal their gender or sexuality. Some LGBT prisoners might therefore need support, but feel unable to request it, in case their identity is revealed. Several prisoners claimed that staff failed to maintain confidentiality, and some staff acknowledged that LGBT inmates might worry about other prisoners discovering their gender or sexuality if they approached staff for support.

Prisoners often emphasised the importance of LGBT groups being confidential. In the leaflet that Colin helped staff produce, they emphasised that LGBT group sessions would happen in a 'safe environment' and be listed as 'Safer Custody' meetings. Members of Robert's group had to sign a contract, including a confidentiality statement:

I agree not to disclose the name, sexuality²⁹, details of offence(s) or any other personal information about any member... even after I have left the group.

Nonetheless group attendance declined when meetings were rescheduled such that attendees were easier to identify. Members now had to leave work mid-session, and many prisoners felt uncomfortable showing a movement slip to attend the group. At Idrees's establishment, the LGBT group was held in a room on the middle of a wing, and since other inmates could see who was attending, some LGBT prisoners felt unable to access this support.

²⁹ Its lack of reference to gender evidences cisnormative assumptions.

When the women's establishment ran an LGBT group, a custodial manager explained that some inmates had felt vulnerable attending something 'labelled as being for gay people' and did not want staff present. Indeed, Emma explained that prisoners would not want to discuss relationships at LGBT support groups with officers due to the risk of being separated. However, Charlotte expressed concerns that even if staff were not physically present, they could still find out who was attending, and therefore LGBT, and potentially in a relationship. As noted in the previous chapter, after noticing his group attendance, Kevin's probation officer asked him about his sex life in prison to re-assess his risk level.

While some participants advocated LGBT group confidentiality, others supported an open approach. Eric suggested that publicizing groups was necessary to de-stigmatize LGBT prisoners, and Oliver suggested open advertising, and managing the attendance of any disruptive prisoners through normal prison protocol. Another means of protecting LGBT prisoners' identities is explicitly including straight, cisgender inmates – so that observers do not know who is LGBT. Iris explained that some attendees would say, 'I'm not gay I'm just here to see what it's all about...just want to get out of the workshop...there's a cup of tea here'.

Knowing that some LGBT prisoners felt unable to attend support groups, Craig helped a prison establish access to a sexuality helpline. However, telephone calls are not always confidential - Addison worried about contacting an external organisation, explaining that a lack of private phones meant other inmates could overhear his call. As well as groups, Mo's organization provided one-to-one support,

recognizing that not all inmates felt able to speak openly about their sexuality. On HIV awareness days, only confident, dominant inmates asked him questions, so he approached prisoners who seemed like they wanted to talk, but felt unable to approach him. A SO in the men's prison's safer custody department tried to avoid other inmates knowing she was speaking to LGBT prisoners by meeting them in the chapel and under the guise of doing offender supervisor work. She suggested that if she established an LGBT group, it might be better for officers to escort inmates, than for her to collect them, to prevent other prisoners 'cottoning on'.

At the women's prison, some powerful participants suggested that if they sought support regarding LGBT issues, other inmates would too. Charlotte was somebody 'that you don't fuck about with', and noted her affect on other inmates, explaining that there was a 'chain reaction' when she cried during a particularly moving church service - 'they must have thought, "if she can do it, I can"'. She suggested it would be meaningful for her to establish an LGBT group, because other prisoners would feel able to attend:

If I opened a group and said 'I'm a gay everybody, you can all come to my group', you'd be surprised how many people turn up.

Healthy Suspicion

A barrier to LGBT prisoners *feeling* supported is their tendency to see situations through the prism of queerphobia. As explained above, discrimination is often subtle, and due to previous experiences of discrimination, marginalised people often

have a 'healthy suspicion' regarding other peoples' behaviour and intentions (Sue, 2010:73). Iris recounted occasional issues with prisoners being unlocked to attend an LGBT group, which some prisoners interpreted as deliberate mistreatment. She did not believe that staff purposefully hindered access to the group, but accepted that some officers were less invested in it than others. Some prisoners recognised that their interpretations might be doubted, as seen in Ali's suggestion that staff were homophobic towards her:

They've not said it, because they're very clever. They can't say 'oh you're this, you're that'... It's the way that they treat you...They'll just bark at me... I'm not paranoid.

Since queerphobia *is* rife in prisons, it is understandable that LGBT inmates might suspect discrimination, rather than giving staff the benefit of the doubt.

Alfred noted that inmates at the women's prison sometimes wrongly perceived discrimination when officers did not provide access to facilities. He explained that such incidents were usually the result of staff being in a bad mood, unaware of the entitlement, or prisoners not in fact being entitled to those provisions. Some inmates did wrongly perceive discrimination. As explained in Chapter 3, Zach claimed that being gay meant he could not apply for jobs that might enable him to have sex with other prisoners, but he was in fact later allocated one such position. The idea of there being homophobic hiring practices seemed believable to Zach as a result of the heteronormativity of the environment.

Balancing Different Groups' Needs

The ability of prisons to support, and be seen as supporting, LGBT inmates, can be constrained by commitments to other minoritised groups. As demonstrated, LGBT prisoners often felt a tension between their rights, and Muslim prisoners'. Martin suggested that by staff allowing 'Muslim empowerment', they were enabling the oppression of LGBT prisoners. While some Muslim prisoners do engage in queerphobic bullying, Martin treated equality as a zero-sum game, considering Muslims being able to attend Islamic lessons and wear headscarves as an assault on LGBT rights. Martin's logic falls short, not least because some Muslim prisoners are LGBT.

In some cases provisions *for* LGBT inmates appeared disproportionate. Iris explained that at one prison, because LGBT inmates had a SO advocating for them, their complaints were taken more seriously and staff tried harder to meet their needs. In contrast Muslim prisoners lacked influential advocates, and so were more often denied provisions on security grounds. This might lead to resentment. Indeed, Iris suggested that some non-LGBT prisoners begrudged the annual LGBT group celebration in particular since it directly resulted in them being 'banged up':

It was taking officers away from elsewhere. At one point there was going to be a big event for world AIDS day...People from outside were going to be coming in, and there was going to be music and they'd be closing down the prison for the day. And there was a bit of grumbling of like, 'what about us?'

As seen above, the Pride event at the women's prison included all prisoners, irrespective of gender or sexuality, thereby preventing the potential for resentment.

Such inclusive events might foster, or at least not hamper, good relationships between LGBT and non-LGBT inmates.

Some establishments limited provisions for LGBT inmates to prevent other prisoners claiming favoritism. Eric explained that resources his LGBT group wanted to provide were 'looked upon as being a privilege':

You couldn't give out a lolly pop...You could only put certain magazines in the library, you couldn't give them directly.

Eric recognized that receiving small items like magazines could create significant jealousies given their relative value in prison.

Establishments with active LGBT support groups usually did not have equivalents for other minoritised groups. However, Iris suggested that this provision was more necessary for LGBT inmates:

The Muslim prisoners didn't need the monthly forum as much, because they had Friday prayers and they could meet with the chaplain...I don't think they needed film nights in the same way

Different minoritised prisoners have different needs, and so standardized, equal treatment is not always appropriate.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered prison efforts to protect and support LGBT inmates. There is great variability across the prison estate, and pockets of good practice, as well as inadequate and inappropriate provisions that conflict with prisoners' own

identified needs. The ability of LGBT prisoners to express their identities is hampered by staff concerns regarding immediate risks of harm, as well as cisnormative and heteronormative assumptions, which are embedded in informal interactions with prisoners, as well as official institutional practices. The intentions and meaning of provisions that do exist for LGBT inmates, like Pride events, can be questioned by inmates who consider them at odds with wider approaches to gender and sexuality.

I have explained that individual staff vary in their understanding of the LGBT community and enthusiasm for LGBT rights. Staff commitment to LGBT equality can be shaped by their personal characteristics, level of training, and time available. While the acceptance of 'banter' is perhaps ingrained in prison officer culture, individual officers and establishments vary in their approaches to low-level, as well as more serious, queerphobia. Responses can border on victim-blaming when LGBT prisoners' openness about their identities, rather than discrimination against them, is presented as the problem.

Staff sometimes fail to recognise the distinct needs of LGBT prisoners, especially in women's establishments, where open displays of same-sex sexuality belie the identity related struggles of many prisoners. When provisions do exist, like support groups, LGBT inmates can be hesitant to access them, lacking faith that their confidentiality will be upheld, and that they would be protected from any resulting queerphobia. Some LGBT prisoners might not feel supported due to considering provisions for other minoritised groups as competing with their own wellbeing, and due to 'healthy suspicion' regarding the day-to-day actions of staff and other

inmates. Many of the above themes are expanded upon within the following two chapters, which focus on relationships between prisoners.

Chapter 6: Relationships In Prison

Introduction

The first section of this chapter explores the nature of relationships between prisoners, and how inmates conceptualise sexuality and gender. It starts by considering the frequency of relationships, before turning to their constitution, in terms of whether they involve sex and romance. I then engage with the idea of 'situational homosexuality', considering the phenomenon of prisoners who are 'gay for the stay'. Next, I explore relationship hierarchies, demonstrating that long-term, faithful relationships between inmates considered 'properly' gay are most highly regarded. This section ends with a discussion of the degree to which relationships are visible.

The second section considers potentially problematic aspects of relationships. Firstly, I explore five practices; predatory behaviour, domestic violence, financial exploitation, emotional manipulation, and sexually charged interactions with staff. I then consider the potential negative impact of relationships upon prisoners, in terms of their all-encompassing nature, fears of infidelity and separation, the challenge of maintaining contact with partners outside prison, and the difficulty of understanding sexuality.

The Nature of Relationships in Prison

Prevalence

My findings corroborate existing evidence that relationships are commonplace in women's prisons (e.g. Severance, 2005). Annabelle claimed that half of prisoners were in relationships; Leila said 'a huge number' were, and Grace claimed it was 'most' prisoners. Staff corroborated the prevalence of relationships. A probation officer described the proportion of inmates in relationships as 'extremely high', and Brian suggested that most prisoners had relationships of some degree. Inmates, including Casey, suggested that same-sex relationships were more common and accepted inside than outside prison, commenting, 'in here you wouldn't double take or look twice at two women kissing'.

In men's prisons, relationships are significantly less common and less accepted. Becca explained that the male and female estate were 'massively different' in terms of the prevalence of relationships, which she considered deeply connected to the stark variance in LGBT acceptance. At the women's prison, she explained same-sex relationships were commonplace amongst both inmates and staff, and therefore 'totally accepted' - being non-heterosexual was neither 'something that you have to keep secret', nor 'anything to talk about'. Conversely, openness about non-heterosexuality and same-sex relationships was very rare at the men's prison. In general, relationships in men's prisons are much less frequent than in the women's estate. When relationships do exist, they occur mostly in VPUs, high-security and sex offender prisons, corroborating previous research (Stevens, 2015).

Types of Relationship – Sexual and Romantic

Several participants at the women's prison had had long-term, monogamous relationships with other inmates. Casey and her partner were together thirteen months in prison, and lived together five years 'on road'. Prisoners quite frequently lived in the community with partners they'd met in prison, and one woman had married her partner. A family engagement worker explained that over the past 18 months she'd arranged for approximately five long-term couples to meet each other's children.

Shorter-term relationships were commonplace, and purely sexual encounters also occurred. Trish referenced 'fuck buddies' who had sex without relationship obligations, and Jessica emphasised the promiscuous and unfaithful nature of some prisoners:

They've got different girlfriends each week. And it's always the same ones swapping and changing...They just cheat constantly...They call them 'bed hoppers' because they just hop from one bed to the next.

In men's prisons, sexual encounters were more common than romantic relationships. William considered the latter 'rare', and Aaron knew of around 6 prisoners who had regular sexual encounters, but only one couple in a committed relationship. Despite being less common, multiple participants described long-term, serious relationships. Dennis and his partner were exploring getting married, and Kyle had a 3-year 'physical/emotional relationship' in prison.

Beyond sexual encounters and relationships, Owen described 'homo-erotic'

behavior:

Men deliberately displaying their naked torsos... walking with their penis out (for a laugh) or twirling it around (helicoptering); men who play with themselves in the showers; cell mates masturbating with you there, awake. In [a category B prison], several big strong men took over one shower block on weekend afternoons, where they'd shower naked and drink several liters of hooch... They all played with their private parts and had semi-erections and this went on for an hour or more with jokes, banter and sexualised talk... Some men also flash themselves or even masturbate behind closed doors for others to see and watch through the flap, but would go no further. Often such activity is masked by banter, humour, etc. and is not seen as gay - just a laugh. As a gay man however it gives out strong signals, and those require interpretation.

Owen's account echoes questions raised in the literature concerning 'what constitutes sexual behavior' and 'the relationship between sexual identity and sexual behavior' in men's prisons (Ricciardelli et al., 2016:1668). William noted that sexual behavior could mean different things depending upon who was involved, distinguishing men 'only expressing a male on male sexuality due to their circumstances', and prisoners 'who are so orientated back in the outside world':

Encounters between the former tend to be about satisfying a purely physical short-term 'need', whereas the latter are more like you'd see outside in a regular relationship.

Gay for the Stay

As William noted, some male inmates who identify as heterosexual have sexual encounters. He explained that these men would 'adapt their thinking, so a hand is a hand, or a mouth is a mouth regardless of gender', a phrase echoing Donaldson's (2001:125) - 'the difference between the experience of entering a female mouth and of entering a male mouth is not significant'. This distinction cuts to the heart of

defining sexuality - Butler (1993:310) questioned what determines it – ‘the act, the orifice, the gender, the anatomy?’

Heterosexual men who have sex in prison are sometimes called ‘jail gay’, ‘jail bent’, or ‘gay for the stay’, phrases also used in women’s establishments. Some inmates, like Emma, suggested these terms were derogatory, however, others considered them neutral, and some prisoners, like Charlotte, as seen above, used them to self-define. In women’s prisons, inmates who identified as straight engaged in romantic relationships, as well as sexual encounters, whereas in men’s prisons, I only found evidence of the latter.

In men’s prisons, being ‘jail gay’ was relatively commonplace - Richard was shocked by the number of men who ‘labeled themselves as straight’ yet had sex with other prisoners. Aaron explained that longer-term prisoners were more likely to engage in such encounters given they were deprived of same-sex relationships for several years. Participants therefore suggested that sex involving straight inmates occurred predominantly in higher security prisons housing long-term offenders. American research suggests that heterosexual men enter relationships with more powerful inmates for protection, that these couples are known about by other prisoners, and sometimes involve affection (Donaldson, 2001). In British prisons, this phenomenon does not appear to exist.

At the women’s establishment, although some inmates entered relationships quite quickly or when serving relatively short sentences, prisoners also suggested

that long-term inmates were most likely to enter 'jail gay' relationships. Jessica explained:

They're in here for twenty odd years, and everyone's got needs [laughs]. I only know one lifer that is full blown straight...the majority of all the others aren't.

Tracy, who identified as straight, suggested that her 'sexual needs' and lengthy sentence meant she might enter a relationship:

If you're only around women, then there's nothing wrong with sharing that feeling, emotion, even if it's just, you know, sex, foreplay or whatever... It looks like I'm gonna be here for a few years... Some people just jump into it, I don't think I will, but if I thought someone was attractive...

Lottie, another straight woman, suggested that if she were in prison for longer, she might enter a relationship, though she would do so in search of companionship rather than sex:

It's such a lonely place, if I met somebody that I was really close to, I'm sure I would get close to them in that way. I'm not sure it would be intimate, but I don't know. Definitely be a loving relationship. Yeah. Blimey. We all need to be loved.

It is commonplace for heterosexual inmates to enter relationships in women's prisons. A Probation Officer explained that upon joining the women's establishment, she was surprised by how many inmates who had only had male partners in the community formed 'intimate relationships':

Being here has opened my eyes that it completely changes. Regardless of how you define yourself in terms of your sexuality, *most* women will engage in some sort of intimate relationship, especially those on a long-term sentence.

Several inmates suggested that relationships were fashionable in women's prisons,

echoing Morgan's (1998) finding that relationships in prison enhance social status.

Grace described relationships as 'popular', and suggested that prisoners might therefore feign non-heterosexuality, 'If you want to be involved, why don't you just say you're gay, regardless of being gay or not?'

Relationships involving straight women were so common that some inmates wrongly presumed other prisoners were 'gay for the stay'. For example, Tracy asked an inmate, 'Are you into women or is it just a jail thing?':

She went 'oh I love women...I like girly girls'. And I was like, 'fucking hell, really?' Again, shock to my system. I thought it was all just a put on thing. You know, wanting a bit of love, wanting a bit of a touchy feeling stuff.

Corroborating previous research, inmates who considered themselves 'gay in the true sense' did sometimes resent straight prisoners entering relationships (Ibid.:79).

For example, Linda, a gay woman, displayed animosity:

It was such a shock to see all these different 'so called' lesbian relationships...I think most of the girls are actually straight...I don't know whether it's meant to be 'the in thing' in prison to be with a woman, but that's what it appears to be.

Cheating and Promiscuity

Being jail gay was often conceptually associated with cheating on a male partner outside prison. Emma explained that 'jail bent' referred to inmates who have 'fellas outside', and same-sex relationships during stints in prison. Cheating was also central to Jessica's definition:

Could you tell me a bit more about this 'jail bent' thing?

It's girls that are with boyfriends on the outside but they've got a girlfriend in here. There's a lot of girls that have got partners on the

outside, but have a girlfriend. I don't understand that. It's disgusting, because it's cheating.

Another prevalent if less frequent association was considering jail bent inmates promiscuous. Hannah saw them as 'bed hoppers', as did Jordan:

It makes the real gay people look bad...Jumping into bed with each other, having about ten birds on the Wing.

'Jail gay' prisoners are presumed to be promiscuous, unfaithful, and uninterested in long-term relationships.

Sex

In men's prisons, relationships involving straight inmates seem exclusively sexual. Mo explained that straight inmates who slept with a gay man he worked with would 'just go with him for sex, and then afterwards totally ignore him'. Prisoners, including Ben, suggested that straight inmates only engaged in particular sexual acts – they 'would never "suck someone off" but would let a man "suck them off" and imagine it's a woman'. This corroborates American research suggesting that straight prisoners perceive penetrating another prisoner, and 'taking someone inside their own body' very differently (Donaldson, 2001:125).

In the women's prison, some participants believed that the main reason straight prisoners entered relationships was to satisfy sexual urges. Annabelle suggested, 'they come in for a bit of lesbian activity', and Linda proposed that such relationships were 'probably more a sex thing than anything else'. Jessica also

believed that straight prisoners entered relationships in pursuit of sex, but did not understand why:

It's completely different sex, because obviously you can't get toys in here, so you can't have the same thingy as you can with a man's penis.

Other participants suggested that straight inmates did not have sex with their partners, and entered relationships for other reasons. Rebecca suggested that some prisoners entered relationships for protection, and did not 'actually do anything with their girls'. Lottie suggested that straight prisoners entered relationships for emotional connection:

People talk about, 'she's jail bent', but I don't think it's anything to do with sex. I think it's just to do with love, and support, kindness, closeness.

Previous research suggests that 'companionship' is a more important drive than sex for female inmates entering same-sex relationships for the first time (Severance, 2005:42). Aidan recalled prisoners self-defining as 'lovebians':

She said... 'I'm not gay, we're lovebians' ... 'I'm not gay, but I'll hold hands, I'll kiss, we'll cuddle, we'll cuddle up in bed' ... These are people who identify, or state that they are straight... However, when they come in custody it's actually that they partner up for the love, the connection.

Emma suggested that 'jail bent' prisoners coupled up for comfort, and that their relationships were more friendships:

A lot of people don't sleep with their partners in here. It's just getting in bed and cuddling at night. So it's not really... It's just a friendship... Obviously you might not get in bed with your friend, but you're not in a little room, and you're not having just contact with that person twenty four hours a day, seven days a week.

Here, Emma suggests that the nature of prisons make close friendships take on forms that replicate behaviours usually associated with couples. Trish suggested that such relationships reflected women's tactile nature:

They're with men before, they've had babies and everything and they come in, and, like I said, women are more tactile, and I think it's more companionship. Because even if you watch little girls in school playgrounds, they play with each other's hair, kiss and cuddle, they hug.

Alfred agreed 'women are more "touchy feely"', but cautioned that such behaviors could develop into sexual relationships. He suggested that straight prisoners entered relationships because of being in prison – being mentally 'in a bad place' they sought somebody to provide comfort. Attributing same-sex relationships to emotional difficulties could be considered a means of pathologising or invalidating same-sex sexuality, similar to that previously documented amongst U.S. prison staff (Pasko, 2010).

There was no straightforward agreement on what distinguished friends from couples in prison. Some inmates, like Casey, suggested that a relationship always, and exclusively, 'gets sexual'. This definition, however, contradicts the experiences of other prisoners. Amanda, who identified as gay, noted that previous relationships had only involved 'kissing' and 'having a cuddle':

Never slept with them, because a lot of girls in here, half of them aren't even gay. They come to jail and they seem to get with a girl, go out and they're back with a man.

Amanda implies that she did not sleep with previous partners because they were not gay, and therefore uninterested in sex, however, she still considered herself as

having had relationships with them.

Choice of Partner

Related to this question of whether 'jail gay' inmates experienced sexual desire and engaged in sexual activity, is the matter of who they enter relationships with.

Inmates suggested that masculine prisoners were the most desirable partners in general. Aidan suggested that prisoners who 'look like young lads' had 'prettier' girlfriends. It was commonly believed that some women therefore purposefully adopted a masculine appearance through clothes and haircuts to attract a partner, corroborating Girshick (2011). Masculine inmates were considered particularly attractive for 'jail gay' inmates. Tay described herself as a 'big butch lesbian' and explained 'everybody loves the butch lesbians...They look like boys don't they? So all the women love them'. Billie considered the love letters and longing looks she received from straight inmates as the result of her masculinity:

They're not gay are they? But I'm the closest thing to it... 'You'll do', that sort of thing.

Billie therefore suggested that you could 'normally tell' that somebody was 'prison gay' through their choice of partner: 'It's normally a butch bird they'll go for, and that's cos they look like lads'. Indeed, some straight prisoners noted that masculine inmates were attractive because of their similarity to men. As noted in Chapter 4, Tracy was attracted to a masculine inmate, 'but as a man, not as a woman'. Trish described straight inmates becoming attracted to masculine women as 'turning':

It's where you turn a straight girl gay. But it's not really. She's bi and

the only reason that she's with that girl is because she looks like a boy.

Morgan (1998:77) cites prisoners using an equivalent phrase, 'turned out', to refer to another prisoner changing a woman's sexuality. Trish does not fall into the trap that many prison researchers do, of assuming that people are 'either exclusively homosexual or heterosexual' (Ricciardelli et al., 2016:1663). However, her definition of bisexual appears to only encompass being attracted to men and women who look like men.

Determining Sexuality

Like Trish, other participants considered 'jail gay' inmates to be bisexual. Prisoners' self-asserted sexualities were often contested. While recruiting participants, a prisoner told me she had 'turned gay' this year, to which her friend replied, 'she's not, she still likes boys on the outside'. A member of healthcare staff contrasted 'true lesbians' to prisoners who 'become bisexual while they're here, but they never have before and they probably wouldn't unless they came back'. Here bisexual appears to be used to describe same-sex behavior more than identity. Indeed, Billie explained that being 'gay for the stay' differed from being bisexual because the former 'only go with girls in prison', and 'don't do it at home'. Emma agreed:

There's a lot of bisexual girls who basically aren't bisexual. They come in and then have a relationship and then as soon as they go out of prison then that's it.

However, at the same time, Emma suggested that prison might bring out latent same-sex attractions. She explained that while heterosexuality was the social norm,

humans, like other animals, were not evolutionarily designed 'to just go for one sex'.

Tracy, as noted in Chapter 4, also considered heterosexuality to be situational, and felt being in prison might surface previously unrecognized sexual attractions:

Coming to prison is good for me, because I'm learning about me. So again I could be something that I've never known... That I am bi, and I've just been brought up to fancy a man... I think we're all just open to anything, it's just what circumstances you're in.

Rather than surfacing suppressed feelings, Grace suggested that prisoners experienced a *change* in sexuality, claiming that within a few months most prisoners would 'convert' and 'become bi-curious'. Brian, the equalities officer, suggested that 'jail gay' prisoners temporarily changed from being straight, to being gay, explaining, 'As soon as they come through them gates, they're gay'

Some prisoners who had previously identified as straight adopted new, permanent identities in men's as well as women's prisons - through entering a relationship in prison, Kevin realised he was bisexual. For others, a change in sexuality was more complicated. Hannah had only had relationships with men before prison, where she met her partner of 11 years, who she had lived with in the community. Researchers of situational homosexuality have tended to suggest that women who enter same-sex relationships for the first time in prison will return to opposite-sex relationships upon release (Severance, 2005). This was not the case for Hannah. She considered herself gay, conflating her behavior and identity; 'obviously I'm a lesbian now, because I'm with her'. Hannah's partner was the only woman she found attractive, there just being 'something about her':

If we did split up I'd probably go back with a man...I don't fancy other

girls, like I say 'oh they're pretty, or she's pretty', but I don't fancy them. Where Amira's proper, she's fully gay, she's butch.

While she had only been in a relationship with one woman, who she met in prison, Hannah considered having lived with her partner in the community as distinguishing her from women who were 'jail gay'. She seemed content with her lesbian identity, but contravened common uses of the term through only being attracted to one woman, and planning to return to relationships with men if the relationship ended. As explained in Chapter 4, Charlotte, who had a male fiancé, was confused about her sexuality, having entered a relationship in prison with the only woman she had ever found attractive. Severance (2005:51) cites a prisoner with similar experiences to Hannah and Charlotte, who professed, 'I am not attracted to all women...I just like this one person'. Many prisoners grapple with the complex nature of sexuality, and try to establish what same-sex attractions means for their sense of self.

Relationship Hierarchies

The legitimacy of prison relationships seems to be measured according to three criteria: length, fidelity, and sexuality. Each of these themes is apparent within Rebecca's explanation of why a 'proper love thing' is more highly regarded than sexual encounters, by both inmates and staff:

The girls that are predominantly lesbian, and they're in long term relationships, they do get more respect and, quite rightly so because they're not sleeping about.

Length and Setting of the Relationship

Prisoners accorded more respect to relationships that were long-term and also occurred outside prison - either before imprisonment, or between sentences. They also believed that staff took these relationships more seriously - Abby explained that staff used the short length of her and her partner's relationship as an 'excuse' to deny them privileges. Ali used emotive language to explain why inmates in long-term relationships should be afforded more respect than couples who had only been together a matter of weeks:

We were together for six years. We lived together out there, we had a dog and everything... I'd have put a body in the ground for her. I loved her to death. She was me next of kin...It was family life out there.

Hannah explained that inmates having successive, short-term relationships negatively influenced staff perceptions of prisoners like her, who are in more than 'just a prison relationship':

They get with one girl and then that girl goes home, and then they get with another ...It makes other people that are gay in prison that are genuinely with their partner and live outside, it makes it look bad on them.

Tay suggested that for staff to regard her relatively new relationship as 'real' and not 'just a joke' or 'just a jail thing' required it lasting outside prison. However, Jordan suggested that staying together outside does not automatically lead staff to consider couples legitimate:

Me and my partner were together for [several] years...And they didn't ever get that we was in love. They just thought that it was a jail joke...We were together on road.

Fidelity and Promiscuity

Prisoners like Hannah were critical of inmates having several short-lived

relationships, believing they invoked negative staff attention:

People just hopping in one, and hopping out the other bed, that's what spoils it. And obviously staff don't take them serious because they're not serious, they're just messing about...It embarrasses and puts shame on people.

Prisoners afford more respect to long-term, monogamous, faithful relationships at

least in part because of the problems that short-term affairs and infidelity can

create. Emma explained that being a 'jail slag' created arguments, and could

therefore affect prisoners' prospects of progression and release. Similarly, Trish

explained:

You've got people that will just sleep with loads of different girls, cause loads of mix-up and then they get released and there's girls fighting over this one person.

Rebecca corroborated that 'slappers' cause arguments:

They're meant to be with one person, they've got their eye on somebody else and everybody starts gossiping about it, and it gets into big love triangles.

Beyond having multiple partners inside prison, inmates were also highly critical of

simultaneously having partners both inside and outside prison – vocally rebuking

prisoners who cheated in this way. Cheating on partners outside prison, as noted

above, is associated with being 'jail gay', and there was particular aversion to

inmates simultaneously having relationships with women in prison and men outside.

Biphobia in such judgments usually remained implicit, hinted at by words like

‘greedy’ or an unnecessary emphasis on the male gender of the partner outside.

However some inmates, like Annabelle, were more explicit:

How do you do it, when you’ve got a man outside?...You go with women and then you break that girl’s heart by going out and going sleeping with a man...It’s bisexual. It’s greedy to me, that.

Casey implied that some staff also take particular issue with ‘jail gay’ prisoners

having multiple partners:

I do see where some of the staff are coming from, because it does piss me off, because obviously I’ve always been gay, I’ve never been with a man...So I see that it does make...what the officer was saying, ‘a mockery’ of lesbians, because they’re coming in, they’ve got a girlfriend on wing or on the house, and then they’re going on a visit with their boyfriend.

Gay prisoners in faithful, long-term relationships were often concerned about other prisoners bringing them into disrepute through association, echoing the LGBT movement’s concerns to gain acceptance through respectability, and therefore policing behavior deemed disreputable (Warner, 1999).

Some prisoners who were known to have male partners in the community tried to deny being in relationships with other prisoners to avoid criticism. However, some inmates and staff were more understanding of having partners both in and outside prison. Brian suggested that cheating was mitigated by the prevalence of people who were ‘jail gay’, and their relationships with women in prison acting as ‘an escape’ from their difficult lives outside prison:

It’s just their own little thing they can have, their own little world that’s separate and private from maybe the abusive or troubled one that they’re in outside.

Sexual Orientation

Couples comprised of lesbians were considered the most respectable and valid. In suggesting that she and her partner should be accorded more respect than other couples, Billie appealed to her longstanding sexuality, explaining, 'I've been gay all me life'. Jordan referred to 'jail gay' inmates as 'fake gays' and 'wannabe gays'. As we have seen, the criticism of having a partner both inside and outside prison is tied up with biphobia. Jessica considered 'jail bent' inmates bisexual and greedy, commenting, 'In my eyes you either are or you're not'. Rebecca explained that the crux of some prisoners' grievances were that they could just not understand that women would want to have sexual relationships with men outside prison, and women in prison. She explained that prisoners would call inmates who 'flip between' women inside prison and men outside prison 'slutty', and say 'you're either Arthur or Martha'. Bisexual people routinely experience claims that people can only be gay or straight (Nadal, Whitman, Davis, Erazo & Davidoff, 2016). Rebecca suggested that cheating on a woman outside prison with a woman inside prison would be less rebuked:

It's something to do with the fact that you like both sexes... It seems to be if you're a bit of both, you're being greedy. It's like you're wanting your cake and custard, and you're also wanting a finger slice.

It is a classic form of biphobia to see bisexual people as 'greedy, or wanting to "have their cake and eat it"' (Barker, Richards, Jones, Bowes-Catton, Plowman, Yockney & Morgan, 2012:20). Annabelle conflated bisexuality with cheating, and only having same-sex relationships in prison:

Some people come into prison that are bisexual - they have a man on the outside and they come in and have a bit of female...and then they

go back to their men when they get out.

Prisoners like Annabelle did not consider that returning to relationships with men post-release might be 'strategies for emotional and economic survivability', rather than evidence of sexuality (Pasko, 2010:19).

Emma had had relationships with men and women before prison, but did not call herself 'bisexual', considering it a stigmatizing label. People define themselves 'in negotiation with social definitions of sexuality that are closely tied to shame and stigma' (Ricciardelli et al., 2016:1668), and Emma suggested people should be able to identify as 'falling in love with the person and not the sex'. She was especially reluctant to use this term in prison given its additional association with women who only had same-sex relationships in prison:

People think of the word 'bisexual' and they think, 'oh just greedy,' or 'you're in prison so you're bisexual because you want to get a girlfriend when you're in here'.

Prisoners and staff routinely use language that conflates sexual behavior and identity, referring to prisoners 'being lesbian in jail', 'being gay just in prison' or having 'lesbian relationships'. Linda demonstrated her awareness of this conflation, referring with disdain to "'so called" lesbian relationships'. Referring to relationships between women as 'lesbian relationships' erases bisexual people (Barker et al., 2012:19), and so if phrases like 'same-sex' were used instead, perhaps relationships involving non-homosexual prisoners might be viewed differently.

In men's prisons, being jail gay also appeared denigrated. Tony, who was

bisexual, explained that inmates joked he was only gay in prison:

Other prisoners were aware of the relationship...Some made jokey comments like I'm gay for the state³⁰ or just jail gay.

Central to biphobia is the idea that bisexuality is a phase (Ibid.). Previous research has found that sexuality in men's prisons is considered binary, excluding bisexuality (Ricciardelli et al., 2016). Unlike in women's prisons, there was no culture of gay and bisexual inmates in men's prisons disparaging 'jail gay' prisoners. This is seemingly because same-sex relationships and sexualities do not confer status in men's prisons and are far less common and visible.

Degrees of Visibility

Relationships tend to be more visible in women's prisons, as well as more prevalent. During fieldwork at the women's establishment, I regularly observed couples, and several participants commented on the visibility of relationships via prisoners holding hands, sitting on each other's laps, or, as Paula noted, sporting love bites. Abby and Tay communicated their relationship through wearing bandannas and 'a paper clip on each other's trainer'. Despite the self-evident nature of some relationships, other couples tried to stay hidden. Leila explained that this was because 'if staff know that you're in a relationship, they will ship one of you out'. She explained, however, that privacy was hard, comparing being in prison to a game of 'Chinese whispers'. Some inmates, including Linda, purposefully disclosed their relationships to staff, fearing that if they did not, and staff found out about it, this

³⁰ 'Gay for the stay' is a common phrase. I am not sure whether the participant wrote 'state' accidentally, whether he misheard other prisoners, or whether they actually used this phrase.

might jeopardize their chances of parole. Christine explained that trying to hide a relationship for fear of repercussions often resulted in prisoners 'getting themselves into trouble' by breaking rules to see their partners. This issue is discussed further in the next chapter. Billie explained that, in practice, staff were aware of all relationships since other prisoners would tell them.

In men's prisons, sexual encounters involving straight men were invariably kept private. Ben explained, 'prison gays' would 'go about sexual activity in secret and would deny it to anybody unless they were spotted in the act'. Edward had the 'occasional encounter with "straight" men', and did not 'kiss and tell', based on their requests:

They are normally initiated by them because they know I'm gay...They are so not open about them sleeping with me. It is all kept quiet. One lad at [a Category B prison] said 'you know I'm in a gang, if they found out they'd kill me'.

U.S. based research has documented gay gang members having to conceal their sexuality 'lest they face serious repercussions' (Panfil, 2014:102). However, this secrecy in prison relationships contrasts with American findings that discreet same-sex encounters between men are accepted and constructed as heterosexual (Ricciardelli et al., 2016.). While same-sex sexualities are much less accepted in men's prisons, and so relationships are more likely to be underground, some gay and bisexual inmates are open about their relationships, as Owen explained:

Some couples openly flaunt themselves by always being together and some are physical in public, though it is rare. Some couples are just left to it by everyone else though others occasionally express revolt at seeing them together in embrace or more. Mostly though it is hidden

and hard to know if two men are merely close friends or something more.

As noted in Chapters 4 and 5, inmates and staff often accuse gay and bisexual men, jokingly or seriously, of being in sexual relationships with friends or cellmates. In the women's prison, there were similar occurrences. A group of inmates insisted that Rebecca and her friend were having a sexual relationship because they were always together, when she said they just had a 'proper friendship'. It can be hard to distinguish between relationships and close friendships (PPO, 2011), and staff sometimes misinterpreted friendships as relationships. Indeed, Annabelle's friend was accused 'of being in bed with another woman':

She's not like that, she's straight, but about two days ago she got shipped out to another prison over it...She said, 'Annabelle, all I was doing was sat on the end of the bed'.

Previous research documents even 'acts as innocent as hugging' have been misconstrued in the sexualised prison environment (Mogul et al., 2011:97). While some friends are misinterpreted as couples, some couples, like Grace and her partner, pretend they are just friends

We spent the whole time together, but we'd say we were best friends...But it was so obvious, and everyone assumes it anyway.

Charlotte explained that because prisoners often hug, it could be hard to discern from physical contact who was in a relationship. She believed that whether staff interpreted affection as signs of friendships or relationships depended on their views of the inmates in question – she believed that staff saw her and her girlfriend as 'good friends', whereas they would interpret other inmates who spent significant

time together as being in a relationship. Staff did not suspect Paula of being in a relationship because of her husband, children and femininity, as explained in Chapter 3.

I have explained that relationships are much more common in women's than men's establishments, and that they also tend to be more visible – inmates in women's prisons not having to worry about homophobic bullying from their peers, though cognizant of negative ramifications from staff. Seemingly invariably, when straight men have sex in prison they do not engage in emotional intimacy, and keep these encounters hidden, since they would elicit homophobia, in contrast with the U.S. literature (Donaldson, 2001). In women's prisons, straight inmates enter committed romantic as well as sexual relationships. Entering a relationship with a woman for the first time can make prisoners question their sexuality. 'Jail gay' inmates are subject to significant, largely negative, discussion in women's establishments. Other prisoners have varying and at times conflicting opinions on whether their relationships are (hyper)sexual or essentially friendships, whether they are straight or bisexual, and the origins of their same-sex desire. Biphobia is central to these speculations. Prisoners with longstanding gay identities, particularly those in (what they consider more legitimate) relationships, worry about being associated with 'jail gay' prisoners. This is in part due to the association between jail gay relationships and promiscuity, cheating and fighting. The next half of this chapter deals further with the potentially harmful nature of some relationships in prison.

Problematic Behaviour and Relationships Causing Problems

Problematic Behaviour

Unwanted and Predatory Advances

In the women's prison, rumours were rife about transgender prisoners' genitals, and there was some indication of transgender prisoners receiving unwanted sexual advances. Paige explained that concern about 'interest' from other inmates was a key factor in the prison's decision not to accept a transgender woman with a penis. Emily, a transgender woman, received significant interest from other inmates in her genitals:

Some of them are going a bit far wanting to inspect my designer vagina...They get pushy.

There were some concerns about prisoners pressuring others into relationships, as a custodial manager explained:

Certain prisoners would always end up in a relationship, whoever they were sharing a cell with...We have had it a few times...Someone come up and say, 'Miss I feel uncomfortable in that room...She's constantly trying to get me to engage in a relationship'.

While some staff were wary of coercive behaviour, others were not. A DIRF at the women's prison reveals that an officer laughed off a gay woman's disclosure that another inmate was making her feel uncomfortable by coming onto her. Pressures to engage in sex were far more commonplace in men's prisons, as illustrated in the section on sexual coercion in Chapter 4. Staff and inmates alike noted gay and bisexual prisoners being pressured to perform sexual acts. Some prisoners might, for various reasons, be particularly vulnerable to sexual coercion. Due to sexual

victimization during childhood, Bob struggled to turn down unwanted advances, only recently learning to assert himself in terms of sexual consent:

I never really understood I could say 'no' until I met a brilliant psychotherapist here at this prison. Well before that, I got a lot of pressure off some other prisoners to engage in sexual activity, I just went along with it most of the time, needless to say this didn't do a lot of my self worth or confidence.

Several non-heterosexual prisoners, like Sean, reported being offered commodities in exchange for sexual services. Prisoners in debt were particularly vulnerable to such offers. Much sexual trading appeared to involve a degree of coercion, however it is important to leave room for the possibility that some inmates freely consent to such exchanges, and benefit from them. Iris warned against the logic that, particularly in sex offender prisons, 'everyone's grooming people all the time, or it's always going to be rape', echoing Wakefield and Spivak's (2018:170) caution that of 'an overly coercive view of prison sex'. Indeed, Craig suggested that some very feminine gay men willingly engaged in prostitution in order to make significant sums of money.

Canteen Flexes

Distinct from the explicit trading of canteen for sex, in the women's prison inmates sometimes entered relationships with the covert goal of material gain. Ali explained that prisoners with desired goods risked being exploited in this way:

If someone's getting fat canteens, they'll pretend they're their girlfriend...Or if a girl gets drugs on a visit, they'll get with them...The girl doesn't realise they're getting used...They call it in here, 'canteen flexes' or 'visit flexes'.

Annabelle had been exploited in this manner by a previous girlfriend:

I'd buy stuff off canteen and stuff for her. She was just seeing what she could get and that. But this one, this one doesn't ask me for nothing.

The prevalence of manipulation made Grace question whether her relationships were meaningful:

Some people go out with other people for drugs, to fill time. So it makes you paranoid and doubtful. 'Is this person dating me to fill time?' Or 'Is this person dating me because I have more money?'

Tracy explained that a 'canteen queen', with a boyfriend outside prison was 'pretending to be gay' to exploit several inmates, and had beaten up a woman who did not produce the drugs she had promised:

She was letting her kiss her because she's got drugs. And then the girl who kissed her didn't come up with the drugs, so she then went in and 'you fucking wound me up as well!' [Hits fist into palm]. She did have it coming to her.

According to Rebecca, it was mainly younger inmates who engaged in canteen flexes. Inmates who were now in stable relationships, constructed themselves as having matured through explaining that they 'used to sleep with all the girls every week and rinse them all for their canteens' but no longer exploited other inmates in this manner:

They're quite proud of it...But in a sense 'Oh, I was only young'. So they use that as an excuse... They're putting the past and the history there. It's kind of building, 'and now I'm matured'.

Imogen, suggested that he and other masculine inmates, who were perceived as gay, were particularly at risk of such manipulation:

I think we're exploited by the straight women in here, because they tend to go for us...to get canteen and all that.

Domestic Violence and Coercion

Some relationships at the women's prison were abusive. Prisoners, like Jordan, described witnessing or experiencing physical violence:

She'd throw chairs at me up the landing. Screaming her head off...I'd let her hit me, bite me, scratch me... But when she went too far I'd knock her clean out...When it went off it went off. The whole wing would be locked up.

Alfred noted more subtle forms of coercion, explaining that relationships could involve bullying and control:

The more dominant one will be starting to tell the other one who she can contact, who she can talk to, what she can wear.

It can be difficult for staff to assess whether relationships are 'truly voluntary' or involve 'a degree of coercion' (Hopkins, 2016:para34).

While relationships can involve domestic violence, they can also provide safety from other prisoners. A custodial manager explained that some inmates will enter 'a "jail gay" relationship for protection purposes', and Rebecca corroborated that some inmates formed relationships 'to feel safe':

They don't know how to be strong on their own...So they feel like they must say they've got themselves a bird...They might walk round holding hands, linking arms...It's a confidence thing, like 'if you have a go at me I've got somebody here to back me up'.

Annabelle had recently pretended to be in a relationship to protect an inmate who was being bullied:

Because all the girls know me in here, I turned round and said to her that I was with her, so people stop bullying her.

Annabelle's actual girlfriend had experienced severe domestic abuse from a man. She commented, 'you can see when I talk to her, her head's somewhere else, and it's sad'. The majority of women in prison have experienced domestic violence (PRT, 2017), which might affect their relationships with each other.

Domestic abuse did not emerge as a theme amongst inmates in relationships in men's prisons. However, domestic violence undoubtedly occurs in men's prisons too. Bright (2015) notes prisoners' concerns that one prisoner was 'the victim of' his partner, who was 'grooming' him.

Beyond non-consensual violence and coercion, prisoners might engage in consensual but harmful behaviours. A DIRF at the women's prison demonstrates a heavily pregnant woman being separated from her partner in prison pending an investigation after another inmate informed staff they had used a bottle in a sexual act. The pregnant woman had recently been to hospital due to vaginal bleeding, causing safety concerns for her and her unborn child.

Emotional Manipulation

While some prisoners manipulate others in pursuit of material goods, as explained above, on rare occasions, prisoners use relationships as a means of entertainment.

Tay seemed proud of other inmates calling her 'sick and twisted'. She tried to seduce inmates with the aim of breaking up relationships, and particularly enjoyed trying to 'turn straight birds':

I once kissed a straight bird and she tattooed me name on her leg...I run a mile.

Tay's pride in sleeping with straight women reminded me of teenage boys bragging about taking a girl's virginity, and Morgan (1998:78) notes, 'to "turn" another woman out is to enjoy a special relationship with her not unlike that of a first sexual encounter'. Tay was in a relationship during my fieldwork with Abby, and explained they were involved in 'games against each other', trying to set each other up with other inmates, to test their loyalty.

Several participants were highly critical of Tay's behavior. Charlotte explained she had 'a filthy name' due to causing 'uproar' and leaving a 'trail of destruction':

In the last, what, two weeks, she's been with at least four people, and then she's going round, going, 'She was just a challenge. She was just a fucking slag anyway. She was easy. We'll see how easy it is to turn the straight girls'.

Billie also condemned how Tay 'plays with people's feelings':

The last one she was with was a bloody lifer that had been in a 3½ year relationship with another lifer, which she split up. It's wrong...It's people's lives.

So many prisoners vocally criticised Tay's behaviour in part because I interviewed them shortly after she and Abby staged a dramatic protest in response to staff trying

to separate them (discussed in more detail in Chapter 7), but also indicating the rarity of such behaviour.

Abby had previously been ‘manipulated’ by a partner. Once she had ‘had enough’ of their relationship, she lied to staff, saying, ‘Abby’s showing me how to cut up properly’, resulting in them being separated. She then sent notes encouraging Abby to visit her on the wing, which she did. However, unbeknownst to Abby, her partner was telling other inmates, ‘Oh my god Abby’s here again. She’s stalking me’. The situation culminated in Abby ‘getting shipped out’. She commented, ‘now I understand why she’s an IPP prisoner’.

Relationships between Inmates and Staff

I came across no instances of staff having sexual encounters or relationships with inmates.³¹ This is perhaps surprising given the prevalence of relationships between prisoners and staff documented in the U.S. literature (See Grishick, 2011 and Mogul et al., 2011), though it does corroborate Stevens’ (2015) UK-based findings. That said, I did not explicitly ask whether such relationships occur, and a lack of disclosure of relationships between staff and inmates does not mean that they do not take place. Indeed, according to Freedom of Information Act Request 111380, between 2012 and 2016 there were 133 conduct and discipline investigations of prison service employees for inappropriate relationships with a prisoner or ex-prisoner.

³¹ In the next chapter I explain that a male member of staff repeatedly entered a prisoner’s room in the early hours to try and catch them having sex.

Some participants in the women's prison describes being attracted to staff, and sometimes flirting with them. Tay boasted about being a 'little charmer' with female officers:

I flirt bad with the women staff...No one else dares do it...I'm like 'Hiya babe' to officers, and they're like 'babe?' And I'm like 'yeah beautiful'. But I get away with it because I'm cheeky...I think they're very shocked like, 'Wow, she's just called me babe. I'm an officer, it should be "Miss"'.

At a previous establishment, Trish and other straight inmates joked with an attractive gay male officer about his looks:

Us girls, the straight ones, used to give him jip, say, 'Aah it's such a shame that...What a waste.'

Both Trish and Tay's interactions with staff appeared innocuous, however raise questions regarding appropriate staff-prisoner relationships.

A few prisoners projected sexual desires onto staff. Tracy suggested that straight men and gay women worked as officers for voyeuristic reasons:

I see the men in a women's jail you think, fucking hell, they're only here for the women...But then I think, 'oh it's the same for the fucking women.'

Jordan believed he and his partner, who shared a room, were moved to different prisons because a particular officer was attracted to his 'stunning' girlfriend. This echoes prior research suggesting that male staff regard masculine inmates as competition for feminine prisoners (Girshick, 2011). Indeed, Billie suggested that male officers were intimidated by her masculinity. Abby suggested that men find it emasculating when women prefer masculine women to them.

Connor, a gay man, was accused of 'coming onto' a male member of staff, which greatly upset him. Oliver recalled a mentally unwell gay prisoner 'coming onto' him:

He did it in a very inappropriate way because he was unwell...I kind of thought, I'm not going to bother to address this as a, you know, 'LGBT rights issue', because I thought, you know what, the incident's passed...I don't think he had the capacity to know what he was saying.

Relationships Causing Problems for Prisoners

Prisoners can find being in a relationship difficult. They might struggle with the intensity of the prison setting, worry about being cheated on, or separated by staff. Prisoners can struggle to keep in touch when partners are released, and to understand their sexuality.

The Intensity of Prison

Relationships within total institutions pose unique problems. Previous research documents prison environments escalating conflicts since prisoners are unable to have time apart from each other (Kupers, 2005). Inmates, like Ali, explained that arguments between couples are heightened in prison due to enforced proximity and interference from others:

Out there...If you have an argument you can walk away, it's not blown into a big thing. But in here you can't turn nowhere, you can't go and have a drink...Out there the only person you have interfering is your mum, in here you have everyone.

Communicating a lack of desire to pursue a relationship can also be more difficult in prison, as Abby explained:

It's different than outside, whereas you'd go on a couple of dates and then think, 'actually no, I'll ignore my phone now'. In here you actually have to say face-to-face, 'I'm not that into this'.

Emma explained how the closed nature of prisons can render break-ups especially difficult:

Outside you can choose not to go to the club that they go to...If you're living together you move out ...But here you're in this little radius of a place. You bump into them constantly.

Break ups could be 'unbelievably awkward' for other inmates - Jessica explained that her house was 'split in half' when a couple separated acrimoniously, and forced other inmates to choose a side. Living in such close confines might make break-ups more likely. Prisoners noted high levels of temptation, the ease with which prisoners could form new relationships, and the fact that prisoners could not hide indiscretions from their partners.

The all-encompassing nature of relationships in prison produced a particular intensity, with couples becoming very quickly attached to each other. Tay and Abby got engaged after a matter of weeks, and, as explained in Chapter 4, Charlotte was deeply affected by her relationship of one month, even planning to return to prison to be with her partner, who had over 20 years left to serve. Grace recognized that being in prison might influence the strength of peoples' feelings for each other:

Those doubts come along. If the situation was reversed and my release date was before hers, would I feel the same about her?...Like I desperately needed her in my life?

Participants often contrasted time in and outside prison. Emma explained that the

'constant' nature of prisoners' relationships meant that 'seven months is a long time in prison for a relationship', and Nadine suggested that being together '24/7' meant that '8 months is like 8 years in jail time'. Similarly, Barry explained that inmates know their friends in prison much more deeply than they would if they were friends for the same amount of time outside prison. Sometimes the intensity of friendships made prisoners question their feelings. Casey was unsure whether she and another prisoner had been in a relationship, but resolved, 'I think it was just a close friendship' due to their lack of sexual contact. Rebecca questioned whether her friend was giving her 'signals', but did not want to compromise their friendship by asking.

Since relationships are much less common in men's prisons, participants discussed them less, however the problems they experienced were analogous to those in women's establishments. Edward identified three 'pitfalls' of relationships, all related to the intensity of prisons:

- 1) You can't get away from them. 2) If you argue there's nowhere to go. 3) If you finish with them there is a really bad atmosphere between you two on the wing, and it's hard to avoid them.

Fearing Separation

The intensity of feelings apparent in many relationships often generated a profound fear amongst couples of being separated. Prisoners described 'living on eggshells', and Olivia worried 'all the time' about being moved to a different part of the prison, or a separate establishment. Billie's partner was chosen at random to be transferred to another establishment for reasons of population management. Billie found out

only twenty minutes before her partner had to leave: 'packed and gone. It was horrible'. She applied to transfer to the same prison, but was struggling to cope with being away from her partner in the meantime.

While Billie had spent considerable time crying and temporarily withdrawn herself from prison life, other inmates were worse affected by being separated. Several participants, including Paula, noted the prevalence of prisoners self-harming:

People that are gay have even tried to hang themselves when they've split their partners up from them. They self-harm and end up on ACCTS.

Male participants also described emotional distress. Being split up from his boyfriend profoundly effected Kyle, who felt a part of him had been 'ripped away'. Edward cried for weeks and developed 'severe separation anxiety' when he was moved to another establishment. Alongside experiencing mental distress after being separated, some prisoners endure emotional difficulties during their relationships. A Probation Officer explained that because the prisoners she worked with were 'very complex', for example often having personality disorders, they struggled with 'emotional management' and 'coping skills', making relationship problems harder to manage.

Beyond administrative reasons for couples being separated, they were particularly fearful of staff purposefully separating them. It was commonly held that prisoners would report couples to staff with the intention of splitting them up. In

particular, as Emma explained, inmates who had been prevented from living with their own partners were keen to sabotage couples living together:

As soon as they find out there's another couple living together, they're right dicks. They'll turn round and they'll make it known and say 'why can't we if she can?' So then they split that couple up.

Prisoners suggested additional motives for reporting couples. Tay suggested that prisoners complained about her relationship because they were attracted to her:

I think it's just jealousy to be honest. There's a lot of girls in here that are trying to get with me.

Abby considered homophobia the roots of some complaints:

There are still some homophobic people in here that don't like seeing you kiss, and even just a peck and it's like 'oh my god, It's PDA [Public Display of Affection]'. It's not that disgusting, just because it's two girls.

Abby explained that staff separated prisoners purely on other prisoners' 'say so'.

Other inmates disagreed. Olivia suggested that while prisoners might make malicious complaints, staff would ignore them if they 'know its lies'. Rebecca explained that staff sought their own evidence, for example through 'night time checks', rather than acting upon 'rumour'. A DIRF at the women's establishment demonstrated staff beliefs that prisoners were falsely accusing a woman of touching other inmates' bottoms due to their 'own agenda' to remove her from the house.

Beyond separating actual couples, prisoners reported that friends might be moved to separate houses due to being wrongly interpreted as a couple. A straight prisoner submitted a DIRF at the women's prison after being moved to another part of the prison due to false allegations from prisoners that did not like her that she

was in a relationship with her friend and engaging in inappropriate public displays of affection.

Prisoners were particularly fearful of being moved to different establishments due to far reduced avenues for contact. Abby claimed that couples could not maintain contact via inter-prison video-link unless they could prove they had 'been together outside', which she considered a de facto ban on same-sex couples. However, Gill, the family engagement officer, suggested that staff could facilitate inter-prison video links for couples formed in prison 'if they can prove their relationship'.³² In practice, even when contact is officially allowed, it might not be facilitated. In Bright (2015) when a man was moved to a different spur for his own safety after being assaulted, he and his partner were not allowed inter-spur visits, despite NOMS allowing visits between and within establishments. When he was moved to another prison, the prison service failed to facilitate inter-prison visits, video-link or telephone contact. It can also be distressing for inmates when close friends are moved establishments, and several participants avoided forming close friendships having been upset this way in the past. However, for inmates in relationships their distress is often particularly heightened.

³² Close relatives in custody can communicate via letter, inter-prison phone calls and inter-prison visits:

"A 'close relative' is defined as a spouse/partner (including a person, whether of the same or different sex, with whom the prisoner was living as a couple immediately prior to imprisonment) and, amongst others, a civil partner. Those who have clearly demonstrated the intention to register a civil partnership...may also be included. (Bright,2015:para14).

Furthermore, NOMS considers allows visits within the same establishment on the same basis as visits between them (Bright,2015).

Fearing Infidelity

Beyond being separated by staff, prisoners feared being cheated on. Jessica explained it was tough for prisoners knowing 'it's so easy to just bed hop':

It's so easy to have your heart broke, because the temptation to move on to somebody else is too easy...Every week someone's girlfriend leaves them for someone else.

Poppy compared the temptation of being surrounded by other possible suitors to being at Disneyland, or 'taking the kids to Toys R Us'. Using a comparable simile, Billie described being in prison for Tay as 'like a kid in a sweetshop'. Since Tay had begun her current relationship by cheating on an ex-partner, she explained that Abby worried she would cheat on her:

She'll try and get me with someone else...She's testing me...Because she took me off someone else, she thinks that someone's gonna take me off her.

This fear of infidelity has been documented in other women's establishments. Hopkins (2016) noted a woman being 'paranoid that her wife is seeing another prisoner behind her back'. Aidan noted that when couples were separated into different establishments, they often became paranoid of them cheating, especially given the 'rumour mills' between prisons. Inmates also worried about partners being unfaithful in the community. Soon before her partner was released, Emma discovered she 'had a fella at home', and concluded, 'if she could cheat on him, then obviously she'd cheat on me'. Some prisoners, like Annabelle, suggested that 'jail gay' inmates were particularly likely to leave their partners upon release:

They say that they will keep in touch and that, but they don't. They go back out to men.

Jordan agreed that such prisoners failed to maintain contact:

You see them saying, 'Oh I love ya. I'll write to you as soon as you get out.' That person never hears from them again.

The fear of being cheated on profoundly affected some inmates - Christine explained that prisoners often spoke to Listeners about their fears concerning partners 'on the out'. The reality of being cheated on was also inevitably painful. Kevin entered 'self-destruct mode' after his partner cheated on him shortly after being released. Of course, such concerns and realities about partners outside prison is not unique to inmates in same-sex relationships.³³

Beyond worrying about being cheated on, inmates worried about their own infidelity being discovered by partners in the community. As noted in Chapter 4, Charlotte feared her fiancé would be able to tell that she was in a relationship in prison, worrying she had 'LESBIAN' written across her face:

He couldn't see it. But the guilt was there. He kept saying, 'what's up?' 'Summat wrong?' and I'm going, 'no, everything's fine...I've got a girlfriend!'

In Goffman's (1963:5) terms Charlotte is 'discreditable' – she is trying to conceal her same-sex relationship and 'pass' according to her partner's expectations.

Keeping in Touch with Partners at Home

Non-heterosexual inmates faced a number of difficulties keeping in touch with partners outside prison, several of which also applied to straight inmates. They

³³ However, the experiences of same-sex couples might differ, particularly if they entered their relationship while in custody together.

worried why their partners had not written to them, or answered their phones, fearing their partner was cheating on them, wanting to split up, or had come to harm. Prisoners' communication with their partners was limited by the prohibitive cost of phone calls, and their public nature. Some establishments have in-cell telephones, which Eric explained, 'changed the whole dynamics' of communication, especially for prisoners in single-cells. Barry suggested that in-cell phones were 'more beneficial than anything' to prisoners, enabling communication with partners at times that suited them, rather than only according to the prison regime.

Visits posed problems for prisoners, with their partners having to travel long distances. In men's prisons, some non-heterosexual inmates had particularly negative experiences. Eric was extremely cautious during visits due to the hetero-normative environment and lack of privacy:

A lot of my gay friends did come in and I'd be like, 'Whatever you do, don't look too camp. Let's go undercover. Let's not draw attention to ourselves'.

Eric explained that conversations he held during visits were later 'discussed around the wing'. This contrasts with previous research that presents visit halls as 'a sacred space', where observations are considered 'disqualified information' (Crewe, Warr, Bennett, and Smith, 2013:67). Colin overheard an intimidating homophobic comment after kissing his partner on a visit, making him 'very careful' in future:

It is very frustrating when he visits because we can't kiss or hold hands like I would like, and like you see other people doing. It just wouldn't be worth the aggravation.

As noted in Chapter 5, an inmate at Colin's prison defecated in another prisoner's

kettle, and called him a 'fag', after seeing him kiss a man during a visit, with staff advising the victim to be less open in future. Colin therefore knew that angering homophobic inmates could have serious ramifications, and that staff could not be relied upon for support.

Previous research documents staff prohibiting physical affection on visits only between same-sex couples (Mogul et al., 2011). However, even when staff allow a degree of intimacy, same-sex couples might feel unable to display affection for fear of other prisoners' responses.

Understanding and Accepting Identities

As explained, same-sex relationships are frequent in women's prisons, and much more accepted than in men's establishments, and perhaps also the outside community. This leads some prisoners, as noted in Chapter 4 to suggest that same-sex attraction in women's establishments evokes no feelings of shame. However, prisoners often struggle to process their feelings after engaging in same-sex relationships for the first time, and to communicate new sexual experiences or identities with loved ones.

As demonstrated in Chapter 4, for some prisoners, like Charlotte, entering relationships for the first time in prison can change their sense of self. Charlotte had been forced to confront her attraction to another woman following a joke about Valentine's Day cards:

She had made a girl a Valentine's card, and I kept going, 'I want a card'...She said, 'right I'm gonna make you a fucking card.'...And I thought, when she gives it me, as a bit of a joke I'm gonna say, 'well give us a kiss.' So when she did, I shit myself...I said, 'right, give us a kiss then' and she just give me a kiss. Then Valentine's Day comes and she's met someone else, another lifer, and she brings her near the house...I went mental. I said 'you better get her away from the fucking house'. And that was when all my friends who were with me were going, 'are you being serious, or are you joking?' And inside I was thinking, Mia, [whispers] 'I'm being fucking serious', and I'm angry about her bringing this girl. And then I started questioning me own feelings then. And I was worried, and I was worried, Mia, because it's just not what I do. I've never done it, but the feelings were there, and I knew they were.

Acknowledging and coming to terms with same-sex attraction can be difficult outside prison (Meyer, 2007) let alone in prison, while separated from loved ones and usual support mechanisms.

Relationships might also pose unique problems for transgender prisoners. None of my female transgender participants reported having had relationships, however, Jordan's gender dysphoria affected his:

When I used to sleep with my partner I wished I had, you know, I wish I was a man...She never touched me, I was a giver, she was a receiver... I hate my body...I used to sleep with a vest on, boxers.

Transgender people often have significant anxieties regarding sex (McNeil, Bailey, Ellis, Morton and Regan, 2012) and gender dysphoria can complicate feelings about sexual experiences (Nikkelen & Kreukels, 2018). Relationships might therefore provoke difficult feelings for transgender prisoners. However, relationships can also be beneficial for self-esteem. Women finding him attractive helped Jordan with his dysphoria:

Because the girls are happy with the way I am, it just seems to make me a bit happier with the way I am.

Likewise, relationships can benefit non-heterosexual prisoners, for example, after entering a relationship in prison Dennis felt 'proud to be gay' for the first time.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the prevalence and nature of relationships in prison, and how prisoners conceptualise sexuality. It has also identified ways in which relationships can be problematic, and cause problems for prisoners. In the next chapter, I consider how staff respond to relationships between inmates. I highlight the inconsistency of responses, and explore in depth the reasons why relationships are permitted and/or banned. I then outline the provisions that prisons make, and fail to make, that (would) enable physically and psychologically healthy relationships.

Chapter 7: Responding to Relationships

Introduction

Having explored the nature of relationships between inmates in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses on staff responses to relationships. It is split into four sections. The first section considers the prohibition of relationships, and how staff and prisoners understand and explain this ban. The ban on relationships is conceptualised in a number of ways; as necessary for a respectful environment, as a means to ensure GOAD, as a way of denying prisoners pleasure, and as a means of ensuring sentence progression and preventing reoffending. I then explain that some prisoners and staff believe that banning relationships causes more problems than it solves, and demonstrate that because prisoners regard relationships as symbolising sexuality, they consider a ban on relationships as homophobic, and undermining prisons' wider equalities work.

The second section of this chapter considers the circumstances under which some relationships are allowed; when they don't involve sex or PDAs, and when prisoners abide by other rules. I explain that prison administrators insist on treating prisoners as individuals, whereas some inmates seek treatment as a couple. The third section explores in detail the inconsistency of approaches to relationships. I reveal inter-prison and intra-prison variations in how couples are treated and relationships are approached. Prisoners understand this inconsistency through two main discourses; homophobia, and whether 'your face fits'. Prisoners tend to regard inconsistency as injustice.

The final section explores provisions to ensure that relationships are physically and psychologically healthy. In terms of maintaining good sexual health, I consider the provision of tests for STIs and BBVs, HIV medication, and barrier protection. I then consider the provision of relationships education, through LGBT prisoner groups, one-off health days, and dedicated courses. Finally I outline four barriers that prisoners face to practicing healthy relationships; the fear of getting in trouble; the embarrassment of discussing sex; a lack of knowledge; and the failure of prisons to stock necessary resources. I explain that within this context, prisoners create their own discourses around safe sex, and ways of achieving it.

Banning Relationships

As explained in the introduction, there is no specific rule prohibiting sexual relationships, but inmates can be punished for engaging in sexual acts. Some inmates at the women's prison, including Jessica, were adamant that relationships were forbidden:

If you're in a relationship with somebody on your house, one of you will be moved...There's notices up in each house to say that there's no sexual engagement allowed.

However, other prisoners were unsure whether relationships, and the various actions that comprise them, were allowed, which they found frustrating. Rebecca explained, 'I don't know what the prison's rules are...they should make it obvious'. Lottie agreed that the rules were 'blurry', commenting, 'The prison doesn't lay any "This is okay, but that's not"'. It's confusing'. Some inmates in male establishments reported strict bans on sexual relationships – at Gerry's establishment inmates

found having sex were separated and adjudicated for 'inappropriate behavior'. Others were less certain of prison rules. Ted asked my advice on the legality of inmates at his establishment being punished for having sex. The lack of clarity regarding relationships is part of a wider problem of uncertainty regarding what is acceptable in prison (Stojkovic, 2003).

Explaining the Ban

Expectations regarding relationships are not explicitly laid out to all prisoners. However, when relationships are forbidden, or when prisoners believe that they are banned, this is rationalised in diverse ways.

Respect

Prisoners often claimed that relationships were prohibited out of respect for others. Ali accepted that couples were not allowed to share a room, noting that male officers would be embarrassed if they saw prisoners having sex. Jessica also rationalised the prohibition of sex as based on respect for others:

If I was in a three dorm with two girls in a relationship, I'm sorry I couldn't deal with that...I don't want live porn

Beyond disapproving of sex in shared dorms, Jessica also criticized sex in private rooms, explaining, 'the walls are like paper'. There was widespread agreement in the women's prison that it was inappropriate for inmates to have sex where others could hear. In a men's prison, Iris recalled prisoners' acceptance of sexual relationships so long as they did not 'have to think about it'.

In the women's establishment, several prisoners recounted prisoners having sex in communal areas. Jessica noted that prisoners had recently had sex in the servery, in a shared kitchen, and in the sheds. Staff separated couples engaging in such behavior, and prisoners respected this approach, Billie commenting, 'they're in a prison, not a brothel'.

Beyond these rare and extreme cases of sex in public areas, inmates also disapproved of lower levels of public affection. Billie explained:

The common room's for everybody, not for you to go and lounge about all over your girlfriend...I'm gay and I wouldn't want to see it...Some women aren't gay that come in here though...It's unfair that they have to see things like that.

Ali corroborated that intimacy between couples is particularly disrespectful to straight prisoners, comparing affection in communal areas to unwanted religious preaching:

Full-on snogging, that's not right...You shouldn't ram it down people's throats. Some people are Muslim, we don't want to hear them preaching to fucking whatever, or like they don't want to hear Catholics preaching.

Nadine described her friends as 'role models for gay couples', in part because 'they're not all over each other in public'. Prisoners tended to agree that holding hands was acceptable, as were brief hugs, or pecks on the lips, but that any further kissing or cuddling was disrespectful. Amanda explained that prisoners engaging in public intimacy lacked self-respect, respect for their partner, and respect for other people. Hannah suggested the same standards applied in and outside prison: 'I wouldn't start snogging my partner in the middle of the town while everyone was

walking past. It's not a good look'.

While norms regarding sexual morality apply to straight people too, there is a longstanding and ongoing problem of intolerance towards public non-heterosexual displays of affection in particular, requiring LGB people to self-police behaviors that straight people do not have to (Hubbard, 2001) The distinction between what is acceptable in public and private in prisons is made explicit within IEP schemes, which stipulates that prisoners must behave 'with decency at all times remembering prisons/cells are not private dwellings (this includes not engaging in sexual activity)'. The same wording was provided to inmates at the men's prison as part of a list of behaviour expectations. Central to the prison service's 'decency agenda' is 'the respectful treatment of inmates' (Butler and Drake, 2007:125). Being treated with courtesy and consideration is particularly important for prisoners, as a devalued group with few other 'objective indicators of self-worth' (Ibid.:122). This might help explain prisoners' insistence that couples demonstrate respect by limiting PDAs.

Good Order and Discipline

Prisoners also understood the prohibition of relationships as rooted in the pursuit of GOAD, or at least justified by it. William explained that staff could appeal to this maxim to punish sexual activity, noting that, in fact, 'almost anything can be an offence against G.O.A.D if a senior member of staff deems it so'.

Some prisoners, like Grace, suggested that staff saw relationships as increasing the risk of violence because couples, consisting of 'two potentially dangerous, violent people' might 'team up' against other prisoners or staff, or fall out with each other. Staff had offered Ali a similar rationale:

That's how it's been explained to me in the past, 'because if you're in a relationship, if one's gonna have a fight then the other one is going to start fighting'.

Paula proved this rationale has some foundation, explaining that she and her partner 'come as a pack', meaning 'if you say something to one, you've got two of us to answer to'. Tay believed that prisoners fighting helped explain the prohibition of relationships:

I think that's why the officers try and put a stop to it...Because that's where the trouble comes from in jail really. That's what all our fights are about: birds.

Several members of staff noted that relationships were the main cause of serious arguments. Debbie explained that in men's prisons, 'gang culture' explained most violence, but that relationships caused issues in women's prisons:

Most of your fights, your arguments, your anti-social behavior, comes from relationships, relationship breakdown or maybe three way relationships going on, so jealousy and things like that.

Debbie explained that 'security implications' therefore explained the prison service's stance on relationships.

Billie explained that fighting affected 'the running of the prison', and Olivia corroborated that it was time-consuming for staff to deal with relationship-related

incidents, recalling the staff response to Tay and Abby's protest regarding being separated:

They had to stop association, they had to get everybody back on the houses and they had to get officers to escort them down to the seg.

There was also evidence of relationships posing logistical problems in men's prisons.

Eric explained that staff asked his charity to avoid 'promoting' relationships for these reasons:

[Prisoners were] going 'we want to share a pad together', and then they would have an argument and then they would go 'we don't want to share a pad'.

In Hopkins (2016) NOMS justified preventing a couple from sharing a cell on the basis of GOAD: the arrangement might be considered unfair by inmates 'unable to maintain their sexual relationships', leading to the couple being victimised.

The Denial of Pleasure and Equality with Heterosexual Inmates

Unfair on Heterosexual Inmates

Paige explained that the prison service did not allow couples to live together because this would breach 'equal rights' for prisoners in relationships with men, who struggle to have contact with their partners, particularly when they are also in prison. Indeed Gilbert, who wrote explicitly regarding the supposed neglect of straight men, felt passionately there was inequality in terms of sexual relationships:

If one sexual group can have protection for sex then heterosexual male prisoners should therefore have the right on equity basis to conjugal visits...If you are gay or bisexual or transgender I'd say they're happy enough as they can have their cake and eat it.

At the women's prison, some straight inmates also felt disadvantaged. Trish suggested relationships should be 'nipped in the bud', and couples prohibited from living in the same vicinity or working together:

I'm heterosexual, and I'm not allowed to have a relationship and have sex with a male, so why should a gay person be allowed?...It should be one rule for everyone.

Lottie suggested that relationships provided companionship denied to straight inmates:

For a straight person, that's taken away from you, isn't it? So I feel, not jealous of them, but I feel like it must be nice to have that love and support.

However, as explained in Chapter 6, Lottie also recognized that straight prisoners sometimes enter relationships to curb loneliness, and even suggested that she might herself enter a 'loving relationship' were she serving a longer sentence. In this sense, access to the benefits of relationships is not exclusive to LGB prisoners.

Eric was unsure whether prisons should allow relationships:

A straight man isn't allowed to have a relationship in prison, so actually why should the gay man?... But at the same time, why should they be split up?...[But] would it come to the stage where we're providing a double bed for them?

Craig suggested that rather than prohibiting relationships between inmates, prisons should ensure equality by allowing conjugal visits, currently prohibited in the UK (Condry, Kotova and Minson, 2016).

Prisoners in relationships routinely claimed that being with their partner

made prison more bearable. Indeed, when Kyle was in a relationship 'it didn't feel like prison'. Several inmates, like Leila, suggested that relationships were prohibited precisely because they made prison life easier:

Prisons are not supposed to be a place where you're supposed to be having a good time, so I think that's the main reason.

Tay agreed that staff prohibited relationships because people are 'in jail for a punishment'. These comments raise enduring questions regarding whether people are imprisoned 'as punishment', or 'for punishment' (Van Ginneken & Hayes, 2016:69). Rebecca explained:

You're not allowed to be padded up with somebody that you're seeing...[Because] you're getting some pleasure and obviously prison is meant to deny you of some of your pleasures, that being one of them.

Indeed, in Hopkins (2016) the judge ruled that prisoners lose the right 'to choose in whose company they can sleep' because being in prison 'inevitably curtails the rights to enjoy many features of life outside'. Emma contextualized staff perspectives on relationships within their broader judgment that prisoners were treated too well:

The way they see it is you're having a relationship in prison, the tax payer's paying for your food, your wages, your bed and breakfast. Basically you're living the lifestyle that normal people who don't take drugs out there do. You work, you get paid, you've got your partner with you...And I can understand that, I really can.

Several prisoners suggested that rules regarding relationships were outward-facing.

Emma suggested that prisons were most concerned with maintaining the *appearance* of being punitive:

They can't be seen to be, you know...It's prison...They're supposed to be taking your liberties away from you, not keeping you in a relationship, not facilitating it.

Billie also suggested that prisons were concerned with public perceptions. However, she was allowed to share a room with her partner, and noted a disjuncture between official discourse and practice on the ground:

Officially they would never admit it... Like out there, for the public to see, that they're allowing us pretty much to do what we please...So the official stance is always 'it don't go on, we don't have it. It's not acceptable'

Some inmates sympathized with the idea that prisoners should be denied the pleasure of a relationship. However, others vehemently disagreed. Paula suggested relationships should be allowed, explaining, 'people are actually living in here. This is their life'. Annabelle believed that inmates should be allowed relationships precisely because of being in prison:

I know...you're in prison for your own crime and that, but it's bad enough being in prison...Then when you get close to someone, you get split up. It's wrong...We should be allowed, because we're in prison, we should be allowed.

Staff did not reference the denial of pleasure as a reason for separating couples, however previous research demonstrates some staff considering 'freedom to express your sexuality' a privilege that should be lost behind bars (Pasko, 2010:22).

Reoffending/Sentence Progression

Several inmates referenced sentence progression as the rationale for separating particular couples. Casey's partner was just beginning a life sentence when staff

transferred her to another prison. Casey explained, 'They were saying she was trying to sabotage my parole so I'd stay with her'. Casey understood this justification, and other prisoners agreed it was sometimes necessary to separate couples for sentence progression. Emma suggested that Abby should be separated from any partner due to her promiscuity:

She causes arguments and then she ruins other people's chances of getting parole and tag.

Emma suggested that, more generally, staff tried to prevent relationships since they could incentivize imprisonment:

Prison, it's rehabilitation, not to find a new way of life and live it in here... There are so many people who just live their lives in prison, and they get obsessed with it and they don't have a life outside of it. For them, going out is like their punishment.

Trish corroborated that by becoming 'fixated' on their relationships, prisoners were 'deflecting' from 'addressing their offending behaviour'. More directly, relationships hindered prisoners' release and reintegration through incentivising imprisonment. Several prisoners, including Ali, explained they 'purposefully come back to jail' to be with their partners by committing crimes or breaching their licence to be with each other. Most prisoners who purposefully returned to prison did so for long-term partners, however, when Tay did not have a stable relationship outside prison she 'kept coming in to be with other people'. I even found evidence of couples who were together outside prison purposefully breaching their licence conditions to live together inside prison. Billie explained that at the probation hostel, she and her partner had to stay out of each others' rooms at all times, so they decided to return to prison where they had 'more freedom' to see each other.

Prisoners, like Jordan, explained that staff were cognisant of them returning to custody to be with their partners, and tried to deter this:

She used to live on that side, I used to live on this side...Officers was putting it in place because they thought 'they're coming to jail just to be together. It needs to stop'.

Ali and her partner stopped coming back into prison to be with each other, knowing that staff would keep them apart from each other, even having 'split exercise'. These rules, however, were not consistently applied. Tay had purposefully returned to prison to be with her partner, though it is unclear whether staff knew this was the case. They allowed Tay and Abby to live on the same wing to prevent 'forcing them to break the prison rules', as Debbie explained:

By keeping them apart we were actually creating more of a problem, because they want to be together. So I'm sure that they would find a way somehow to see each other...and then just ultimately getting in trouble.

In the short term, this approach apparently led to 'improved behaviour' between the couple. However, while allowing Tay and Abby to live in the same vicinity might make them easier to manage in the short term, allowing them to live in the same vicinity might incentivise Tay to reoffend again in order to be reunited with Abby, as she had done for numerous other partners in the past.

Attitudes Towards the Prohibition of Relationships

Creating More Problems than they Solve

Inmates regularly claimed that staff created problems by banning relationships, and that relationships could in fact promote good behavior. When Ali and her partner

were kept apart, they broke rules to communicate, sending 'love letters', which were forbidden based on the basis that if prisoners were passing letters they might pass illicit items:

I was going like six weeks not seeing her, and then you're passing notes and your notes are getting caught, and then you're getting done...Sometimes they made more problems keeping you apart than it did letting you see each other.

Ali explained that other establishments had internal mail systems, which at least allowed couples to stay in touch.

Abby and Tay lived on separate houses, and felt their opportunities for spending time together were insufficient. They met at the gym, where they were not supposed to socialize, and church, which Abby joked 'isn't very appropriate...Going to church to see your lesbian girlfriend'. Some prisoners clearly take issue with couples using religious services to see each other – an inmate submitted a DIRF after another prisoner called her having her arm around her partner at church 'disgusting and wrong' and suggested the devil made them gay. Abby and Tay had joint association for thirty minutes each afternoon, but found this did not provide quality time. They therefore skipped work to see each other. Some couples in the same prison had almost no opportunity to see each other, when one prisoner lived on the wing, and another on a house.

The prison expended significant resources trying to keep couples from seeing each other. Jordan had to be escorted around the prison due to his efforts to see his partner:

We would do anything to see each other. When you're in love with someone you do.

Amanda explained that she and her partner were constantly in trouble due to trying to see each other, commenting 'it'd be less paperwork' for staff if they let them see each other.

Some prisoners were unsympathetic towards couples breaking rules to see each other. During a previous relationship Billie was 'always on basic' because of skipping work to see her partner. In hindsight, she blamed herself, rather than staff, for being punished:

We weren't doing what we were supposed to be doing, and we were choosing to run about the prison and not doing what everybody else has to do. Of course I thought I was hard done by at the time, but deep down I knew it was me own fault.

Billie explained that inmates often saw such punishments as homophobic, but explained, 'the relationship didn't come into it' – she was punished for breaking prison rules. Similarly, Christine did not accept the idea that staff were homophobically targeting prisoners in relationships, instead considering them to be legitimately punishing prisoners for breaking rules. Irrespective of whether it is reasonable to punish couples for breaking rules when they are prevented from seeing each other, in practice, staff often do allow couples to live together in order to prevent such problems. After repeatedly getting in trouble for trying to see each other, staff allowed Jordan and his partner to live near each other, with the explicit hope of improving their behavior, which worked.

In a DIRF, a prisoner went so far as to claim that the prison was obliged to house couples on the same wing to avoid them being punished for breaking rules, explaining 'the prison has a responsibility to ensure that if I am in a loving relationship I should not be penalised'. Debbie explained that since allowing Abby and Tay to live together they were displaying better behavior, and clearly provided important support for each other. Several prisoners suggested that seeing their partner was good for their behavior. Annabelle explained that her girlfriend helped calm her temper, meaning she was less likely to 'end up down the seg'.

Edward noted that staff accepted relationships in men's prisons due to recognizing that they 'kept the peace' between gay prisoners, who could 'be very bitchy'. This is reminiscent of Donaldson's (2001:124) claims that officers sometimes enable couples to stay together in the belief that prisoners in relationships cause less trouble, and that separating couples might threaten 'the general peace' by creating fights. Of course, the Punk-Jocker relationship scenarios Donaldson is referring to differ greatly from those between men in British prisons.

Relationships as Representing Sexuality

At the women's prison, inmates tended to conceptualize relationships as manifestations of their sexual identities, such that when relationships were disallowed, they felt their very identities were under attack.

This can be seen in Abby's suggestions that it is easy for prisoners to be gay,

unless staff discover their relationships, and separate them:

You can be who you want in here...Unless the staff find out...Jail is a lot easier to be gay, as long as the staff don't know.

Similarly, Paula equated having to conceal her relationship with having to hide her identity:

Having to hide your sexuality, you shouldn't have to do that... I don't think you should have to hide who you are.

While describing prisoners being disgruntled with the treatment of couples, Abby referred to the treatment of gay inmates, suggesting she equates the two, commenting, 'Everyone's sick of the way they're treating people in here who's gay'. Annabelle agreed that separating couples was 'against lesbians', and Olivia implied that staff referring to PDAs as 'inappropriate' was evidence of homophobia:

They say it's 'inappropriate behaviour'. It's normal. It's not inappropriate...Holding hands, kissing, putting your arms around each other.

Terminology partly explains why inmates regard the separation of couples as homophobic. Annabelle heard a teacher criticize '*lesbian* activity' between prisoners, and Paige explained, 'We don't accept inter-prison *gay* relationships' [emphasis added]. Their use of 'lesbian' and 'gay' might be interpreted as staff taking issue with same-sex sexualities, not behavior.

Perhaps another reason that prisoners in the women's establishment considered the separation of couples as homophobic is because they experience little overt queerphobia. When I asked how prisons could be improved for LGBT

inmates, prisoners invariably focused upon relationships. In the absence of explicit discrimination, relationships became their main queer rights issue. In men's prisons, where homophobia is much more apparent, other issues took precedence.

Of course, the legitimacy that same-sex relationships are accorded can be a measure of LGB acceptance. Casey suggested that years ago staff were more accepting of relationships than they were now, which she considered ironic given that same-sex relationships were then less condoned in the community – with same-sex couples unable to marry. Outside prison there is a direct comparison between how same-sex and opposite-sex couples are treated. When same-sex couples could not marry, this was an obvious injustice because other couples could. In prison, opposite-sex relationships do not exist (unless between cisgender and transgender prisoners).

Emma contrasted the treatment of inmates in same-sex relationships in prison, to prisoners in opposite-sex relationships with partners outside prison:

They couldn't do it with a man and a woman, they couldn't turn round and say, if it was your husband, 'Right you can't ever see him now, that's it'. But they can do it with women, 'well you're progressing more so you can go on to the houses, while your wife isn't progressing as much'.

Emma treats relationships between prisoners as same-sex relationships, and prisoners' relationships with partners outside as proxies for opposite-sex relationships. In practice prisoners can have same-sex partners in the community,

making her comparison misleading.³⁴ Separating couples is considered homophobic partly because there is no simple comparisons of staff approaches to opposite-sex couples.

Unfair Due to Staff Relationships

Prisoners were well aware of relationships between staff, and able to identify specific couples. Prisoners, like Tay, regarded the prohibition of relationships as particularly unfair given staff in relationships could spend time together at work:

They're allowed to work together, walk around the grounds together with each other, but if you're a prisoner, you're not allowed...Just because they've got keys in their pockets doesn't make them any different to us... I go mad at them all the time, 'You's are allowed relationships but we're not? You should be working in separate jails or separate shifts'...They just tell me to shut up, 'It's not you who tells us how to work is it?'

Paula considered the situation particularly unfair since officers in relationships could see each other outside prison too:

We're living here, it's not just a job to us like it is for them. This is our lives. We have to live here, so we should be allowed to live how we want to... You shouldn't have to hide that you're with somebody on the fear of being split up, when that doesn't happen to them outside, so why should it happen to us?

Relationships between staff, like prisoners, can become uniquely intense, Alfred referring to them as 'very, very deep' given them working in the same total institution. Paula suggested that this should make staff more empathetic:

³⁴ That said, same-sex partners in the community could conceivably commit crimes to be reunited with their partners in prison, while opposite sex partners cannot.

They work in the same place, they go home with the same people... Their whole life revolves around them and they should understand that, because this is our life as well, but the only difference is we don't go out the gate at night.

Almost verbatim with Tay, Paula commented, 'they're no different to us, just because they have a set of keys'. They saw the power differences between them and staff as immaterial for how couples should be treated. Paula suggested that prisoners in relationships should be able to interact in the way she imagined staff couples did outside prison:

You should be allowed to give your partner a kiss ... If the officers are out in public they don't have to hide that they're kissing their partner, so why should they be allowed to do that outside and girls in here not allowed?

Rules on Relationships as Undermining Wider Equalities Work

Inmates often suggested that the treatment of couples demonstrated the insincerity of staff commitments to equality. Leila considered staff claiming not to 'have a problem with lesbians and gays' was contradicted by them separating couples:

They were saying, 'oh everyone's equal', or whatever, but then I think, 'well if that's the case then how come when people are in a relationship you just break them up?'

As seen in Chapter 5, prisoners considered staff responses to couples as undermining the sincerity of their Pride celebrations. The charity worker who ran the LGBT group that established Pride at the prison was herself unsure 'where you would reasonably draw the line' on couples showing affection. In terms of staff approaches to sex, other charity workers considered prison policies as homophobic. One charity representative explained that the Prison Officers' Association (POA)

were 'anti-condoms' because 'they don't like the idea of sex in prisons', which she considered having 'an element of homophobia about it'. Craig suggested that regarding sex in prison cells as breaching prison rules was homophobic, since this contradicted wider constructions of cells as private places:

We can't have something private for one thing and public for another purpose. For the purposes of smoking it's a private place...So therefore there is no offence.³⁵

Debbie was adamant that the prison service's approach to relationships was not about them 'not supporting equalities'. She presented allowing some form of relationships between prisoners as necessary for ensuring equality:

We need to celebrate equalities, but we just have to do that in a safe way, so it doesn't impact on other people.

She explained that disallowing 'inappropriate behaviour' in communal areas was 'not about discrimination', since heterosexual couples in the community also had to observe 'a certain standard' of behavior in public. She wanted to communicate a clear message to prisoners on what behaviours are not appropriate, to allay their perception of rules as discriminatory:

It's about getting that message out to the girls that we don't want to discriminate and the Pride event especially celebrates people's sexuality and people being different and people being allowed to be individuals, but at the same time it's about having respect for everybody else.

Beyond banning relationships being considered at odds with sexual equality, Billie suggested that it communicated a lack of commitment to equality and diversity more broadly:

³⁵ Given that smoking is now prohibited, this argument holds less sway.

They can't change other things that they want to change, move with the times, and not change stuff like that... It's either all or nothing.

Allowing Relationships

Relationships are sometimes condoned in both men's and women's prisons. Edward described a 'couldn't care less attitude' towards sexual and romantic relationships, and Iris explained that inmates found having sex at a Category C sex offender prison were allowed to continue sharing a cell - the SO who ran the LGBT group there would just check the relationship was not coercive, and that they were using barrier protection.

Beyond relationships being condoned, they are sometimes actively facilitated. At the women's prison, Billie and her partner, who had lived together outside prison, were offered a two dorm. At another prison, staff moved Linda onto the same wing as her partner, who she had met in prison, so they could spend more time together, on the recommendation of their probation officers. Staff supported Linda and her partner, who had then been released, to marry, even accompanying Linda's partner to meet the registrar. Staff facilitated their ceremony:

They let us decorate the family room...We had a little buffet for the children and then once they'd left we went for a meal...A three course meal for two...They made us a wedding cake as well. It was amazing, and then after that we went back to the family room and we just had our time.

Much research has documented couples having unofficial wedding ceremonies in prison (Donaldson, 2001, Propper, 1982, Wakefield & Spivak, 2018), while in Britain same-sex couples in prison are now having officially-sanctioned civil partnerships

and marriages.

Prisons also facilitate couples meeting each other's families. Gill had enabled several long-term partners to meet each others' children on joint visits, family days, and parenting class graduations. She explained they made these arrangements if the relationship was 'quite a long term thing' and the couples were 'gonna be together on the outside'.

Permitting Relationships, within Certain Parameters

At the women's prison, staff and inmates alike indicated that relationships were usually accepted unless they were considered to be causing problems. In prison, benefits are granted conditionally (Crewe, 2009), and relationships appear to be informally permitted on the basis of certain provisos.

Grace considered relationships a 'grey area', governed by 'unwritten rules' - although they were ostensibly prohibited, unofficially, staff allowed well-behaved inmates 'access to that privilege'. The parameters within which relationships are condoned correspond to the rationales discussed above for banning relationships – relationships were usually informally allowed if they uphold respect for others, GOAD, and did not impede sentence progression. Such concessions were limited in that staff insisted upon treating couples as individuals.

Sex

Some prisons had clear rules allowing relationships, but not sex. Abby explained that at one establishment, cell-sharing arrangements consistently reflected this position:

In that jail no-one is allowed to, if you're in a relationship you're not allowed to share a cell...There's a straight down the line, 'no sex in prison'.

Lawyers have criticised PSI 47/2011 for not clearly communicating whether sexual activity is allowed 'where there is an expectation of privacy', like in prison cells (Bright, 2015). At the women's establishment, several participants suggested that similar rules were in place. Indeed, Paige, explained that staff 'don't condone sexual activity', and so prohibited couples from living together, but facilitated 'means of them having contact'. Yet despite this seemingly clear-cut rule, she also suggested that some couples were allowed to live in the same vicinity:

Sometimes they can be in the same area, but *normally* [emphasis added] they're not on the same house, because sometimes when you put them together you're just encouraging that sort of behavior [sex].

As seen above, some couples, like Billie and her partner, were allowed to share a room, despite this providing the opportunity for sexual contact, further undermining the idea there was a consistent rule in the women's prison.

The incident involving Abby and Tay, alluded to above, was illuminating regarding staff approaches to sex. Prisoners complained about the couple having sex in communal areas of their shared house. They admitted having sex, but denied the details - Abby noted, 'it wasn't in the common room, it was in the bathroom'. After being punished in segregation, they were allowed to live on the same side of the

wing, in individual cells. This allowed them to see each other, but was intended to prevent them from having sex.³⁶ Tay explained that they had been given 'a little chance', but that one of them would be transferred to another prison if they were caught missing work to see each other or 'kissing on the avenues'.

Debbie advocated allowing Tay and Abby to live on the same wing, explaining that staff had previously been 'over-cautious' in their approach to couples:

NOMS stance is certainly being in the same room together isn't allowed...[However] there's a big difference between being locked up in the same room together, or totally kept apart.

The issue of couples having sex has been disputed in law. In Bright (2015) a judge upheld the prison's decision to hold a male couple on different wings after they were twice caught having sex during association. The judge considered this proportional given they could still see each other during work, lunch, and when attending church services. He also noted that the couple were not punished for having a relationship, but because they were 'unable or unwilling' to behave with 'common decency' in that relationship. In Hopkins (2016), a couple was initially allowed to share a cell 'on the condition that they did not engage in sexual acts', but the prison later reversed this decision, which contravened the prison's 'decency/managing relationships policy'. Staff separated the couple to prevent allegations of 'favouritism', and they were then housed on the same wing, where they had 'regular, lengthy and unfettered daily contact'. Again, their relationship was not regarded as a problem, but the potential for having sex was.

³⁶ In practice, Tay and Abby might have been able to have sex. Edward described sleeping with men in his single cell during association.

Public Displays of Affection

Inmates explained that discreet couples were condoned, whereas those who engaged in PDAs risked punishment or separation. Olivia and her girlfriend were allowed to remain on the same house as they were not 'in anybody's faces', refraining from 'kissing and cuddling in front of people'. Likewise, Emma believed that she and her then partner were allowed to continue sharing a room because they were 'behaving':

We weren't overly flirtatious in public and we weren't getting caught having sex.

Some inmates, like Emma, were critical of couples being openly affectionate because they increased staff intolerance for relationships more generally. Similar approaches to relationships existed in other women's prisons, and in men's establishments. Upon noticing 'a rather revealing love bite', Kevin and his partner were moved to different cells, whereas staff condoned Edward's relationship because he and his partner 'kept it private', rather than 'bragging about it and showing off'. Such approaches mirror those documented in American men's prisons, where staff tend to overlook consensual relationships, 'so long as the behaviour does not become disruptive or too open' (Donaldson, 2001:124).

There are no straightforward rules regarding when PDAs are too blatant. The women's prison chaplain, Alfred, suggested, 'a hug, a quick peck on the cheek is fine', but that 'serious dipping of tongues in each other's mouth' was inappropriate. However, Ali described prisoners sometimes being punished for brief pecks on the lips and even the 'inappropriate behaviour' of holding hands. The lack of clarity on

what physical contact between couples is permissible is discussed in Bright (2015). Ultimately, the judge considered it 'unrealistic and unnecessary' for prisons to 'spell out in detail the kind of physical contact between prisoners (including cuddling) that is regarded as indecent or otherwise unacceptable'.

Breaching Prison Rules

Prisoners suggested that staff usually condone relationships between inmates who otherwise comply with prison rules. Olivia, who lived on the same house as her partner, explained:

It's not affecting me at work... I'm not getting into trouble. As long as I'm not getting warnings, then I don't see that they have the chance to move us really, because I'm not causing any problems.

Grace agreed that couples could gain the informal privilege of being left alone if they complied with other rules. Being subject to staff discretion incentivized Grace to self-discipline:

As long as you don't make it hard to be managed...they'll leave you alone ...Prison is complicated, and it's subtle, there's loads of grey areas as well. So that's why it's best to be good, under the parapet, because you can bypass most things...The better you are, the more they'll leave you alone and the more the staff are willing to give you access to. I'm as good as gold on that Wing. I've got a better job for it, and staff are much nicer to me... and when my girlfriend comes, they'll probably leave me alone.

Here, the flexibility of rule enforcement encourages prisoners to behave. Officers often tolerate rule violations 'in exchange for general goodwill' (Crewe, 2009:105) and to 'fulfill their larger obligation to maintain order' (Stojkovic, 2003:275). One way of constructing "'docile" bodies' (Foucault, 1991:138) then, is to encourage self-

regulation by allowing minor indiscretions.

Being Treated as a Couple

Participants, like Casey, explained that in prison 'you can never be treated as a couple'. If her partner was being restrained, segregated or 'shipped out', Casey was not entitled to be informed. She recounted officers telling her:

I don't have to tell you nowt, because you've got your prison number, and she's got her's. You're individual. We can't see you as a couple.

Casey believed that partners should have privileged access to information about each other:

They say it's none of our business, but obviously it is our business if I'm in a partnership with her....I'd want to go and see if she's alright, or she weren't getting hurt.

When staff punished Abby and Tay for having sex in a communal area, they wanted to move Abby to the wing, and keep Tay on the house. The couple was angry at being punished separately, as Abby explained:

She was going home in three days, it was out of order. They could have put us both down the wing, we'd have still seen each other, but we would have been punished for our actions, but instead they decided to split us up.

In protest at this decision, Abby and Tay disobeyed staff instructions, and covered the floor in shower gel to prevent officers removing them. In response, staff agreed they could both be held on segregation, and walk there together – a concession presumably to limit the use of force. Abby complained that once in segregation, staff 'went out of their way' to prevent them seeing each other:

We couldn't go on the exercise yard at the same time...When she went to go home...They wouldn't even let me say goodbye...Some of the officers like the power of 'you're staying there, you're staying there and there's nothing you can do about it'.

Abby and Tay felt entitled to be punished together, as well as housed together. Tay believed that staff should allow her and Abby to live on the same wing since they knew how much they 'love each other'. Abby claimed a 'right to be able to see the person [she] loved'. This claim seems a little dramatic given that when housed separately, Abby and Tay still saw each other daily – much more than inmates in relationships with people outside prison.

Abby suggested that having a partner in the same prison should be afforded as much weight in allocation decisions as other considerations, like location near family and access to healthcare and courses:

Why not look at 'Is this person in a relationship? How long have these two been in a relationship? How much stress is it gonna cause?'

Some staff were sympathetic to the idea that relationships should be considered in transfer decisions. Gill advocated against transferring a prisoner who had a partner in the establishment, and children together:

I did ring OMU [The Offender Management Unit] and say, 'look, they're very close, the children come', but she still got moved...It was something she had to do that this prison didn't offer...They were like one family unit and then the family have to go and see one in one prison, one in another.

Similarly, an officer tried to delay Billie's girlfriend being transferred to another establishment, and when this was unsuccessful, to ensure that Billie was moved to

the same prison as quickly as possible.

Paula suggested that failing to acknowledge couples was an extension of staff denying the humanity of prisoners:

They just look at us as numbers and that's the truth. They don't care if they're shipping a person out...how it's going to affect another person if they are in a relationship.

Prisoners often refer to being treated as 'a number' to communicate feeling disrespected (Hulley, Liebling and Crewe, 2011:13).

Inconsistency in Practice

As seen above, staff respond to relationships in various ways. In this section, I explain that the treatment of couples differs according to establishment, individual staff and inmate.

Inter-Prison Differences

In general, there are inconsistencies between how officers in the same type of establishments implement rules (Loucks, 2000) and this is certainly the case for how relationships are managed. Corroborating U.S. findings (Morgan, 1998) several prisoners, including Grace, noted that how relationships are approached 'depends on the prison'. As noted above, Abby's former establishment had a 'straight down the line' ban on couples sharing rooms, which she contrasted with her current establishment's approach of '*they* can, but *they* can't'. William noted differences across the male estate:

Each prison seems to have its own unofficial policy. I've been in some where a ban is strictly enforced, and in others where a complete blind eye is turned.

William suggested that how prison officers in different establishments approach relationships depends on their prison's management. Similarly, Iris understood the 'enlightened' approach of wing staff to relationships, at an otherwise 'old fashioned' Category C prison, as the result of an extremely driven SO. She also considered the prison's sex offender designation as influential, by increasing staff recognition of the potential for sexual relationships. On the contrary, Ben suggested that sex offender prisons were especially strict on prohibiting sex, and preventing gay prisoners from sharing cells with each other. Grace suggested that security-level shaped responses to relationships – more secure establishments approaching them 'much more cautiously', and being quicker to use 'ship outs'. She found the women's prison relatively lenient.

Staff responses affect the prevalence and nature of relationships in prisons. However, other differences between establishments are also influential. Edward explained that the logistics of sex were simpler at lower-security prisons, due to less staff surveillance. William described one establishment where inmates could easily swap cells to facilitate sexual encounters, due to 'an unusually lax attitude to roll checks'. He recalled another establishment where gay and bisexual inmates, 'especially those in actual relationships' would move to a particular section of the prison 'jokingly referred to as the "married quarters"' due to prisoners being able to access each others' cells overnight. At the women's prison, staff did not supervise the houses at nights, where inmates could access each other's rooms. Abby

explained that even in other areas of the establishment, 'everyone's having sex' since, unlike other prisons, inmates were not required to keep their door open when somebody was in their room.

Whether prisons have single or double occupancy cells influence the prevalence of sexual relationships. Prisoners explained that having sex with a cell-mate reduced the likelihood of being caught. Shared cells might also encourage relationships that would otherwise not occur. Billie and a friend entered a relationship after being placed in the same room, and she suggested that it would never otherwise have occurred. William considered the 'enforced intimacy/lack of privacy' in shared cells as encouraging sexual encounters - he and a cell-mate mutually masturbated, which he explained would never have happened had they met 'in any other circumstances'.

Sex occurs more frequently in certain types of prison (Stevens, 2015), and differences in management approaches, levels of surveillance, and cell-sharing arrangements help explain this.

Differences between Staff

Previous research (Donaldson, 2001) notes that individual officers police relationships differently, which prisoners, like Ali, agreed with – some allowed her to see her partner whereas others would 'have none of it'. Likewise, as noted above, Ali explained that while most officers condoned prisoners holding hands, others 'would

give you an IEP’.

Inmates explained this inconsistency in various ways – the result of officers’ own views, their personal characteristics, and poor training. Laura, suggested that officers’ ‘personal opinions’ were influential, explaining, ‘If the officers are against it then they’re gonna split them up, whereas some officers don’t care’.

As seen in Chapter 5, prisoners considered officers’ genders and sexualities as influencing their treatment of couples. Staff demeanor also affects the implementation of rules, as Rebecca suggested – a particular teacher let a couple engage in graphic sexual discussions and openly kiss and touch each others’ breasts, when other staff would have punished these behaviours:

He keeps saying ‘behave, behave’, but he’s not strong enough to actually follow through. He’ll say twenty thousand times ‘I’ll IEP you if you don’t behave’, but the IEPs never come...They know they can walk all over him.

Emma preferred officers who strictly enforced rules, so that she knew what to expect:

You get these ones that are quite soft, but then if they’re having a bad day they’re hard arse and you don’t know how to gauge them. If you know how somebody is, they’re straight down the line, if you break the rules it doesn’t matter how much they like you, you break the rules, you’ve broke the rules.

Prisoners often referred to strict officers as ‘old school’. Rules used to be ‘harsher but less ambiguous’, and inmates today struggle with unpredictability (Crewe, 2009:109).

Inconsistency in approaches to relationships was also explained as the result of insufficient training. Abby suggested that training would help officers consistently judge couples according to certain criteria, such as whether the relationship appeared controlling, and whether the prisoners involved were abiding by other rules. She suggested that a particular officer who 'sticks up' for couples by reassuring colleagues they would monitor their behavior should be the one to 'train people up'. Debbie acknowledged officers' uncertainty on how to manage relationships, and was trying to construct 'one clear message'. Uncertainty amongst staff regarding rules on relationships is unsurprising. There is no straightforward guidance on whether 'homosexual relationships should be facilitated by locating prisoners as close together as possible or restricted' (Bright, 2015:para16).

Lottie noted a broader problem of inconsistency in officers' implementation of rules, based on a 'lack of training':

One officer will think that's okay, and another officer won't think that's okay...And that could be on anything...You never get the same answer.

Previous research notes staff uncertainty on specific rules, and variations in how they interpret and enforce those rules they do know (Loucks, 2000). Staff tend to agree on the need to enforce rules flexibly, but disagree on 'when and how' to be flexible, resulting in 'inconsistency and uncertainty' (Stojkovic, 2003:275).

Prejudice

The lack of clear guidance regarding the management of relationships has been criticised for leaving couples open to being arbitrarily separated, or sanctioned for displaying affection, by homophobic staff (Bright, 2015, Dunn, 2013). Inmates often considered individual officers' attitudes towards homosexuality as influencing their response to relationships. Paula claimed that staff who separate couples 'don't like gays' and Nadine suggested that a particular officer separated couples because he 'doesn't like girls with girls'. There was often no overt evidence that the officers were homophobic, with prisoners' suggestions based more on the 'healthy suspicion' discussed in Chapter 5 (Sue, 2010:73).

Abby believed that staff allowed her and Tay to walk to segregation together due to the presence and influence of a lesbian officer, and a few officers 'that are okay with it', whereas segregation staff kept them separated because they were 'not homophobic, but don't really give a shit about gay rights'. Prisoners also saw homophobia in staff separating friends for innocuous physical contact— a gay woman submitted a DIRF after being punished for playfully pulling her friend's pajamas bottoms off, knowing she had shorts underneath. She explained there was no 'sexual intent', but the behavior was reported as such by a fellow inmate, and resulted in her being moved houses.

Paula suggested that when staff enforced rules on relationships more vehemently than other rules, this was evidence of homophobia. She considered it 'disgusting' that couples had to 'live on eggshells', while other prisoners lacked

repercussions for breaking other rules:

[They're] supplying drugs in the jail, but they're left alone, and then they're on the people's case because they're gay.

This claim, that staff selectively enforce rules due to homophobia is difficult to prove. Staff mistreatment tends not to encompass blatant abusive acts, but 'distortions of policy and procedure', making mistreatment s hard to prove (Crewe, 2009:105). When prisoners complain of staff only punishing minoritised inmates for breaking rules, an example of 'routine favouritism', these accusations are almost invariably dismissed (Edgar & Tsintsadze, 2017:vi). It is therefore very unlikely that similar claims of homophobia based on staff separating prisoners in relationships will be upheld.

William suggested that homophobic governors could shape a whole prison's approach to relationships, their 'prejudice and ignorance' impacting the behavior of officers on the ground. Homophobic prison staff of all grades undoubtedly exist, and it is indeed plausible that their personal biases would result in officers enforcing rules banning relationships particularly stringently. This would corroborate U.S. based research (Morgan, 1998, Donaldson, 2001).

Transphobia might also influence staff approaches to relationships. Ali explained that officers were particularly keen to prevent a transgender man entering relationships:

They were like scared...She [sic] got with some girl and they were a bit funny about it...They wouldn't let them on the house together and that. I think that's because she [sic] was like a lad.

Staff Emphasizing their Lack of Prejudice

Staff were often conscious of appearing homophobic, and so tried to differentiate between their approach to relationships in prison, and their personal views on same-sex sexuality. Paige explained:

We don't have an issue with people being gay, which is what I communicate...We have the lead paths and the equalities to make sure everyone isn't discriminated against...But we can't accept relationships within the establishment.

Similarly, Alfred explained that relationships were not discouraged because of 'the basic principles', but because they often caused problems - inappropriate displays of affection, fights and abusive behaviour. Like Paige, he felt the need to communicate this distinction to inmates, explaining to same-sex couples that he his perspective on prisoners marrying was unrelated to their sexuality:

They think we're picking on them... I think that's because of historical views on their relationships...You have to try and get that message over, that this isn't anything to do with your sexuality, this is all about the practicalities of relationships.

Beyond reiterating their lack of homophobia to inmates, an officer at the women's prison even submitted a DIRF due to being offended at a prisoner's claim that she was homophobic after separating her and her partner for anti-social behaviour.

Donaldson (2001:124) documents homophobic staff engaging in 'private witch-hunts' to catch prisoners 'in the act', and when an officer 'kept busting in the room at 6 o'clock in the morning' to try and catch Billie having sex, he would say, 'This is not acceptable...Out there this is fine, in here it is not.'

Despite staff efforts to distinguish their approach to relationships in prison and views on homosexuality, inmates often remained sceptical. Paula maintained that, contrary to their stated rationale, staff separated couples due to homophobia:

Some of them don't like it and they'll go, 'well it's a security risk',
when you know it's not.

In prisons, decisions are often 'simply attributed to 'security' with little further explanation' (Crewe, 2009:112), which understandably creates scepticism. Similarly, Abby suggested that staff use overcrowding as an excuse when moving prisoners in relationships to other establishments.

Individual Prisoners

If Your Face Fits

At the women's establishment, inmates repeatedly suggested that staff show greater leniency to couples whose 'faces fit'. Crewe (2009:110) refers to 'whether 'your face fits'' as 'a motto of the modern prison', highlighting the negative aspects of discretionary power. Indeed, Emma explained that beyond relationships, particular members of staff would enforce any rules differently depending on 'how much they like' the prisoner in question.

Rebecca suggested that 'if your face fits', staff will 'turn a blind eye' to prisoners being in a relationship, and even sharing a room. Likewise, Paula explained:

Sometimes they let a couple [share a room] if the officers like them, but they won't let another couple, because the officers don't like them people. It's like if your face fits with some of them.

Rebecca speculated that 'what makes your face fit' is staff knowing and trusting you to behave:

Maybe it's if you've been in prison a lot before. Maybe it's like, 'oh well here's an old timer', and then they've got a history then. They're like, 'oh this person kicks off', or 'this person doesn't kick off'.

Other prisoners shared this perspective. Abby explained that she and Tay being 'quite naughty' made staff less inclined to allow them to live in the same vicinity compared with other couples. Power in prison can be 'deferred', with inmates facing repercussions long after their negative behaviour (Ibid.:114), and staff tried to separate Ali and her partner based on how she used to behave before she was even with her girlfriend. Ali considered such delayed ramifications unfair. Paula recognized that prisoners' behavior determined staff treatment, and knew that staff would separate her from her partner if they discovered the relationship because neither of them 'suck hole'. She was not willing to alter her behavior for leniency, commenting, 'You need to be up their arse, or snitching ... I don't do me jail like that'.

A Probation Officer corroborated that prisoners' behavior helped explain inconsistency in the treatment of couples:

It's probably dependent on how chaotic the individual is. So if they present as quite stable, trustworthy, there are no issues, they live together, but if they're not, they're moved apart.

Staff are known to use discretion to benefit those inmates they have positive relationships with (Ibid.), and other marginalised groups, like Black and Asian inmates, have complained about the unfair distribution of punishments and privileges (Phillips, 2012).

Easy Pickings

Some prisoners suggested that staff viewed all relationships negatively because of the actions of a minority of couples who behaved disrespectfully, threatened GOAD or prevented each others' sentence progression. Olivia considered this unfair, noting 'it's not all bad and you can get sensible people that are taking it serious'. Prisoners suggested that staff targeted couples that were easiest to separate, irrespective of whether they in particular were causing problems. Casey, explained that it is easiest to separate prisoners in long-term, stable relationships:

They obviously can't split up a bed hopper... She'll just be on to the next girl. So it's the serious relationships what they start trying to fuck up.

Inconsistency as Injustice

Inmates frequently complained about staff separating some couples while allowing others to remain in a relationship. Paula declared, 'you can't have one rule for one and one rule for another'. Prisoners, like Lottie, explained that inconsistency produced 'jealousies and frustrations' amongst inmates. Those who had been separated from their partners, like Ali, were highly resentful:

They wouldn't have us anywhere near each other...They were saying, 'we do not have couples together.' Now if you're gonna say that then don't put them two in together. There's got to be a bit of consistency.

Ali noted prisoners routinely 'kicking off' because of only certain couples being allowed to share a cell. Inmates, like Hannah, who believed their relationship should be particularly highly regarded felt especially aggrieved. She explained that prisoners in new, uncommitted relationships could live in the same vicinity, enabling them to sleep together, while she lived with her partner outside prison yet 'cant even get on the same house'.

Since prisoners can easily 'compare circumstances', inconsistent treatment is easily translated into a sense of injustice (Liebling, 2009:20). Ali advocated a comprehensive rule prohibiting all couples from sharing rooms:

If you're gonna say 'no' to one person it should be 'No, couples can't be in their room together'.

She claimed that staff discretion would always unfairly affect 'naughty' prisoners, and suggested that staff should not treat couples differently 'just because of how they behave':

Everyone's different...It only went like that with Abby and Tay because of who they are - just because Tay's a bit cheeky and all that, and Abby's the same. That's not her fault. It's the way she is...It's always gonna be [staff] judging you on who you are, and how you go on...That shouldn't come into it.

Conversely, Billie considered allowing some couples to live together better than a blanket ban. When Billie first arrived in prison, staff did not allow couples to live together 'full stop'. She considered it preferable that staff now made decisions 'on an individual basis'.³⁷ Billie and Ali's divergent views suggest it might be impossible

³⁷ In contrast to Billie, other women in prison suggested that staff had become stricter on

for staff to gain legitimacy in the eyes of all inmates. Prisoners critique officers for both 'imposing rules too literally', and 'being inconsistent' (Crewe, 2009:96).

Beyond resenting inconsistency within the same establishment, prisoners sometimes drew comparisons with different jurisdictions. Daniel suggested that prisoners in romantic and/or sexual relationships should be allowed to share cells, remarking, 'They do it in Holland, so why not England?' Similarly, Linda suggested that conjugal visits should be allowed for long-term couples, noting, 'We're in the European Union, some of their prisons do'.

Relationship Provisions

The first section of this chapter explored how staff condone and punish relationships, and prisoners' responses. I now consider the ways that prisons promote psychological and sexual health within the context of relationships.

Screening and Prevention

As noted in Chapter 2, prisons must provide healthcare equivalent to that accessible outside prison. This includes sexual healthcare. In 2013, the government committed to introducing opt-out testing for Hepatitis C, Hepatitis B and HIV. I found high levels of awareness amongst prisoners that they could access tests for STIs and BBVs. The women's health nurse explained that uptake of tests was high since many inmates did not access healthcare outside prison.

relationships, and particularly couples sharing rooms, during the same time span - a discrepancy presumably based on having been in different establishments.

Prisons are required to provide HIV medication and disinfecting tablets³⁸ to prevent the transmission of BBVs. In prison, the key transmission routes are sharing drug-taking equipment, tattooing and piercing, and unprotected sex (NAT, 2011). More could be done to prevent the spread of BBVs via these routes; for example, charity workers noted that some prisons in other jurisdictions have official tattoo parlours and needle-exchange systems. The lack of access to clean needles means that prisoners having unprotected sex are more likely to encounter BBVs.

Prisons are required to make condoms available³⁹ however I found variability in access to barrier protection and lubricants, corroborating previous research (Howard League, 2013). At some prisons, contraception is easily accessible. One Category C sex offender prison had particularly good provisions. Inmates could access condoms and lubricant at GBT support groups, from LGBT and other equalities representatives (perhaps facilitating access for sexually active non-LGBT prisoners), from Listeners, and from healthcare, with staff actively offering these provisions during health checks on reception. An HIV charity representative praised a programme in another prison, where inmates could anonymously access condoms from vending machines. At my two main research sites inmates could only access contraception by request from healthcare, which they very rarely did. At the women's prison, inmates were often unaware that these provisions were available, as discussed further below. The men's establishment's condom policy specified,

³⁸ Prisons in Northern Ireland are not required to provide disinfecting tablets (National Aids Trust, 2011).

³⁹ Prisons in Northern Ireland have until recently not provided condoms. However, Carr et al., (2016) explain that a few prisons now provide condoms, and that this provision is due to be rolled-out across the estate.

‘condom availability will be highlighted during healthcare reception screening, induction talk and healthcare information leaflet’.

Some staff are reluctant to provide condoms. The women’s health nurse emphasised that dental dams could be supplied *‘if ladies ask for them’*, explaining that staff are ‘not supposed to encourage relationships’. This concern that offering contraception too freely is akin to promoting relationships is widespread – courts have upheld establishments limiting access to condoms on the understanding that making them freely available might ‘be seen to encourage homosexual activity’ (Howard League, 2013:4). Some staff were concerned about barrier protection being used for illicit purposes. One healthcare worker explained:

We don’t want to promote that they’re just given to anybody, because people will just pick them up and they’ll be used for anything.

A, HIV charity representative explained that staff illogically feared that condoms would be used as water bombs, and Craig noted concerns that prisoners might use them to carry drugs. Similarly, Curtis suggested that reluctance to provide condoms at his prison’s sexual health clinic, was rooted in the belief that prisoners would use them ‘to hide illicit items in certain places’. As explained in Chapter 5, the risk-averse nature of prisons can result in staff denying provisions on security grounds.

Education

LGBT Groups

Some prisoners learn about the transmission of STIs and BBVs during LGBT groups.

At the group Iris observed, prisoners were taught about safe sex, including why it is important to use lubricant, ensure that condoms are still in date, and fit correctly. The group was established with an explicit focus on sexual health, in terms of sexual behavior and mental wellbeing. Craig explained that mental wellbeing fosters good sexual health since 'if people feel better about themselves, they're less likely to engage in high risk-taking behavior'. There is a proven association between mental ill health and unsafe sex (Sikkema, Watt, Drabkin, Meade, Hansen and Pence, 2010) and Craig suggested that through enhancing prisoners' wellbeing, the group contributed to better sexual health.

Not all sexually active inmates attend LGBT groups – some prisons do not have this provision, not all LGBT inmates attend those groups that are available, and some inmates who have sex in prison are not LGBT. Craig explained that heterosexual men who have sex with men are particularly vulnerable to contracting HIV due to their different perception of proximity to HIV, thinking 'It doesn't happen to straight people, it happens to them gays'. NAT emphasise the importance of taking active steps to ensure that prevention materials are available for men who do not identify as gay or bisexual (NAT, 2015). It is therefore important to provide sex education to prisoners who might not identify as LGBT.

Health Days

Prisons run intermittent health promotion days, some of which include a sexual health focus. At the men's prison, one such event had included talks on safe sex and

condom demonstrations. These events provide information to large numbers of inmates. Joseph, an HIV charity worker, recalled running a stall on HIV, BBVs and STIs at a recent health day attended by over 400 prisoners.

As noted in Chapter 5, the women's prison disseminated sexual health information at its Pride event. A member of staff explained that prisoners could speak to them, or take leaflets if they were 'worried or embarrassed'. However, as explained, few prisoners engaged with the stalls.

Courses

Beyond one-off educational events, the women's prison ran a five-week relationship and sex education programme. A member of healthcare staff explained that the programme, which inmates called 'sex school', was relaxed, accessible, hands-on, and 'really good fun'. To keep groups 'intimate' and confidential, groups were small, reflecting best practice for delivering sex education (Pound et al., 2017). However only allowing up to 8 prisoners per iteration means only a small proportion of inmates could access this education.

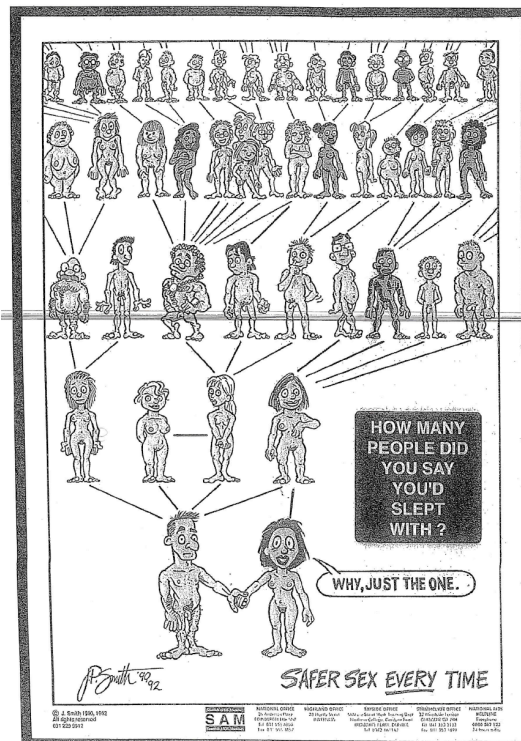
Initially, staff invited inmates who appeared young, 'vulnerable' or ill informed during sexual health screenings. More recently, a prisoner representative advertised the course through word of mouth, and referred inmates she believed would benefit from it. The course was not openly advertised, and knowledge of its existence was limited. However, participants who completed the course received a

sperm key ring, which I had seen prisoners use, and could be an effective advertising tool.

The choice of a sperm key-ring perhaps reflects the hetero-normative lens of the course organisers, who explained that a prisoner had complained about resources excluding non-heterosexual people:

She pulled the sex tree out and she went, ‘there’s nobody gay on there’, and we looked at it, didn’t we? And it was just something that we hadn’t even thought of...So we gave her the sex tree and said, ‘right you pick who you want us to mark off’. So it was her kind of input to it, and we still use that today.

4.1 Sexual History Tree



The updated diagram now demonstrates that same-sex couples are also at risk of STIs, and staff explicitly catered for women in same-sex relationships by making explicit that lesbians also need smears, and advertising the availability of dental dams.

However, Aidan noted hetero-normativity in other forms of relationship education:

A lot of the domestic violence courses, in my experience, it's always stereotypical male/female roles, the male being the perpetrator. They used to put signs, not so long ago, around the prison on 'What is a healthy man?' What signs to look for, either healthy or unhealthy versions of *men*...When actually that can apply to, it doesn't matter, male or female.

American prisons offer relationship education that is insufficiently inclusive of same-sex relationships (Severance, 2005), and hetero-normativity in sex education is prevalent in Britain. Guidance for teachers on sex education was last issued in 2000, when Section 28 was still in force, and makes no reference to LGBT people. From September 2020, relationships and sex education in schools will include LGBT families, sexual orientation and gender identity (though there has been backlash at this decision).

Domestic Violence

The final session of 'sex school' focused on alcohol, and included communication, consent and domestic violence. A Probation Officer explained that prisoners experiencing domestic violence could participate in The Freedom Programme, which previous research suggests is hetero-normative, for example focusing on male perpetrators, and is sometimes experienced as alienating by lesbian participants (Watkins, 2009).

Prisoners doubted that inmates in domestically abusive relationships would seek help. Ali noted the lack of a named governor for supporting prisoners with domestic violence, explaining that prisoners who were 'getting leathered' might feel

uncomfortable disclosing this to a 'random officer'. In the absence of a specialist, trained member of staff, inmates might access help via more general support systems. Alfred indicated that the chaplaincy had offered support to inmates in controlling relationships, and a psychotherapist helped Bob learn how to refuse unwanted sexual advances. However, mental health provisions within prison are currently inadequate (NAO, 2017).

A probation officer at the women's prison explained that staff could separate prisoners in abusive relationships if this were 'in their best interest'. While it might sometimes be necessary to separate couples, the fear of being split up prevented inmates from seeking help. Nadine explained, 'one of yous would get shipped out if there's domestic violence, so I don't think anyone would go for help for that'. As an LGBT rep at a previous prison, Abby supported prisoners in relationships, and believed that inmates were more comfortable speaking to their peers than staff about domestic abuse. Peer supporters can offer 'shared experiences and perspectives', and are usually 'more readily available' than staff (HMIP, 2016:4).

There were no provisions at the women's establishment to work with domestic abusers, and a Probation Officer explained there are no offence-focused programmes for women convicted of domestic or sexual violence. This is particularly problematic given that individual probation officers 'just don't have the resources' to provide one-to-one work that could help fill this 'gender-related gap' in provisions. Given that a significant minority of bisexual and lesbian women and

transgender men experience domestic abuse (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018a), it is likely to be commonplace in women's prisons

Sexual Identity Provisions

There is a clear lack of support for prisoners struggling to understand their gender and sexuality. At the women's establishment, 'sex school' did not acknowledge that relationships in prison might raise questions regarding identity. However, the course that Linda was being trained to deliver might be more promising in this regard. A probation officer routinely discussed relationships with inmates she worked with, recognizing their prevalence and ability to affect sentence progression, but doubted that all of her colleagues consistently asked about relationships. Of course, external LGBT charities support some inmates regarding identity, as noted in Chapter 5, though this provision is relatively rare. U.S. research recommends services to support prisoners to understand their sexual identities (Severance, 2005), which are clearly also vital in Britain.

Barriers to Support

Fear of Getting in Trouble

Corroborating Irish research (Carr et al., 2016) prisoners were reluctant to request condoms because sex is prohibited. Prisoners, like William, saw requesting condoms as akin to 'admitting to the likelihood they will be committing an offence', and so feared negative repercussions. Nadine found it illogical that prisons stocked condoms yet proscribed sex:

If you're caught while using it, you'd get a nicking...So why supply them if you're gonna get nicked for using them?!

At the women's prison, inmates were particularly worried that requesting contraception would result in couples being separated. An HIV charity worker suggested that prisons should explicitly inform all inmates they could access condoms 'completely legitimately'.

Embarrassment

A second barrier to safe sex is the awkwardness of having to request contraception. Charity workers repeatedly mentioned this problem - one representative comparing having to request condoms to being treated like a teenager. Mo was unable to provide condoms, and doubted that prisoners he signposted to staff would feel comfortable requesting them. A final charity worker suggested inmates who had to be escorted to healthcare were particularly unlikely to request condoms, rather having 'unsafe sex than have that embarrassment'.

At the women's prison, several inmates found healthcare provisions more generally to be awkward and insufficiently confidential. Laura therefore felt 'too embarrassed' to discuss sexual health, and finding healthcare staff 'rude and unpleasant', Lottie did not trust they would respond professionally:

I could imagine it would be like, 'contraception?!' I can imagine they'd find that quite hilarious. I suppose they'd be talking about it in the staff room.

Carr et al., (2016) documented confidentiality concerns regarding requesting

condoms.

Lack of Knowledge

Inmates were often unaware they could access contraception. Tay explained, 'they don't condone [sex] so you don't get safe stuff', and Casey agreed that contraception was unavailable in women's prisons:

I've heard that in men's jails they give condoms out. In here obviously they don't give nothing out...It shouldn't be about, 'oh you can get tested when you want'. They should try and provide things what *prevent* wanting to get tested.

Beyond not knowing contraception is available, some prisoners might not understand its importance. Healthcare staff noted female prisoners' mistaken beliefs that they could not contract STIs from same-sex relationships. Imogen believed that sex education was largely unadvertised in the prison because staff did not want to 'encourage' sexual relationships.

Failing to Stock Provisions

The final barrier to safe sex that I encountered was establishments running out of sexual health provisions. On arrival to prison, staff confiscated Eric's condoms, telling him, 'you don't need these in prison, you won't be having sex'. He fought for several months to access contraception and lubricants, with different prison providers shirking responsibility:

G4S said it was healthcare I needed to go to, and healthcare was saying it should be G4S.

G4S had not purchased any condoms since taking over the healthcare contract. Because inmates rarely request contraception, for the reasons outlined above, prisons might lack the impetus to keep stocks replenished. An HIV charity worker noted that prisons also failed to stock sterilizing tablets – they would buy them en masse, find they were rarely used, then stop buying them altogether, existing stock becoming out-of-date.

At the women's prison dental dams were available, although prisoners were almost invariably unaware of this. However, other barrier protection might be more appropriate. No participants reported using dental dams in or outside prison, and most had never even seen one. Dental dams are rarely used among women who have sex with women –latex gloves and condoms are more commonly used (Richters, Prestage, Schneider & Clayton, 2010).

Efforts at Safe Sex

Lacking easy access to contraception, prisoners sometimes used other means of protection. Some inmates were discerning about their choice of partner. Grace only slept with 'decent people' who she assumed had no infections, and Jordan chose not to sleep with 'dirt' or 'jail bikes'. Tay asked prospective sexual partners whether they had STIs, and if she doubted their reply, would make them get tested. Prisoners also tried to avoid STIs by limiting their range of sexual acts. Jordan explained, 'What I see as safe sex is no oral', and William noted the 'saving grace' of inmates not using condoms was that most sexual acts were 'less risky'.

Substantiating previous findings (Carr et al., 2016) when prisoners lack safe-sex materials, they sometimes construct their own. Tay explained that unable to access lubricants, some inmates created their own using Vaseline and 'spray bottles'. In contrast to Tay's claim to 'know for a fact' that lubricants were prohibited, the women's health nurse tentatively suggested they could prescribe lubricant if it were requested. Prisoners lack explicit information regarding the sexual health provisions available.

Conclusion

I have demonstrated that prison responses to relationships vary according to establishment, staff, and individual inmates. Prisoners are often unclear on rules regarding relationships, and provide different rationales for them being prohibited or allowed. While some inmates can access resources for healthy relationships, consistent provision is lacking, and too many inmates remain unaware of what support is available.

The next chapter concludes the thesis. It draws together the major themes discussed across Chapters 4 to 7, summarises the main contributions of this thesis, and suggests avenues for future research.

Concluding Thoughts

This concluding chapter begins by highlighting the major themes that have arisen from my empirical research, and explaining their implications for both British prison studies and queer criminology. I then draw out policy implications, and finally, consider the study's limitations, and avenues for further research.

Major Themes and Implications

Visibility

The first key themes relates to the visibility of LGBT prisoners. Cisnormative and heteronormative assumptions render gender and sexual minorities invisible behind bars. Non-heterosexual feminine women are often considered straight, and transgender men considered masculine women. Facing being closeted by other peoples' assumptions, some prisoners openly assert their LGBT status, preferring potential overt hostility to living a lie, or confident of receiving acceptance. Some LGBT prisoners, somewhat surprisingly, find the closed prison environment allows them to openly profess their identity in ways they could not in the community.

Other LGBT inmates choose invisibility due to concerns about their safety, or their minoritised sexuality becoming a 'master status' (Becker, 1963). Straight, cisgender prisoners avoid this risk given their hegemonic identities - rather than dominating how they are perceived by others, their sexualities and genders are in fact 'invisible' (Earle and Phillips, 2013:119). Exaggerating their minoritised identities, rather than being discreet, might gain LGBT prisoners more acceptance,

albeit tokenistic. In men's prisons, inmates considered gay, but who do not openly assert this identity, receive particular hostility. They exist in a 'glass closet', having an 'open secret' (Sedgwick, 1990:165) that engenders hostility from prisoners who value authenticity.

While some people are *interpreted* as LGBT, others are more explicitly 'outed' - their LGBT status made visible without their consent. Inmates or staff sometimes share confidential information, and media reports can also reveal a prisoner's gender or sexuality. Sometimes prisoners are unable to conceal their LGBT status. For transgender women who have socially transitioned and are housed in men's prisons, their transgender status is self-evident due to their gender nonconformity. In women's prisons, transgender men who have visibly physically transitioned are inevitably 'outed' as transgender given cisgender men are never housed there.

Transgender and gender-nonconforming people are sometimes unable to visibly present their gender in prison. Some women's prisons fail to stock masculine clothes, and in men's prisons, transgender women have been required to wear men's clothes in public areas - wearing overtly feminine clothes being considered as increasing the risk of violence towards them. Transgender prisoners also struggle to access the medical treatment required to enable them to physically transition.

LGBT prisoners are more visible in certain types of establishments, most notably sex offender prisons and in certain areas of individual prisons, like VPUs. In

calmer, less violent environments, prisoners are more able to openly present their identities, encouraging further inmates to come out, and enabling the success of LGBT support-systems, producing a cycle of visibility.

Since Sykes's (1958) landmark study revealed imprisonment as an affront to identity, research has reflected on prisoners' abilities to express themselves in such a dehumanizing environment. Presentation of self remains a central concern of contemporary research on how marginalized groups experience imprisonment (see, for example, Phillips, 2012). Such research often centres on identities that are apparent, whereas this research focuses on concealable characteristics.

Cisnormativity

British prisons research still invariably presents male establishments as holding all and exclusively male prisoners, and female establishments all and exclusively female prisoners. Beyond failing to engage with the existence of transgender prisoners, the sociology of imprisonment also lacks a thorough engagement with gender nonconformity behind bars. My findings evidence the damage that cisnormative regimes cause to transgender and cisgender prisoners alike through failing to provide gender-appropriate services, such as boxer shorts in women's prisons. Prisons researchers must change their terms of reference and terminology to reflect the existence of people of all genders in prison. Prisons masculinities research should be extended to include inmates in women's establishments and LGBT prisoners in men's prisons.

Relationships

Very little British research concerns relationships in prison, resulting in academics understanding them in terms established by outdated North American studies.

Chapters Six and Seven reveal relationships as an important structuring mechanism in women's prisons, not through the occurrence of pseudo-families (Giallomardo, 1966), but because of the prevalence of sexual and romantic relationships, which involve most inmates at some point. While these relationships can provide comfort, as is commonly recognized, they also involve love, sex and exploitation. I have presented a hierarchy of relationships in women's prisons, those most revered being long-term, monogamous, and consisting of inmates who have had same-sex relationships outside prison. Sexual coercion is not confined to men's establishments, nor loving relationships to women's.

Relationships can profoundly affect prisoners, inducing them to change how they identify, come out to friends and family, or even purposefully return to prison, with resulting implications for research on reintegration and reoffending.

Relationships affect other inmates too, who observe, interfere in, and help pick up the pieces from arguments, betrayals and losses. Discontent with the management of relationships fits within Crewe's (2011) explanation of the pains of uncertainty and indeterminacy. British researchers still draw on decades-old concerns with how prisons attack personal identities. Beyond prisoners' pain at being treated without individuality, my research demonstrates that prisoners in relationships feel disrespected by being treated separately, rather than as a couple. In women's

prisons, relationships represent sexuality, meaning that affronts to relationships are considered homophobic.

Understanding identities

During, and sometimes as a result of their imprisonment, some people change their gender or sexual identity. Entering same-sex relationships for the first time can lead to new self-understandings - prisoners might identify with temporary sexualities like 'gay for the stay', maintain a heterosexual identity despite new behaviours, or adopt new, permanent identities. Prisoners can encounter new concepts behind bars, through meeting transgender people for the first time or learning new sexuality labels at LGBT groups. While it can be empowering and liberating to forge new identities, there are accompanying challenges, like coming out to loved ones. My research sits within wider research on the construction and management of identities in prison. The prisons literature on marginalized inmates would benefit from drawing out the differences between entering prison with a marginalized attribute and acquiring it during prison, for example through transitioning, ageing or converting religions.

British criminological research on LGBT people, and gender and sexuality as concepts, remains sparse. This thesis seeks to demonstrate the salience of gender and sexual diversity to the dynamics of prison life. It contributes to British queer criminology and prison studies, through its presentation and analysis of rich, qualitative data.

Implications for Prison Policies

I have provided clear evidence that prisons need to improve their approach towards relationships between inmates. Rules are often unclear to inmates and staff, are inconsistently applied, and lack a clear rationale. Couples often regard their treatment as discriminatory, based on a dislike for them as individuals, or non-heterosexuality more broadly. Fearing separation, prisoners often try to conceal their relationships and therefore struggle alone with problems like domestic violence and homophobic bullying, and have unsafe sex. Prisons should communicate clear, rationalised rules regarding relationships. Staff must explicitly publicise barrier protection and lubricants, implement anonymous access, and reassure prisoners that possessing safe-sex materials is legitimate. Prisons should provide, and again, advertise, LGBT-inclusive sex education, and relationship support.

Rather than perpetuating cisnormative ideals, prisons should actively enable transgender and gender-nonconforming prisoners to present their identities. They must openly communicate and facilitate access to masculine or feminine clothes, shoes and accessories, and guidance on socially and physically transitioning should be available to all prisoners. Prisons should provide, and advertise, expert LGBT counseling for all who need it.

Peer support mechanisms like LGBT representatives and groups should be proactively initiated, maintained and publicized. Confidentiality must be upheld for those who desire it. All staff should complete existing online equality and diversity

training. Specialized staff, in particular, need to be well versed in LGBT issues and keep abreast of changing terminology and best practice. Where possible, equalities responsibilities should only be allocated to staff with a genuine enthusiasm and interest in these areas. Staff should proactively prepare to treat transgender people respectfully and there must be sanctions for those unwilling to respect names, pronouns, and agreed searching procedures.

Staff should implement a zero-tolerance approach to queerphobia, including ‘banter’. They need to openly communicate that inmates can report queerphobia from staff or other prisoners via DIRFs, and that complaints will be answered confidentially, without negative repercussions. Prisons should take seriously their duty of actively fostering good relationships between LGBT and straight, cisgender prisoners, for example through celebrating calendar events and stocking relevant library materials. Staff should communicate that equality is not a zero-sum game, and that producing equal outcomes requires equitable rather than identical treatment.

Some improvements for LGBT prisoners are practical and easy to implement, whereas other more systemic issues require more effort and resources. The experiences of LGBT prisoners clearly prompt calls for changes to policy and practice. However, focusing on policy implications, risks trying to fit LGBT inmates into the current prison system, rather than asking how we can use their experiences to problematize, and reimagine the way we treat people who contravene laws. This research raises broader questions, such as whether prisons should be segregated

according to gender, or other markers of identity, whether it is possible for prisons to do more good than harm to marginalised individuals, and whether prisons could ever fully eliminate discrimination and foster good relations between inmates.

Limitations and Avenues for Further Research

This project should be extended through further research. Given my research's exploratory nature, qualitative methods were best suited, and quantitative methods could help determine the prevalence of the phenomena I document. The treatment of transgender prisoners is a fast-moving field, necessitating research into the effects of changes in policy and practice. There has been a sharp rise in vocal hostility towards the transgender community since my fieldwork, which will inevitably have shaped transgender prisoners' experiences.

Further research would benefit from focusing on particular sub-groups of the LGBT community, for example bisexual or non-binary prisoners. LGBT prisoners have multiple, interconnected identities, meaning that other characteristics such as class, ethnicity and religion shape experiences of being LGBT (Moran & Sharpe, 2004). Additional studies should consider experiences at the intersections of gender, sexuality and other axes of identity. Methodologically, the criminological literature would benefit from further reflection on the ethics of conducting research with LGBT inmates, accessing the views of prisoners who feel compelled to stay hidden and researcher positionality.

Concluding Statement

This thesis has investigated the construction and presentation of gender and sexual identities in prison. Recent advances in equalities legislation and staff acceptance of LGBT prisoners promise improvements for sexual and gender minorities. However, diversity initiatives are hampered by the inevitable institutional prioritisation of safety, security and staff cynicism, and deeply ingrained cisnormativity and heteronormativity. Given the current undertow against LGBT equality, these hegemonic societal discourses are unlikely to shift in the near future, and any advances will be hard to translate into the binary prison system, founded upon cisnormative and heteronormative assumptions.

I hope to have contributed to the limited understanding of LGBT prisoners' experiences, and to have amplified some of their own accounts of life behind bars. Public knowledge is largely confined to popular cultural representations of LGBT inmates and news stories written about female transgender prisoners who have died by suicide or are considered inauthentic and predatory. At a time of backlash against advances in LGBT equality, both in Britain and internationally, it is important to consider the experiences of some of the most marginalised people in the LGBT community.

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