

Queer Resilience:
The Intersection of LGBTQ+ Rights and the Carceral System Through an
Examination of the Experiences of Incarcerated Queer People

by

Matthew Long

Advised by Ann Frost

Presented to the
Law, Societies, and Justice Department
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with College Honors in Law, Societies, and Justice

University of Washington
Spring 2025

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Contextualizing LGBTQ+ Rights in the Carceral State.....	8
I. The Criminalization of LGBTQ+ People.....	8
II. Federal & State Protections.....	10
III. Housing Assignments.....	11
A. Indeterminate Implementation.....	13
IV. LGBTQ+ Healthcare Accessibility.....	14
V. Programs and Support Groups.....	16
Methodology and Data.....	17
I. Approval and Recruitment.....	17
II. Interview Protocol.....	18
III. Coding.....	20
Limitations.....	21
Findings.....	22
I. Finding 1: Queer Carceral Injustices.....	22
A. Suppression of Queer Identity.....	25
B. Discrimination.....	28
C. Housing Issues.....	31
D. The Inaccessibility of Gender-Affirming Services.....	33
II. Finding 2: Exacerbated Punishment of Queer People.....	35
A. The Perilous Environment of Prison for LGBTQ+ People.....	36
1. Punishment Inflicted by Staff.....	37
2. Punishment Inflicted by Peers.....	39
3. Violence & Abuse.....	41
4. Sexual Violence.....	43
B. Ineffectual PREA Enforcement.....	45
C. The Dichotomy Between Incarceration and Mental Health.....	47
D. Arbitrary Program Opportunities.....	49
III. Finding 3: Queer Resilience.....	50
Discussion and Future Directions.....	56
Bibliography.....	58

Abstract

Injustice has permeated the criminal legal system and its punitive regime for as long as this society has existed. The rapidly expanding American carceral state arose from a myriad of retributive policies and legislation that became prevalent throughout the last quarter of the twentieth century. There is currently an abundance of research focused on the effects of incarceration on people of diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. A crucial gap in prison reform research remains the effects of this system of punishment on LGBTQ+ people. This research endeavor aims to address that fact and reveal how individuals with queer sexual or gender identities have been impacted by this system within Washington State. The institutions that exact punishment in this state operate both on a heteronormative apparatus and a gender binary. This examination involves placing formerly incarcerated LGBTQ+ people at the forefront of prison reform research to highlight their distinctive adversities and establish policy proposals to ameliorate them. Interviews were conducted with people who fit this demographic to bring to light their lived experiences and discover what practices, policies, and changes they want to see implemented. The findings illustrate a need for reform in areas including programming opportunities, gender-affirming care, therapeutic services, housing assignments, and equitable treatment overall. Incarcerated LGBTQ+ individuals are subjected to exacerbated punishment from correctional staff and other incarcerated individuals, which leads to difficulties with interpersonal dynamics and an overall suppression of identity. Faced with heightened vulnerability while incarcerated, LGBTQ+ people maintain resilient attitudes as they reenter society and positively transform their lives. The voices of this community in this research illuminates the necessity of addressing LGBTQ+ rights within prison reform efforts.

Key Words: Injustice, mass incarceration, Washington State, LGBTQ+ rights, punishment, lived experiences, prison reform.

Introduction

I couldn't be myself. I got made fun of... It was rough... It affected me because before incarceration I loved myself. And during incarceration I began to hate myself. And now that I'm out, I'm starting to find myself again... I just.. What people don't get about incarceration is: It's not a good life. It's not what they say it is.. It's worse than what they say it is... I spent most of my incarceration in segregation because I am transgender.

—Harmony

The criminal legal system within the United States immensely impacts the lives of millions with its punitive policies and practices that have evolved over the course of this country's history. Throughout the last quarter of the twentieth century, a multitude of legislative movements that centered around highly retributive punishment for crime developed on the state and federal levels. Due to shifts in crime politics that emerged in the 1970s, the American carceral state proliferated, ultimately leading to its current population size of approximately two million people in jails and prisons (Nellis 2024). This system includes an additional three million people who remain in contact through institutional supervision measures (Nellis 2024). The rise in incarceration rates since the end of the twentieth century is incongruent to the crime rates of the same period, which both the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Justice Statistics reveal to be at a significant decline since the early 1990s (Gramlich 2024). The striking

global context of American mass incarceration can be indicated by the fact that this country comprises less than 5% of the world's population but incarcerates more than 20% of the world's prison population (Campbell & Schoenfeld, p. 1375). Punitive social control reached this juncture through a myriad of policy approaches, including but not limited to "tough on crime" ideology, the "war on drugs" campaign, "zero tolerance" crime-control strategies, and "three strikes" laws (Campbell & Schoenfeld 2013; Lotke et al. 2004).

In the state of Washington, sentencing laws have transformed over the past four decades to coincide with the national trends of punishment politics. Presently, there are 13,867 people incarcerated in this state's prison system, according to the Washington Department of Corrections (DOC) at the end of 2024 (Washington State Department of Corrections 2024). There are 9 men's facilities and 2 women's facilities within the state, which vary in terms of security levels, geographic location, and institutional specificities. The heightening of the incarceration rate in Washington that transformed this penal regime started with the establishment of sentencing reforms and political developments in the latter quarter of the twentieth century. The Sentencing Reform Act (SRA) of 1984 led to the relegation of rehabilitation as a punitive objective and the prioritization of retribution and incapacitation as primary policy goals (Beckett & Evans 2020). The SRA imposed the abolition of parole release for most incarcerated people – with few exceptions and alternatives such as petitioning the Indeterminate Sentencing Review Board – which had numerous implications on early release methods and the augmentation of long and life sentences (Beckett & Evans 2020). Additionally, Washington was the first state in the nation to pass "three strikes" legislation – the Persistent Offender Accountability Act – in 1993, in which mandatory life sentences are enforced upon a third conviction of the "most serious" offenses (Lotke et al. 2004). The Washington State

Legislature also passed the Youth Violence Reduction Act in 1994 which resulted in 16 and 17 year old children charged with particular felonies to be “auto-declined” in the juvenile system and instead sent to adult courts and prisons (Beckett & Evans 2020). Mandatory minimum sentencing structures, strict modifications to offender score calculations, and statutory changes to “earned release time” further perpetuated the proliferation of longer sentences and harsher carceral realities (Beckett & Evans 2020; Redburn et al. 2014). Despite substantial evidence that shows longer sentences are fruitless and ineffective for a majority of cases, almost half of the incarcerated population of Washington is serving ten or more years (Beckett & Goldberg 2024). In a state where the incarceration rate more than doubled over the past several decades, judicious deliberation must be applied to public policy and legislative actions regarding criminal punishment moving forward.

Washington’s criminal legal system leads to manifold injustices for marginalized groups which have been disproportionately represented within it throughout history. Black people, socioeconomically disadvantaged people, undocumented immigrants, and other minorities have been largely affected by this society’s penal regime. Systemic racism has been so entrenched within this state’s prison system that there is a black/white disparity of approximately 5.5 to 1 incarcerated individuals (The Sentencing Project 2020). As Michelle Alexander compellingly argues in *The New Jim Crow*, the American carceral state has been engineered as a backlash against civil rights progress and weaponized against people of color through segregationist and discriminatory means (Alexander 2010). Additionally, the carceral landscape is predominantly representative of men from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Mears & Cochran 2016). The prison system has time and time again reflected the criminalization of people with low incomes, as hierarchical economic structures hold primacy within the process of accessing legal aid,

justice, and liberty (Manion 2019). This issue is compounded by the occurrence of over-policing that is commonplace throughout low-income communities which are more likely to include racial and ethnic minorities (Mears & Cochran 2016). This leads to an intersectionality between race and socioeconomic class which exacerbates the involvement of people of color within the criminal legal system. Furthermore, the criminalization of undocumented immigrants has consequences in the carceral system since detention centers are arguably quasi-prisons, punishing those who oftentimes lack criminal offenses, convictions, or charges (Cházaro, p. 134). Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and local authorities in the state of Washington are responsible for the escalating presence of immigrants in the carceral state (Cházaro, p. 128). All in all, there exists an extensive amount of scholarly literature which dissects the impacts of mass incarceration on the aforementioned marginalized groups.

In the sphere of criminological and carceral research, there is one group of justice-involved people that has been consistently and seriously disregarded. LGBTQ+ people – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other sexual/gender minorities – are commonly overlooked within mainstream examinations and studies surrounding the criminal legal system of Washington state. Despite the reality of advancing acceptance and visibility of LGBTQ+ people across our contemporary society, their position within the carceral state remains undertheorized and underrepresented in academia (Brown & Jenness 2020). The prison industrial complex embraces the sociolegal marginalization of LGBTQ+ people and plausibly exacerbates their already existing issues. Current academic literature asserts that there is a considerable absence of primary source research surrounding the experiences, perspectives, and distinct needs of LGBTQ+ individuals affected by the prison system (Brown & Jenness 2020; Donohue et al. 2021). This gap in empirical information regarding queer sexual and gender minorities who are

impacted by the carceral system needs to be confronted via qualitative investigations of their lived experiences.

Contextualizing LGBTQ+ Rights in the Carceral State

I. The Criminalization of LGBTQ+ People

The American penal system acts as a host to a wide range of policies and practices that intersect with LGBTQ+ rights and realities to a crucial degree. According to a policy report by *The Sentencing Project*, LGBTQ+ adults are incarcerated three times more than the total adult population, and LGBTQ+ youth are incarcerated two times more than other youth (Ghandnoosh & Stammen 2022). The National Inmate Survey indicates that there are approximately 124,000 people in U.S. prisons and jails who self-identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, and there are over 6,000 people who self-identify as transgender (Ghandnoosh & Stammen 2022). In regard to disproportionality, the U.S. Census Bureau revealed that 33.3% of incarcerated women and 5.5% of incarcerated men identified with queer sexual orientations, juxtaposed with 7.6% and 6.8%, respectively, within the broader American populace (Ghandnoosh & Stammen 2022). Within the parameters of the Washington DOC, there exists a lack of statistical data on the presence of LGBTQ+ incarcerated individuals within state prisons and jails. However, it is presumed that the national figures reflecting the incarcerated queer population are emulated in state demographics. Recent criminologists have accentuated the factor of intersectionality that is detectable in the over-incarceration of LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly in the case of transgender women of color (Jenness & Rowland 2024: p. 284). Even with a sole focus on LGBTQ+ identity, there

remains differing carceral effects on queer populations based on subdivisions of gender and sexual orientation (p. 284). Quantitative analysis and trends of mass incarceration prove the inordinate existence of LGBTQ+ people in the carceral state.

LGBTQ+ people are criminalized in American society through discriminatory patterns and frameworks which have manifested within legal and social mechanisms. Joey L. Mogul, Andrea J. Ritchie, and Kay Whitlock contributed to the foundations of this branch of criminology through their book entitled *Queer (In)Justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States*. Their work captures the multidimensional scope of how the criminal legal system and accompanying institutions persecute and mistreat this group. The authors emphasize how queer criminal archetypes – notably “gleeful gay killers”, “lethal lesbians”, “disease spreaders”, and “deceptive gender benders” – perpetuate harmful stereotypes onto this group and instigated the “punishment of queer expression” (Mogul et al. 2011: pp. 20-36). This book draws attention to the levels of homophobia and transphobia that pervaded the crime control agencies, courts, and carceral institutions of American society (Mogul et al. 2011). The authors propose a dichotomy between the environment of prison and LGBTQ+ identity, asserting that the gender binary of this regime results in the “strict regulation of sexualities and gender expressions deemed deviant” and the “rigid enforcement of gender norms, as well as the use of segregation and denial of even basic needs, as a means of regulating prisons as queer spaces” (p. 94, 111). The sex-based division of the prison system is inherently exclusionary to incarcerated individuals who are transgender, non-binary, gender-fluid, or those not identifying with binary gender norms. In regard to sexuality, the carceral system is often stigmatized as a queer space since sexual expression is predominantly limited to homosexuality within these sex-segregated facilities (Braunstein 2017: p. 231). Prominent scholar Craig Haney has established that intertwining

factors of hypermasculinity, gang prevalence, and violence within prison culture undoubtedly engenders the victimization of queer people and positions them at the lower end of the prison hierarchy (Haney 2011). Incarcerated transgender people face an abnormal risk of violence, sexual assault, and mistreatment while serving their sentences, which is exacerbated by their unjust placement in prisons that do not align with their gender identities (Pemberton 2013: p. 163). Life-threatening diseases including HIV and hepatitis C are known to spread rampantly throughout incarcerated populations, which generates a serious risk for all those affected by sexual violence, especially queer individuals (Pemberton 2013: p. 163). The strict structuring of the penal regime with an enforced heteronormative gender binary leads to myriad injustices for LGBTQ+ populations.

II. Federal & State Protections

The carceral system encompasses a variety of policies and practices which impact incarcerated LGBTQ+ individuals and the ways in which they experience institutional punishment. Although there exists a dearth of literature reflecting the effects of such policies, there are several crucial sources that present their rudimentary frameworks. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Washington recently published a report on the rights of incarcerated transgender individuals, underlining state laws and DOC regulations which apply to numerous conditions of incarceration. The pertinent federal protections of queer incarcerated people emanates from the cruel and unusual punishment clause of the Eighth Amendment and the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) signed into law in 2003 (ACLU of Washington 2023). The primary purpose of enacting PREA was to allocate resources, analysis, recommendations, and

funding to protect incarcerated individuals from rape and sexual assault in federal, state, and local prison systems (National PREA Resource Center 2023). The Department of Justice provided final regulations – known as “PREA Standards” – for enforcing this federal law to ensure that it contained specific protections for transgender individuals in federal, state, and local institutions (ACLU of Washington 2023). In compliance with these regulations, the Washington DOC has adopted and adjusted PREA standards within their jurisdiction, producing direct implications for LGBTQ+ individuals in relation to risk assessments, facility placements, and DOC staff conduct (ACLU of Washington 2023). Additionally, the DOC presumably enforces correctional staff training which is set up to instruct safety measures for transgender, non-binary, or other queer individuals (ACLU of Washington 2023). Aside from PREA regulations, state anti-discrimination policies like the Washington Law Against Discrimination are not inclusive of incarcerated individuals, leaving them with limited options to access rights and protections (ACLU of Washington 2023; RCW 49.60.030).

III. Housing Assignments

The DOC policies surrounding housing incarcerated people take into account a multitude of factors and elements. There is no strictly established code that dictates exactly where newly incarcerated LGBTQ+ individuals will be housed; instead, the prison superintendent and facility multidisciplinary team have full discretion in evaluating each person’s needs and reviewing where people are assigned (DOC 490.700). In regard to assigning housing to transgender, intersex, or non-binary individuals, DOC policy enacted in 2020 enables initial and prospective requests for residing in a gender-affirming facility (DOC 490.700). Since sanctioning this

procedure, only 22 of the 284 self-identified transgender individuals within Washington prisons have been permitted to transfer to gender-affirming facilities (Girgis 2024; Washington State DOC 2024). There are several reasons why the majority of incarcerated transgender individuals aren't in facilities that align with their identities, such as DOC red tape, safety concerns, or having well-established communities in their current facility. The explicit specificities of the DOC 490.700 policy, which are included under "Preferences and Housing Placement Requests", are as follows:

“At any time, an individual may voluntarily submit DOC 02-420 Preferences Request to their case manager designating their preferred name, pronoun(s), gender to conduct searches/urinalysis, and gender identity, and to request gender-affirming state-issued garments and/or placement in gender-affirming housing” (DOC 490.700).

After submitting both DOC 02-420 and DOC 02-423 forms, there are multiple levels of bureaucratic assent that must be arranged before an incarcerated individual can be authorized to reside in a gender-affirming facility (DOC 490.700).¹ Even in the case that a transgender or non-binary person's request gets approved, they may be transferred to another facility or returned to their original facility at any time “due to documented, objective safety and security concerns” (DOC 490.700). This institutional oversight may lead to the discrimination or exclusion of transgender individuals who are involuntarily moved to facilities that don't align with their gender identities. Moreover, DOC personnel are required to screen all incarcerated individuals upon arrival in a PREA risk assessment procedure – detailed in DOC 490.820 – which includes sections on “sexual victimization potential” and “sexual predation potential” (Washington State DOC 2023). In the determination of an individual's risk for sexual victimization, they are asked a

¹ DOC administrative officials have absolute control over this authorization, which includes the Associate Superintendent, Correctional Program Manager, Housing Multi-Disciplinary Team, Deputy Secretary, PREA Compliance Manager, and Gender Affirming Program Administrator.

list of questions which involves equating LGBTQ+ identities to risk factors (DOC Form 07-019). This screening form demands that DOC staff asks each incarcerated person if they “identify as gay/lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or non-binary”, and if not, they must also assess whether or not the individual appears to be non-binary or queer to them (DOC Form 07-019).² This screening requirement has the potential to lead to defective practices, as incarcerated individuals may not feel comfortable disclosing their identities and correctional personnel may exert their biases and assumptions while filling out the form. Correctional staff utilize DOC 490.820, DOC 490.700, and 17 additional factors while making a final determination of where to house transgender, intersex, non-binary, and other queer individuals. Each prison reviews requests for housing assignment changes once every six months.

A. Indeterminate Implementation

DOC policies that pertain to housing LGBTQ+ individuals are executed in a more arbitrary manner than a systematic one. It has been less than five years since the DOC began authorizing gender-affirming housing, and there has already been a consequential deviation from the policy set forth in DOC 490.700. The majority of self-identified transgender individuals are not incarcerated in facilities that align with their genders, and the minority who are face the risk of undeserved transferrals or punitive efforts which reverse the policy’s aims. An apposite example that showcases this detrimental reality is the case of Amber Kim, who is a transgender woman who recently got transferred to a men’s prison from a women’s prison in Washington. According to *The Seattle Times*, it is the first time that an incarcerated transgender individual has

² This section of the risk assessment form is worth 6 out of the 42 points total, and a score of 11 or more signifies a risk for sexual victimization that applies to discretionary DOC housing assignments.

been relocated from gender-affirming housing back to a DOC facility that does not align with their gender identity (Girgis 2024). She was incarcerated at the Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW) for approximately three and a half years before being involuntarily moved to Monroe Correctional Complex (MCC) – a men’s prison. This transferral occurred in June of 2024, several months after Ms. Kim and her cellmate were found guilty of a “504” infraction for engaging in consensual sexual contact (ACLU of Washington 2024). Her cisgender cellmate received no other punishment for this infraction other than moving to close custody within WCCW for a couple months. In December of 2024, the ACLU of Washington filed a personal restraint petition on behalf of Amber Kim, citing the cruel punishment prohibition clause of Article I, Section 14 of the Washington Constitution (ACLU of Washington 2024). She has remained at the men’s prison for approximately 9 months now, where she has stayed in solitary confinement for the majority of this unjust housing determination. This vastly inequitable instance of punishment exacted by the DOC proves that there is a dissonance between the policies in place for transgender individuals and the way they are pragmatically implemented. The extent and severity of the arbitrariness within DOC housing assignments for LGBTQ+ individuals remains an inadequately researched area.

IV. LGBTQ+ Healthcare Accessibility

All individuals in DOC custody receive medically necessary health and mental health care provided by the Health Plan of the Health Services Division. There is no direct guarantee of medical services offered to incarcerated individuals, and there are strict guidelines for obtaining the services that are readily available. The landmark case of *Estelle v. Gamble* in 1976

established the precedent of requiring state carceral systems to provide adequate healthcare that is “reasonably commensurate with modern medical science” (Aldrich et al. 2023). In regard to LGBTQ+ individuals, the most germane modern healthcare concerns the accessibility of gender-affirming care. The DOC Health Plan outlines that this type of care is administered through the Apple Health (Medicaid) Transhealth Program managed by the Washington Health Care Authority (Washington DOC Health Plan 2022). This program which channels Medicaid benefits is restricted for incarcerated individuals within the DOC, since there is suspended coverage and limitations to care beyond inpatient hospitalization. There is presently an obstruction of access to the “Guidelines for Healthcare of Transgender Individuals” document that can be postulated via references within DOC 490.700. These inaccessible guidelines are cited as the foundation of healthcare for any incarcerated individual who needs gender-affirming care or surgery (DOC 490.700). Various procedures including hormone therapy, genital reconstruction, breast reconstruction, and surgical processes are incorporated into the DOC Health Plan, but there lacks readily available information on the execution and regulation of such vital healthcare.

Furthermore, a recent settlement agreement between the DOC and Disability Rights Washington (DRW) cemented the supposed provision of gender-affirming medical and mental health care inside Washington prisons. Focused on safety concerns of incarcerated transgender individuals with disabilities, DRW put forward a complaint and settlement agreement in federal court to address allegations that the DOC was violating the U.S. Constitution, the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (Disability Rights Washington 2025). The court imposed a consent decree in October of 2023 which ordered DOC to provide timely gender-affirming healthcare and services as maintained by the Transhealth Program of the

Washington Health Care Authority (Disability Rights Washington 2025). This settlement agreement led to the inclusion of gender-affirming surgeries, procedures, therapy, clothing, property, and treatment within DOC guidelines involving transgender individuals (Disability Rights Washington 2025). The requirements for surgery entail a minimum of 12 months of hormone therapy and specific documentation prior to the procedure (ACLU of Washington 2023). Even with healthcare policies outlined in this settlement agreement, the tangible nature of DOC treatment of transgender and queer individuals remains precarious and discretionary in regard to enforcement mechanisms.

V. Programs and Support Groups

In regard to programming opportunities for LGBTQ+ individuals, there is extensive fluctuation across the eleven prisons in Washington state. The specific types of programming – educational, vocational, therapeutic, rehabilitative, and reentry services – vary from prison to prison and lack a ubiquitous nature throughout the DOC. The accessibility of certain programs and opportunities are contingent on factors such as an individual’s sentence length or infraction history. The effectiveness of these programs are dependent on the staff and resources available to fulfill their execution and purposes. The policy known as DOC 100.500 outlines that DOC supports “Non-Discrimination for Individuals” on the basis of various identities, including gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation (DOC 100.500). This policy serves as the Department’s commitment to non-discrimination, and it applies to programming, housing, and other crucial services (DOC 100.500). Qualitative research is needed to analyze the application of this policy towards LGBTQ+ individuals within DOC facilities.

Support groups that prioritize incarcerated queer individuals are scarce and unavailable throughout the majority of carceral settings. Within the eleven prisons in Washington, there are presumably only a couple of LGBTQ+ support groups. One of those groups is called Alliances, and it was established in the Twin Rivers Unit (TRU) of MCC. Its purpose is to provide an inclusive environment for the queer population of TRU. There is limited obtainable knowledge on other programs in other facilities in Washington that support the LGBTQ+ community.

Methodology and Data

I. Approval and Recruitment

Prior to collecting data, this research was formally approved by the University of Washington's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Human Subjects Division (HSD). The research qualified for a Category 2 Exempt status, and the IRB ID associated with this study was STUDY00022153. The data that was gathered involved 10 qualitative interviews with formerly incarcerated individuals who identify as LGBTQ+. Research participants were recruited and identified through networking processes with local non-profit organizations which specialize in assisting the justice-involved LGBTQ+ community. These grassroots organizations were monumentally crucial in enabling the author to conduct this research, which included Beyond These Walls, Black and Pink, and Peer Seattle. Further research participants were recruited through the procedure of snowball sampling, which entails contacting existing participants to access additional people who are suitable for the study (Emerson 2015). All 10 participants were

fully informed of the nature and intent of this research during the process of recruitment and before the interviews commenced.

II. Interview Protocol

The framework of the interviews was established by taking inspiration from lessons that Annemaree Lloyd conveys in *The Qualitative Landscape of Information Literacy Research: Perspectives, Methods and Techniques*. This literature emphasizes the rationality of phenomenology, which is the study of lived experiences and how they inform deeper complexities and meanings within a society. The theory of sociocultural learning was also applicably drawn from this book, underlining the significance of contextuality, intersubjectivity, and situatedness within qualitative information literacy. Additional lessons that were attentively followed included prioritizing the concepts of cognitive empathy, heterogeneity, and self-awareness that Mario Luis Small and Jessica McCrory Calarco highlight in *Qualitative Literacy: A Guide to Evaluating Ethnographic and Interview Research*. The author relied upon these notions of qualitative literacy to ensure conscious and perceptive empathy, recognition of diversity, and discernment of interviewer dynamics, respectively.

The interviews were conducted both in person and virtually via zoom, depending on the preferences of each participant and their relative location. Regardless of the forum, the interview protocol was exactly the same. The interviews always started with an acknowledgement of the purpose of the ensuing conversation and asking for consent about audio recording and participation. Each research participant was given the opportunity to state any boundaries or unbecoming topics for the conversation, and their levels of comfort were addressed and

acknowledged in advance of the questions. Once verbal consent was received, the participant was first asked to provide the relevant context of how they identify in relation to their queer sexuality or gender identity, or both. The questions were modified slightly to adapt to each person's particular identity. They were then asked about their overall experience of incarceration and to list all of the institutions they resided at. Next, each participant spoke about how prison impacted them with respect to their LGBTQ+ identity. They were asked to describe the support systems and interpersonal dynamics that they encountered during their incarceration. Furthermore, they were prompted to reveal how specific policies and practices affected them, including Department of Corrections conduct, housing assignments, healthcare accessibility, gender-affirming care, mental health services, vocational programming, and rehabilitative measures. Most participants naturally spoke about how these facets of the prison system influenced them in regard to their queer identities, and if they did not, the author asked additional questions following up about the matter. The conversation then led to the participant explaining their reentry process and any issues that transpired for them. The interviews concluded with inquiries about their desired reform recommendations and changes in policy that would directly aid the LGBTQ+ population in the carceral system. Each participant was also given the opportunity to expand on anything else they thought was worthwhile to share about their experiences. The average duration of the 10 interviews was approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Each participant of this research was awarded compensation in the amount of \$40 for their time by virtue of University of Washington's J. Eleanor Pearson Endowed Library Fund for Human Rights. This monetary compensation was provided shortly after each participant's interview with the author.

III. Coding

After all 10 interviews were conducted, personal information from the participants were redacted and each person was assigned a code name. The interviews were then transcribed and entered into *ATLAS.ti*, a qualitative data analysis software. This platform was utilized to organize, classify, and interpret the empirical data that was collected. The interviews were thematically categorized from qualitative codes that were aptly identified.

During the process of coding, each transcript was read and fully understood by the author. While reading each transcript, every sequence of text that signified a theme was codified. The main round of coding led to the establishment of 70 codes across 397 quotations. These codes were then subcategorized into code-groups which revealed the core themes of the research. Many codes overlapped in regard to their themes, and many were decidedly immaterial to the purposes of the examination. This process yielded the following thematic code-groups:

- Queer Carceral Injustices
 - Suppression of Identity; Discrimination; Heteronormativity; Transphobia; Gender-Affirming Care; Housing; Misgendering; Oppressive; Participant's Identity, Participant's Partners, Queer Community Inside; Queer Limitations; Targeted Inside
- Exacerbated Punishment
 - Punished; Abuse; Cellmate Issues; DOC Arbitrariness; Education; Healthcare Issues; Mental Health; Necessities; Negative; Negative Relationships; Policy Implementation Issues; PREA; PREA Issues; PREA Risk Assessment;

Programming; Rehabilitation Program Ineffectiveness; Segregation; Violence;
Sexual Assault; Staff Discretionary Power; Staff Mistreatment; Targeted by
Incarcerated Peers; Unsafe Environment

- Queer Resilience
 - Queer Resilience; Introspection; Openly Queer; Participant's Identity;
Participant's Partners; Positive Experience; Positive Mindset; Positive
Relationships; Positive Treatment; Queer Community Inside; Queer Community
Outside; Queer Support Groups; Support Systems

These code-groups illustrate the research findings that serve as a reflection of the lived experiences of justice-impacted LGBTQ+ people.

Limitations

This qualitative research involves several plausible limitations that were acknowledged and considered throughout the establishment of the findings and subsequent conclusions. Firstly, the two-quarter time frame of this project bounded the author to orchestrate all of the research processes in an efficient and prompt manner. Secondly, the sample size of participants was restricted based on the allotted resources and time for this study. It is plainly unfeasible to engage every formerly incarcerated LGBTQ+ person within Washington State in research, so the 10 participants interviewed will serve as a small-scale representation of the much larger demographic. Nonetheless, the 10 people who made this research possible were undoubtedly reflective of a diverse sample of queer sexual and gender identities. Throughout the findings,

“queer” is utilized as an umbrella term to make it possible to connect the experiences of these individuals with unique and varied LGBTQ+ identities. Future research should expand on the practice of intersectionality in this discipline through prioritizing participants with diverse backgrounds regarding race, ethnicity, class, disability, and other marginalized identities. Lastly, all of the people that participated in this study were previously incarcerated, so their lived experiences were shared in a retrospective nature. Knowing that recollections are susceptible to imprecision, future studies should involve individuals who are presently incarcerated to prevent such a limitation.

Findings

The process of qualitative data analysis led to the establishment of three findings. Queer people experience carceral injustice in a distinctive way from their heterosexual or cisgendered peers. Additionally, this group is subjected to exacerbated forms of punishment from interpersonal dynamics and systemic issues. Lastly, despite the adversity that is experienced, this population’s perspectives reflect the notion of queer resilience.

I. Finding 1: Queer Carceral Injustices

The voices and perspectives of all 10 research participants signify the overwhelmingly detrimental nature of the carceral system. Every person interviewed mentioned a multitude of situations and experiences that serve as evidence of the entanglement of systemic injustices within the penal regime. While speaking about their unique and diverse identities, this group of

queer individuals shed light on the effects of incarceration on members of the LGBTQ+ community. Many conveyed how their sentences influenced their relationships with their own identities, and some individuals identified a shift in the way that they identified before, during, and after becoming involved in this system. The majority of participants drew attention to the manifold ways in which incarceration led to a suppression of their queer identities. Reflecting various gender and sexual minorities, this group and their lived experiences prove that the Washington DOC does not adequately address or protect the rights and lives of incarcerated LGBTQ+ individuals. Several participants who encountered the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), juvenile detention centers, and jails during their incarceration reveal the omnipresent state of injustice that LGBTQ+ individuals are faced with outside the DOC.

The process of qualitative coding led to a striking result of 143 quotations identifying a negative experience. Participants expressed how the prison system affected them, their well-beings, and their identities. When asked about his overall experience as a gay man, Jesse declared:

You know, the overall experience, I would have to say... uh pretty traumatizing. It's hard to really encapsulate the full entire breadth of the experience in just a few emotions or words. I would say the whole experience was a blatant in your face form of tyranny. It was oppressive – it was kind of crushing – in a sense. And I feel like, uh, after a certain point of time... it has negative effects on a person for sure.

This “oppressive” and “crushing” aspect of incarceration described here was very recurring and salient across the interviews. All of the participants claimed that prison impacted

them in a very negative way, and most referred to their experience as involving trauma. They all shared how their queer identities added to the way in which they experienced such negativity.

Taylor – a transgender woman – shared her point of view regarding this correlation:

Staff is exceptionally dismissive of anything that requires any effort... and queer people in general require a little bit more effort... I think this does transcend queerness in prison, because they treat everybody the same, but when they treat everybody the same and the majority of people are the same in a lot of ways, it's not as problematic for them. The more different you are, the more problematic it is for you. So I think it does affect everybody, but it affects queer people more so than straight cis people.

The intrinsic and extrinsic differences between straight cisgendered people and queer people are wide and large. Like Taylor expressed, the queer community is treated in a “problematic” manner within carceral institutions. The overall environment of prison is not an equitable space for marginalized communities, and staff “dismiss” people of different identities and backgrounds. Many individuals proclaimed that the way they and other queer individuals were treated was immensely unfair and immoral. Jesse voiced their opinion on the absolute gravity of this carceral reality:

I think it's important to know that yeah... these people do get harmed... harmed to the point where they take their own lives. And it's important to realize that like... just because they're queer doesn't mean that they deserve all that abuse, like, they don't deserve to go through all this hardship just because they love who they love.

The damaging adversities that the LGBTQ+ community is faced with inside prison needs to be addressed. The psychological harm that is inflicted on incarcerated queer individuals has numerous effects on their well-being and lives. Like Jesse asserted, incarcerated people are subjected to many difficulties and injustices for loving who they love and being who they are.

A. Suppression of Queer Identity

The expression of queer genders and sexualities is heavily suppressed within the carceral state. Most participants revealed that the environment of prison produces sociocultural dynamics of heteronormativity and cisnormativity. This atmosphere of exclusion generates fear and vulnerability for queer people, so many decide to conceal their true identities while incarcerated. Silas illustrated how this fear of mistreatment influenced his thought process when he got to prison:

So when I first got to prison, I was like, I'm not telling anybody I'm gay... like it's just, I already know it's a thing, right, you know, it's gonna be a thing... I don't want the hassle and so I didn't tell anybody.

The conceptions of prison culture that pervade society lead people to hide their sexual orientations or gender identities upon arrival. Jesse conveyed a similar situation:

Yeah, I would say, for an example, I was told when I went from the jail system to the prison system...I was told like: "Say you're straight. Like, you walk into the counsellor's

office and you tell them that you're straight because your time will be a lot easier if you do so, right?" So that already told me as soon as I hit the gate that there was this patriarchal straight-dominated society that had its privileges... uh, but - but obviously I can't pass as straight. So while I was straight on the computer, um, it did present those challenges...especially at one of the institutions Stafford Creek... It's in a very red kind of a county... And so being a gay male in the system in general just poses a lot of hardships that a straight person wouldn't experience.

Whether it is internally or externally enforced, queer people suppress their identities so that they can attempt to be viewed the same as anyone else would. The prison system was not designed to be inclusive of people of diverse sexualities or genders, so that creates many issues and harmful realities for this population. Many participants expressed how they felt like they had to stay in or go back into the "closet", which symbolizes how prison culture is conducive to the suppression of queerness. Tyrone, who encountered a Washington juvenile detention center, described how he struggled with his gender identity upon entering the system:

Shortly before I got incarcerated, I was beginning to accept myself more as a feminine man... but it was really hard because while I was in jail, a lot of people were furthering the narrative that I wasn't like an acceptable man because I was feminine... like even though I had already worked so hard at going against that toxic masculinity for myself.

The interpersonal elements of incarceration serve as an informal structure of social control that leads many individuals to face difficulties along the path towards accepting

themselves. Tyrone's perspective is evidence of the lack of inclusivity that exists within the carceral state. The conditions of incarceration within Washington state lead to the exclusion of anyone that is not straight, cisgender, or conforming to traditional ideology.

Several of the participants talked about the process of discovering their sexuality during their period of incarceration. Some came out of the closet for the first time in prison, expressing how their identities changed or fluctuated over the course of their sentences. Steve – a bisexual man who experienced the BOP – spoke on his individual journey with this:

My time in the federal system was interesting because I went in, like, a cis hetero male for life... and I did not become - I did not come out as bisexual until like halfway through my time... And it was just like a shock... It is not the same at all to do your time straight and fitting in... and to do your time out and otherwise... it's just hell, it is horrendous.

Steve's experience figuring out his sexuality inside and dealing with the stigma attached to it as a result was fairly commonplace throughout the interviews. Avery shared a similar sentiment through talking about her experiences as a transgender woman:

When I went to prison initially, I was a... um, for all intents and purposes... I was a straight man. And I really, uh, have gone through a lot of different feelings about my sexuality for a very long time. And so when I went to prison, um, I had to take stock of an awful lot of things in my life. So I felt a lot of different ways... Many, many different ways, uh, about it...

The process of identifying with a certain sexual orientation or gender identity is not always a simple one. Within the carceral system, this process is almost always more challenging and taxing for people. Even with the traditional conventions and burdens of prison culture, there were participants who persevered during their pathways of self-acceptance. For example, Taylor talked about how it was like coming out as transgender:

For me, there wasn't a choice of whether or not I was going to do this. I've had a lot of people afterwards tell me: "Oh, you're so brave to live as yourself while you're in a men's prison for all of this time". And for me, there was no choice. I'd spent 39 years of my life lying to myself about who I was... When I finally figured out who I was, I don't care what's happening... I'm not able to put that away for anybody or anything... to hell with the consequences.

This attitude that Taylor developed during her time shows how queer people are pressured to overcome many social obstacles during their incarceration. The burdensome environment of prison forces the LGBTQ+ community to develop mindsets of perseverance and determination while living as their authentic selves. However, many people within this population still suppress their queer identities to adapt to the rigid culture of this institution.

B. Discrimination

The carceral state leads to discriminatory norms and conditions that incarcerated queer people encounter. Structural discrimination is widespread and rampant throughout DOC facilities

and other carceral institutions. Despite the non-discrimination policy of DOC 100.500, LGBTQ+ individuals are time and time again subjected to mistreatment which results from arbitrary policy implementation and staff discretion. When reflecting on the conduct towards queer people in prison, Silas emphasized:

LGBTQ+ people in prison are targets for a lot of people, whether it be inmates or whether it be staff, based on whatever kind of biases or hatreds they have in their heart. People feel like they have a right to discriminate, to try to intimidate, or extort these people for whatever it is that they feel like they want... it's like - it's viewed as a weakness, even though it's just a person being who they are.

The bias and hatred that Silas describes seems to permeate the sociocultural elements of the carceral system. From staff to other incarcerated individuals, there are many circumstances in which the social dynamics that incarcerated queer people experience can negatively affect them. When describing the interpersonal aspects of his time inside prison, Steve mentioned the homophobia that he was confronted with:

I dealt with so much. I dealt with so much like whispering and so much like judgment and there's like... People all of a sudden, like, wouldn't want to share a drink with me – the same bottle – all of a sudden... like just thinking like, I instantly have AIDS now... And it's just like people have really ignorant notions around these things.

The instances of discrimination that Steve shared shows how apparent bigotry is within the carceral environment of queer individuals. Most of the participants had similar experiences to Silas and Steve, however, the transgender individuals experienced distinctive forms of discrimination which involved transphobia, misgendering, and deadnaming. For example, Harmony recounted a time where a correctional officer misgendered her:

It messed with my mental health because of the way they talked to me. The way that they addressed me as a 'him' and I said I'm a 'her': "No, you're a him. You're a dude with a dick. You have a dick. You're in a men's prison ... get over it."

This type of blatant transphobia that Harmony encountered in prison was not uncommon to her. She also shared how discriminatory staff were when it came to things like makeup:

The makeup is very minimal... And when we put our makeup on, we'd have guards call us clowns... a mistake... tell us to kill ourselves... cuff us up for no reason... just because we have makeup on they'd threaten to infract us if we don't wash our face.

These experiences of discrimination are proof of the dehumanizing conduct that staff inflict on transgender women in men's facilities. The prison system and DOC personnel enforce a culture in which transgender people and their rights are disregarded and oppressed to severe extents. Harper, who is also transgender, mentioned the discrimination that would stem from other incarcerated people:

In most cases, you know, 90% at least... 95% of... 99%... 99.9% of incarcerated individuals have an idea about transgenders and it isn't good... to be honest with you. It's a very small percentage of people that are willing to accept me as me.

The prejudices and intolerance that transgender people like Harper receive is extremely unjust and harmful. The discrimination that comes from staff and other incarcerated people needs to be addressed so that transgender individuals can feel protected and accepted. Overall, the extensive amount of discrimination that queer people endure in carceral institutions further reveals the systemic injustices that they face.

C. Housing Issues

In opposition with the policies that are established for housing LGBTQ+ individuals, the Washington DOC often neglects this group's needs and safety while executing housing assignments. Many of the participants expressed how they did not approve of the system that was in place for arranging these assignments. Harper conveyed this disapproval by stating:

They have policies for all that stuff, you know, especially when it comes to transgender individuals... They have policies, housing protocols, all sorts of things that they're supposed to follow... Now, they don't always follow them, you know, uh, they house - they house us with whoever they think we're safe enough with... but honestly, I've been in cells where I've been sexually harassed, threatened, and all sorts of different things, simply because I am who I am.

Housing is a crucial component of somebody's carceral experience, and current practices are not adequate within the DOC. Similar to Harper's comments, Riley also claims that housing assignments are unjust for queer people:

If you're LGBT and you have an issue like say with housing... like you have a cellmate and you're like: look, this isn't gonna work... I just need to move... you have basically two options, either go back and whatever happens happens, or you just check in and you go to the hole...

Riley's perspective on this matter is extremely relevant to the issues that many queer people face with their cellmates. Incarcerated people have little autonomy over where they are housed, so certain risks and vulnerabilities are quite unavoidable. Queer people have higher chances of being victimized within this process, like Harper and Riley disclosed.

As it relates to queer sexual orientation, certain practices that exist in prison are very exclusionary and ostracizing. Avery described how queerness is constrained and oftentimes forbidden through stating:

There are no consensual relationships in prison. So, um, even if - even if you really like somebody, um, there's just not going to be any way that the prison will allow it. They'll move you to another unit... to another prison... So no matter how much you really like somebody or no matter how much you want to stay away from somebody, there are procedures when it comes to that kind of stuff unless staff decides to look the other way.

Staff will separate queer individuals when making housing decisions, as Avery expressed. The reality that no relationships are deemed as “consensual” leads to realities in which queer communities inside prison are neglected and divided.

Regarding gender-affirming housing placement, some participants talked about the difficulties with the process of transferring into facilities that align with their gender identities. The majority of transgender people are in prisons that don’t reflect their genders, and there is a discrepancy between DOC policy and transfer authorizations (Girgis 2024; Washington State DOC 2024). Harper expanded on this issue:

I think it’s just a horrible way they got it set up. You know what I mean? They just take whatever’s on your birth certificate and that’s what you’re stuck with... and they’ll put you in those places with those that they say that you’re like... You know, but they do have avenues that you can go down to be transferred to a facility that is, you know, more to your own gender. So it’s just a process and it takes a lot of time... and 90% are refused the transfer.

The superficial nature of the “avenues” towards gender-affirming housing that Harper highlights is a large issue that affects the safety and rights of all incarcerated transgender individuals. If the majority of people’s transfers are being rejected, then inspection upon the enforcement mechanisms of such policy is necessary. All in all, the majority of participants found difficulties and safety issues with their housing assignments.

D. The Inaccessibility of Gender-Affirming Services

Based on the perspectives of the participants involved in this study, it is clear that there is a vast dichotomy between the policies and practices in place when it comes to gender-affirming care. This approach to support and healthcare is essential to the rights of people with queer gender identities, and many carceral institutions disregard its importance. As Harmony puts it while talking about how medical staff treated her while she was incarcerated:

They don't help us... We ask for our medication and we're lucky if we get them... they'll give us the wrong dose to get us sick. They'll try to use a dirty needle to give us our shots. They're - they're petty towards us...

The “us” that Harmony is describing is the group of transgender women in the men’s facility she was at. This level of DOC staff mistreatment towards this population is widely inequitable and alarming. The discretionary power that medical personnel within prison have needs to be reevaluated. When discussing the bureaucratic obstacles that Taylor faced within the federal system, she stated:

I had medical care riding on the program. They would not give me any gender-affirming care unless I got this program done first...other than my hormones, which thankfully nobody stopped me from getting the entire time I was there because I was on hormones when I came into prison. So they kept me on them the entire time...didn't mess with my doses. There were no problems with any of that.

This alludes to the fact that transgender individuals within the BOP are required to be on hormones when entering prison in order to obtain access to them during their time. The other gender-affirming care that Taylor mentioned is dependent on various programs and administrative assent that must occur before access is provided.

When speaking on his experience with this type of care in the juvenile detention system, Tyrone expressed:

Despite me having very good behavior and being very accepting, I often found my needs not getting met either at all or in a timely manner... The only reason I got a chest binder eventually is because there was this group that came in... they actually donated the chest binders with their own money. They came in and visited us and they paid with their own money to get me a chest binder... which chest binders are very important for trans men.

This institutional neglect and outside involvement that Tyrone illustrates proves that the established internal procedures are not adequate enough to provide necessary services for transgender people. This group of people should not have to rely on external assistance from non-profit groups to live as their authentic selves.

Overall, these transgender participants from various carceral systems prove that one thing is for certain: gender-affirming care is insufficiently provided within the prison system. The current policies are implemented in a way that does not allow for the full affirmation of transgender identities in the carceral state.

II. Finding 2: Exacerbated Punishment of Queer People

The second finding of this research embraces the notion that the carceral system leads to an exacerbated form of punishment for LGBTQ+ people. All of the participants revealed the multitude of negative experiences that influenced their incarceration to an unjust extent. The voices of this population reflect how adversity is intertwined with the environment of prison. The punishment that the participants recounted in their interviews was made worse by the staff and incarcerated peers that they were surrounded by during their sentences. The vulnerability of the queer population within the carceral state was revealed through acts of violence, abuse, and sexual violence that were addressed by participants. They also shared the ineffectiveness of PREA enforcement, which is supposed to help incarcerated people with this form of suffering. Almost all of the participants signified a correlation between incarceration and heightened mental health issues. Lastly, the availability of certain programming opportunities were substantially arbitrary from the perspectives of the participants. The lived experiences of these LGBTQ+ individuals demonstrates how the prison system is a catalyst for cruelty.

A. The Perilous Environment of Prison for LGBTQ+ People

The interpersonal dynamics of prison shape the experiences of every single person who is involved within this system. The social environment of prison leads to vulnerable populations – such as the LGBTQ+ community – experiencing worse day-to-day lives. Even with the policies that are in place for them, the participants expressed how the institutions they encountered disregarded their rights and autonomy. Harmony summarized the punishment of queer people in the Washington prison system by stating:

Stop punishing us... Protect us like your policies say... Quit punishing us and transferring us and getting rid of us. Do something to help us. We're not the problem. We're not always the problem...

Like Harmony says, the DOC does not act in accordance with their policies when it comes to LGBTQ+ rights. This population of people within the system is subjected to exacerbated punishment during their incarceration.

1. Punishment Inflicted by Staff

The majority of participants revealed how staff mistreatment affected them and their overall carceral experience. Specific instances of misconduct from staff and administrators led to a worsened state of punishment for these individuals. Queer people are commonly victimized within this system, which is what Harmony explained by sharing her experience:

And I was victimized more that way and harassed and taunted by staff and inmates that it was just... it wasn't fun for me. I got put in 'seg' a lot and got separated from my friends and my people that I was used to...and I had people that I was with, you know, and they got retaliated on...

This negative treatment described here was common throughout the interviews. Harper talked about the extensive bigotry that staff applied towards them and other queer individuals:

A lot of the officers, to be honest with you, are just horrible to transgender individuals, you know, simply because they don't agree with - with whatever our lifestyle choices are... Or our own definitions of ourselves. They don't agree with our own defining of ourselves. You know what I mean? They're - they're - I don't know, maybe old-fashioned in that... I guess that they're stuck in their ideologies and they refuse to accept new realities. You know that: I'm here. I'm here... So the officers can be very difficult, if not just outright blatantly harmful to us in there. They go out of their way to get us in trouble, to write us up, to do whatever... to make us feel less than.

Jesse expressed a similar experience where they dealt with staff's bigotry:

I had to go speak to the supervisor... the community unit supervisor who happened to be very Christian... and he - he brought me in... He said "I'm denying your move". And I asked why and he said: "It's for your salvation". And uh, yeah, it was - it was kind of screwed up... Yeah, he was just like: "yeah, we're not gonna move you because I'm doing this for your salvation. I'm doing this for your eternal soul". Because he assumed in his head that I was going to have consensual sex with somebody, which happens to be against the rules.

This discrimination involving religious beliefs is absolutely unjustified and immoral.

Jesse's experience with this supervisor further reflects the heteronormative culture of prison that excludes queer people.

When talking to prison staff after experiencing sexual violence, Riley was faced with an additional injustice:

I'm sitting in the office with them trying to explain what happened and I'm fucked up... like I am not good right now. And the lieutenant of Coyote Ridge... He looked me dead in the face and said: "This wouldn't happen if you just acted like a man in a men's prison. This is your fault."

This extremely harmful way of speaking to a transgender person reflects how staff and their prejudices can negatively affect this community. When relating this to the federal system, Taylor spoke about her perspective on staff conduct:

There needs to be better training of CO's in the federal system because the issue is: nobody wants to do their job the right way. They want to just get away with whatever they can and not have to work. And they can because nobody trusts an inmate's word.

The lack of proper training of correctional officers (CO's) can lead to detrimental outcomes for vulnerable populations inside prison. Taylor's comment draws attention to the power imbalance that exists between the staff and the incarcerated population within this system. The structure of the prison hierarchy leads to worsened experiences for queer individuals.

2. Punishment Inflicted by Peers

The sociocultural environment of the carceral system is additionally shaped by the entire population of incarcerated people at any given facility. The distinct biases and opinions of others have massive implications for incarcerated LGBTQ+ individuals. This informal social control enables the exclusion of anyone who is not straight or cisgender. As Harper recounted:

I've had inmates tell me I can't sit at tables simply because I am who I am... You know, that I don't have a right to sit at a fucking table that's not even theirs. You know, I've had inmates threaten me... I've had inmates tell me to get the hell out of their cell because I am who I am... Just petty things like that, you know, and those little things they - they - they hurt. It's the little things that hurt. Can't sit at a table...

This form of ostracism that Harper encountered shows how negative social relationships can impact an incarcerated person. This social exclusion that was based on queer identity shows how this community is treated differently in this environment. When talking about their sexual orientation, Jesse revealed how it affected their relationships:

That being said, that did put a target on my back...uh, you know, for those folks who I guess wanted to pursue another agenda... Uh, so in regards to relationships, it was very easy to form them. However, I think also because it was so easy it hampered my trust because I ended up trusting the wrong folks sometimes, not knowing the hidden agenda behind their motives, right. Most of these folks were just pursuing us, you know, trans folks or gay folks... for sexual gratification... sometimes that came in some non-consensual activities or harm... uh, so because of that it made it hard to really trust

another person who comes up and introduce themselves to me... like, I always second guess like, what's your agenda, like what's your motive, do you really want to be my friend and just spend time or are you looking for something else?

These dynamics of forming relationships that Jesse describes were quite commonly expressed by the participants. There are uniquely challenging aspects to a queer person's interpersonal environment that many other groups inside prison would not face.

Silas had a paralleled experience to Jesse and Harper in regard to these dynamics of his social relationships. He was asked about what should be established to rectify these types of issues for queer people:

I think that there needs to be probably more protections in place for people... Both protections from inmates and protection from, like, staff misconduct, because that's a very real thing... So it's very difficult for a person that is experiencing any kind of mistreatment because of their status is LGBTQ+... it's difficult for them to do anything about it.

Like Silas expresses here, the prison system absolutely needs more safety measures to protect LGBTQ+ individuals from mistreatment. This applies to staff and incarcerated peers, and queer people should be safe from both.

3. Violence & Abuse

The participants expressed how their queer identities led them to be in a vulnerable position within the environment of prison. This vulnerability encompassed many accounts of violence and abuse that were brought up in the interviews. Harper described the reality of prison violence from cellmates and administrators:

Absolutely, especially when I was in Shelton and that sergeant did what he did to me. You know, and it was only because the people that they put me in a cell with didn't want me in there. So they threatened me, physically threatened me, with harm to get me out of that cell so when I communicated that to the sergeant he just told me to deal with it...

The threats of violence that Harper experienced were connected to their identity, and the sergeant did nothing about it. This shows the lack of precautionary measures within prison that leads to violence and abuse being commonplace. When addressing the role of staff in protecting incarcerated people from this mistreatment, Steve asserted:

As sad as it is, I don't think so... because I think at - at its core, they don't care about inmates. And it's not like - it's not, uh, exclusive to sexual violence. Like most COs if they see a guy getting stabbed up, they don't give a fuck. They don't see you as human, they don't care. Like they don't actually... so when the staff don't view these people as people, I think that's like a root problem.

The dehumanization of incarcerated people that derives from staff mistreatment is horrifying and detrimental. The instances of violence that the participants expressed impacted

them in many ways. Taylor described what it felt like to be placed in solitary confinement against her will:

So, after that, um, they put me in a safe cell and this is getting into the single worst experience of my life. They left me there for 170 hours with no contact from psych staff. Any officers that came by that I asked for anything told me: "You need to speak to psychology" ... and they wouldn't tell me when psychology was coming nor would they pass a message along to psychology. They used this as a method to punish me.

This abuse that occurred within her time in the BOP is a reflection of the exacerbated punishment that queer individuals encounter while incarcerated. These experiences that the participants shared alluded to the overall oppression that is common within prison environments.

4. Sexual Violence

The participants additionally referred to the nature of sexual violence within the carceral system. Most of the participants either encountered these instances themselves or witnessed them while inside prison. Jesse reflected on how being a gay man led to being victimized in housing assignments:

We have no say in who we get to live with... So it's usually older, um, more abusive men, um, just older men in general... which kind of just - it just doesn't make you safe and it leads to some sexual assaults to happen... um, you're just not able to move in with

somebody that you're friends with because they do perceive you as being more sexually inclined to pursue something.

This lack of safety for people who are not straight is a violation of their rights and completely unjust. Steve spoke on how this culture of sexual abuse impacted him and his partner while they were publicly together in a federal facility:

Now it's like people are aggressive towards you because there is like - there's like an underlying rape culture that is in the prison system. And now people are like weirdly aggressive to me, weirdly aggressive to him... I had a horrible situation with someone who was sort of a high profile, like, New York gangster, who basically walked up to him and gave him this piece of paper that was just like: "You come here at this time ready - shaved and ready - or I'm going to kill you". And I'm thinking, well, fuck this sucks... you know, like I have to - I've got to do something about this... Like we were just like thinking all morning and thinking: this guy's gang doesn't know that he does this... And luckily he was so 'DL' and so terrified that he backed off because he didn't want like the gang to know that he was like this horny and trying to rape people...

This "underlying rape culture" that Steve addresses is a downright deprivation of human rights for incarcerated people. Steve and his partner were targeted based on the fact that they were openly together in a men's prison.

In regard to the participants who identified as transgender, many expressed how they

were victimized as well. They revealed how being transgender in a prison that does not align with their gender identities leads to instances of sexual violence. As Harmony stated:

We don't belong in a men's prison... We're - We're... I got raped...

Riley shared a similar experience and talked about PREA as well:

I got raped in prison and that was a shit show... They handled that like fucking hell... So I think that we need it. I think it is very vital to people's well being in the facility. They just handle it like shit...

These occurrences of rape and sexual violence need to be addressed. The queer population within the carceral system should not be victimized and punished because of the vulnerability that comes with their identities. This leads into an examination of the enforcement of PREA and how participants viewed this policy.

B. Ineffectual PREA Enforcement

The federal policy known as PREA has affected the entire carceral system within the United States for over two decades now. Every single participant in this research mentioned this policy naturally within the interviews. This goes to show how extensive and wide-reaching this policy is for LGBTQ+ individuals who come into contact with the carceral state. When talking

about this policy, the participants expressed many issues with its ineffective results. Jesse declared that this policy-based response to sexual violence is superficial:

There is a reality that gay men, women, transgender folks... They do get abused in prison... and the current PREA policy, which is the Prison Rape Elimination Act... it doesn't do anything. It's just another one of those superficial - for show - rules that actually gets weaponized against us.

This policy leads to an inherent contradiction for queer people: it is not designed to truly protect them. Taylor conveyed a paralleled response:

Honestly, I would say it's impossible for anybody to use it effectively. The system itself is just broken. It does not function as intended in any capacity... What ends up happening is the CO's use it against whoever is using it. If you file a PREA, they're coming after you in some capacity.

The mechanism of PREA filing does not lead to positive outcomes for incarcerated queer individuals like Taylor. It becomes “weaponized” against them because prison staff have discretionary power in implementing it.

Cameron voiced his opinion on how PREA is quite meaningless to him:

PREA is a punchline: that's what it is. I mean, the number of PREA jokes that are running around prisons is just like... I know, like, maybe one person that's ever called the

PREA line...and it has earned its reputation as just being a punchline for everybody's jokes...

This reputation of PREA that Cameron expressed needs to be changed and improved. With the high frequency of sexual violence that occurs inside prison, PREA as it currently functions is not an adequate response to this immense problem. The perspectives and concerns that the participants shared leads to the conclusion that PREA standards need to be amended.

C. The Dichotomy Between Incarceration and Mental Health

The environment of prison intensifies existing mental health issues and generates new problems. There exists a fixed dichotomy between mental health and incarceration for queer individuals. Most of the participants revealed how detrimental their experiences were when it came to their mental health.

Silas addressed the psychological aspects to the initial part of his incarceration:

So, there were like different stages, right? Because when I first got arrested, I was like totally depressed. Like, I didn't wanna do anything. I - I just stopped talking to people, like, from the outside, except for my mom, uh, for about like two weeks... So during that kind of whole first period, it was just a lot of depression... like I guess I would say shame and like self-loathing and like, you know, I just - I just ruined my life...

The multidimensional parts to the effect of incarceration on one's mental health is extremely important to recognize. Silas continued to talk about the system of mental health care that exists in prison, and he advocated for improvements:

I think more and better mental health services for people dealing with, like, various issues...because a lot of things either just go untreated or unaddressed.

The structure of mental health services is clearly insufficient for people within the carceral system. When these issues go "untreated or unaddressed", incarcerated people's experiences are exacerbated to serious extents. Riley spoke passionately about this matter:

The way they handle mental health issues is so fucking insane, oh my God... like if you are having a problem, and like, literally the solution is like: you just need to sit and you just need to talk to someone and just vent, you know, and cool it down... No, you're going to suicide watch... If you like a mental health emergency, it's suicide watch, period...

The psychological impacts of incarceration are not handled in appropriate ways, and many participants conveyed similar notions. Taylor was glad to be able to contribute her voice when talking about this matter:

It's horrific, and I'm just - I'm glad that I'm able to at least tell somebody about this, because I don't think a lot of people understand that this is the reality of the situation in prison.

Overall, this intersection of incarceration and mental health had detrimental impacts on the participants. The negative experiences that occurred in prison led to worsened mental health conditions for this group. Mental health services and care need to be expanded and improved in order to address this problem.

D. Arbitrary Program Opportunities

Throughout the prison facilities that this group of participants experienced, there was a certain fluctuation in the availability and accessibility of programs. Whether it was educational, vocational, rehabilitative, or reentry-oriented programs, the participants frequently disapproved of what was offered to them. As Riley stated when talking about programming:

Programming depends on the facility... So different facilities offer different programs, and their classification system kind of screws it up because... I was at the facility where we had the college courses where I could get, you know, like an AA degree or whatever. I couldn't qualify because I had - on paper - a life sentence that I would never get out, so I didn't need it. So I didn't qualify...

The barriers to educational programs that Riley emphasized here are unjust and serving a negative purpose. When sharing one of her peer's stories, Avery revealed:

So, she on the other hand, they wouldn't let her have a job outside the unit...because they were prejudiced against trans people and they said: "Well, we're not gonna - we're not

going to refer you over to correctional industries because you're trans and we just won't accept that". And so they held her back and wouldn't let her make money and so, she was treated with a lot of disrespect.

The transphobia that was involved in this programming rejection is largely unethical and arbitrary. This proves that transgender individuals experience obstacles to accessing programs that would benefit them. When reflecting on the availability of programming, Silas stated that rehabilitation is oftentimes unfeasible:

So like, for prison in general...prison right now is not – this is just in general, there are certain places that do things better than others – it is not a great rehabilitative environment. Especially like when I was in the federal system, it was just - there was not a lot to do that was constructive, and things that were constructive were like difficult to access.

If prison lacks rehabilitative programming, then the punishment that incarcerated populations face is consequently exacerbated. The participants voiced how programming opportunities were arbitrary and unsuccessful in general. This aspect of the carceral system is crucial to the experiences of incarcerated individuals, so advancements must be instituted.

III. Finding 3: Queer Resilience

The LGBTQ+ population of the carceral system experience punishment in a myriad of ways. Systemic injustice evidently permeates the penal regime and affects the lives, rights, and overall experiences of incarcerated queer people. The final finding of this research defends the concept of queer resilience, which can be defined as the nature of the incarcerated LGBTQ+ community to stay optimistic and positive in the face of adversity. Nearly all 10 participants reflected this notion, and the code titled “Queer Resilience” appeared 44 times throughout the process of qualitative analysis. The voices, perspectives, and experiences that were witnessed across the interviews illustrate the resilient character of the queer community. Further evidence of this is the fact that these 10 individuals wanted to share their lived experiences in this way.

When providing an overview of her experience in the carceral system, Taylor expressed:

While I was away, I was able to take the time and effort needed to work on myself...and I've come out of this experience a much more resilient person than I was when I went in... Is it worth the trade-off for the trauma I experienced? Probably not... But I didn't have a choice... and not having a choice, I'm - I'm glad for the positives that have come out of this. And I try and hold on to those as much as possible so that it's not an overly horrifying experience...

This reflection of her experience is truly remarkable and inspiring. Taylor was able to move past the negative part of her incarceration and choose to be a “much more resilient person”. While still recognizing the trauma and adversity she encountered, it is important to understand the monumental nature of developing a positive mindset like that.

Many of the participants also expressed positive outlooks while sharing their retrospective accounts. Although rarely mentioned, support groups had a role in fostering positive experiences inside the prison system. As Silas shed light on:

By the time I got to Monroe I was like... I had already done six and a half years, almost seven years... I didn't care anymore. I was, like, open about it...and there was a large queer population there at TRU, so it wasn't a big thing... And also, because there's a larger queer population, there was like more... when I got there, it was still kind of in the midst of covid, but they have like a group that goes in there... It's called "Alliances" now, it used to be called "Unity", and it's like an LGBT support group. And so that was cool to be able to be a part of that and get to talk to other people and like, yeah, we're all living this...

This support group inside Monroe's Twin Rivers Unit (TRU) has been very beneficial to queer individuals like Silas. It provides a space for inclusion within a system that is very exclusionary. More queer support groups need to be introduced in every prison facility within DOC and across other institutions as well. LGBTQ+ support groups could be a catalyst for queer resilience if implemented adequately.

When thinking introspectively, Jesse shared how his relationship to his own identity evolved after being incarcerated:

I would say the experience has definitely strengthened my identity in kind of a rebellious way... because I think I just got... before I was just typically a passive person, you know,

“yes, sir”, or whatever...not to try and stir anything up. And I think - I think after experiencing so much oppression and so much tyranny, just in my face, and just so like - I just got mad... I just got upset... And, uh, it kind of sparked this rebellious spirit. So now I’m just - I’m just kind of, like, in your face with it and kind of - in a way - braver.

This reflection of resilience is absolutely extraordinary. Jesse further expanded on this “spark” and how it influenced his reentry experience:

I came out, kind of like I said, I found that spark inside me - inside of the prison and I kind of carried that out here... And I kind of channeled that through different queer orgs, like “Black and Pink” and “Peer Seattle”, which kind of fueled my work... I bring that to the table with my other job at the CEPP... um and so my - my relationship has grown within myself and my confidence really...through this experience and the fact that I made it through this terrible experience and I can carry it out here because I am a queer gay person. Like I did all this and now I’m out here doing bigger and better things.

Jesse’s involvement with non-profit organizations that help justice-impacted queer people is another indication of queer resilience. It is very incredible that he works towards helping others who similarly endured punishment within the criminal legal system. Many other participants shared their involvement in non-profits and grassroots organizations after being released from prison. The positive impacts that the participants are currently having within society is further proof of their resilience. At Peer Seattle, Steve has found a meaningful purpose working with queer advocates:

I'm just so glad to work here... it feels just very impactful being at a place that's like such a community spot... We have things going on...there's one where a lawyer and a doctor are coming here to explain the state of trans healthcare and the law... It's a cool thing happening at the end of the month... And I think that's really what we need is to just, like, be in the community doing things.

This employment opportunity upon reentry has impacted Steve in a very transformative manner. Steve's pathway towards finding a purposeful job after being incarcerated was paralleled by Cameron:

A lot of people who come out – a lot of my trans clients – like one of the first things I want to do with them is just, like, take them up to Capitol Hill and just let them walk around and realize that no one's even going to notice them... I think a lot of them need to know what it's like - to feel what it's like to go walk around a neighborhood where nobody's even going to notice them for being trans, let alone target them... like, you'll walk right past everybody and they won't even see you...they won't care... And so, I think a lot of it - it's good for them to experience what that's like...

This reentry assistance work that Cameron engages in helps facilitate the growth of queer resilience for others. This remarkable work is affiliated with the non-profit organization called Beyond These Walls. Allowing queer people to experience Capitol Hill – one of Washington's most welcoming environments for LGBTQ+ people – upon reentry is incredibly important and helpful. Steve also talked about the impact of this inclusive neighborhood:

I think it's been excellent. I think I've outperformed all expectations. I love my neighborhood of Capitol Hill... I feel like I'm part of a community for once, and I work in a community space. And I love it. It's excellent... It's come with its own annoyances...like dealing with probation and all their little nit-picking of things; but overall, I think it's been pretty sweet. I'm so glad to have come to Seattle and settled in here.

This element of community Steve talks about is vastly significant for queer people leaving the carceral system. The LGBTQ+ community of this society needs to be more accepting of its justice-impacted members.

Additionally, some participants referenced the political state of American society within the first several months of 2025. The regressive status of LGBTQ+ rights within this country has followed the return of the Trump administration in January of 2025. The executive orders that have targeted this community include the policy of only recognizing two biological sexes and therefore restricting gender identities (The White House 2025). Tyrone related his concerns about politics to the purpose of this research:

I just think I'm very glad that you're doing this study because like... Especially in a time like right now where there's a lot of erasure of the queer community... and trying to stop even studies like this and stop information about this getting expanded in general... it's very important in a time like this, especially for this all to be happening...

It is now more important than ever for the queer community to remain united. The political issues of our broader society should not inhibit the internalization of queer resilience.

Like Tyrone emphasized, the objective of this research is extremely important for the LGBTQ+ community. Incarcerated queer individuals should no longer be neglected and disregarded in Washington state and throughout the United States.

The justice-impacted queer community is resilient, as the participants of this research exemplify. This characteristic of this population is incredibly important to recognize when examining their lived experiences. The queer community perseveres even when injustice intertwines with their carceral realities.

Discussion and Future Directions

This research resulted in three main findings that summarize the experiences of 10 LGBTQ+ individuals who were impacted by the carceral system. The intersection between incarceration and queerness led to manifold implications for the ways in which they experienced criminal punishment.

Firstly, the penal system led to injustices for this queer population. The oppressive environment of prison forced these individuals to suppress their authentic identities. The sociocultural dynamics of this environment involved discriminatory norms and exclusionary practices. As it pertains to housing and gender-affirming care, queer people and their needs are not adequately addressed. The systemic injustices that are commonplace within the carceral system affect LGBTQ+ people in detrimental ways.

Secondly, the environment of prison itself forces harms and adversities onto this group. Punishment is exacerbated for queer individuals from a myriad of sources. The interpersonal dynamics of engaging with staff and peers inside prison leads to mistreatment and injustice. The

recurrent nature of violence, abuse, and sexual assault that this population is subjected to needs to be addressed urgently. The enforcement of PREA from carceral staff is ineffective and inappropriate when it comes to responding to sexual violence. The effects of prison extended to queer individuals in the form of psychological abuse as well. Mental health services that address the needs of this population are scarce and flawed. Furthermore, the establishment of programs that operate within carceral settings are unproductive and in need of improvements. The arbitrary nature of policy implementation further leads to worsened experiences for queer individuals. Reform is absolutely necessary in the areas of housing assignments, gender-affirming care, violence response procedures, mental health care, and programming.

The conclusion of this research is encapsulated by one salient phenomenon: queer resilience. This characteristic of the justice-impacted LGBTQ+ community is remarkable and shows the perseverance that they acquire when experiencing injustice. The queer population is undeniably resilient as they leave this system and lead meaningful lives upon reentry.

Future research should entail several things as it pertains to incarcerated LGBTQ+ people. There needs to be a wider range of perspectives included in this area of prison reform. Diversity could be further prioritized if such research involved more queer people with intersecting identities. The future direction of this discipline should consider the effects of the carceral system in a wider variety of institutions outside of Washington state.

Furthermore, this research gives rise to the ensuing question: what would the reality of the carceral system look like if queer resilience was enshrined instead of diminished?

Bibliography

- “ACLU of Washington Sues Washington Department of Corrections for Unconstitutionally Transferring a Transgender Woman to a Men’s Prison.” *ACLU of Washington*, 17 Dec. 2024,
www.aclu-wa.org/news/aclu-washington-sues-washington-department-corrections-unconstitutionally-transferring.
- Aldrich, Jennifer, et al. “Gender-Affirming Care, Incarceration, and the Eighth Amendment.” *AMA Journal of Ethics*, vol. 25, no. 6, 1 June 2023, pp. 407–413,
journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/gender-affirming-care-incarceration-and-eighth-amendment/2023-06, <https://doi.org/10.1001/amajethics.2023.407>.
- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. Tenth anniversary edition, New Press, The, 2010.
- Beckett, Katherine, and Allison Goldberg. *Sentencing Reform in Washington State: Progress and Pitfalls*. 12 Jan. 2024.
- Beckett, Katherine and Heather Evans. 2020. *About Time: How Long and Life Sentences Fuel Mass Incarceration in Washington State*. ACLU of Washington.
- Braunstein, Michael D. “The Five Stages of LGBTQ Discrimination and Its Effects on Mass Incarceration.” *University of Miami Race & Social Justice Law Review*, vol. 7, no. 1, 6 July 2017, pp. 217–246, repository.law.miami.edu/umrsjlr/vol7/iss1/3/.
- Brown, Jason A., and Valerie Jenness. “LGBT People in Prison: Management Strategies, Human Rights Violations, and Political Mobilization.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of*

- Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 30 June 2020. Oxford University Press,
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.013.647>.
- Campbell, Michael C., and Heather Schoenfeld. “The Transformation of America’s Penal Order: A Historicized Political Sociology of Punishment.” *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 118, no. 5, 2013, pp. 1375–423. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.1086/669506>.
- Cházaro, Angélica. “Rolling Back the Tide: Challenging the Criminalization of Immigrants in Washington State.” *Seattle Journal for Social Justice*, by Hirabayashi Coram Nobis, Volume 11, Issue 1, 2012, pp. 127–148.
- DOC 100.500: Non-Discrimination for Individuals. *Washington State Department of Corrections*, 17 July 2023,
www.doc.wa.gov/information/policies/default.aspx?show=600.
- DOC 490.700: Transgender, Intersex, and/or Non-Binary Individuals. *Washington State Department of Corrections*, 17 Aug. 2023,
www.doc.wa.gov/information/policies/default.aspx?show=600
- DOC Form 07-019: PREA Risk Assessment. *Washington State Department of Corrections*, 2016.
- Donohue, Gráinne, et al. “Views and Experiences of LGBTQ+ People in Prison Regarding Their Psychosocial Needs: A Systematic Review of the Qualitative Research Evidence.” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 18, no. 17, 3 Sep. 2021, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18179335>.
- “DRW v. DOC.” *Disability Rights Washington*, 21 Feb. 2025,
disabilityrightswa.org/cases/drw-v-doc/.
- Emerson, Robert Wall. “Convenience Sampling, Random Sampling, and Snowball Sampling:

- How Does Sampling Affect the Validity of Research?" *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, vol. 109, no. 2, 2015, pp. 164–68,
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0145482X1510900215>.
- Ghandnoosh, Nazgol, and Emma Stammen. "Incarcerated LGBTQ+ Adults and Youth." *The Sentencing Project*, 9 June 2022,
www.sentencingproject.org/policy-brief/incarcerated-lgbtq-adults-and-youth/.
- Girgis, Lauren. "Trans Woman Argues Move to Monroe Men's Prison Is Cruel Punishment." *The Seattle Times*, 17 Dec. 2024,
www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/trans-woman-argues-move-to-wa-mens-prison-is-cruel-punishment/.
- Gramlich, John. "What the Data Says About Crime in the U.S." *Pew Research Center*, 24 Apr. 2024,
www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/04/24/what-the-data-says-about-crime-in-the-us/.
- Haney, Craig. "The Perversions of Prison: On the Origins of Hypermasculinity and Sexual Violence in Confinement." *American Criminal Law Review*, vol. 48 Am. Crim. L. Rev., 2011, pp. 121–142,
heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/amcrimlr48&id=123&collection=journals&index=.
- Jenness, Valerie, and Alexis Rowland. "The Structure and Operation of the Transgender Criminal Legal System Nexus in the United States: Inequalities, Administrative Violence, and Injustice at Every Turn." *Annual Review of Criminology*, vol. 7, no. 1, Jan. 2024, pp. 283–309, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-criminol-022222-040947>.
- Lloyd, Annemaree. *The Qualitative Landscape of Information Literacy Research: Perspectives*,

- Methods and Techniques*. 1st ed., Facet, 2021.
- Lotke, Eric, Jason Colburn, and Vincent Schiraldi. 2004. *Three Strikes and You're Out: An Examination of the Impact of 3-Strike Laws—10 Years after Their Enactment*. Justice Policy Institute Policy Brief. Washington, D.C.: Justice Policy Institute.
- Manion, Jen. "Carceral History in the Era of Mass Incarceration." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 143, no. 3, 2019, pp. 233–46. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5215/pennmaghistbio.143.3.0233>.
- Mears, Daniel P., and Joshua C. Cochran, "Who Goes to Prison?", in John Wooldredge, and Paula Smith (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Prisons and Imprisonment*, Oxford Handbooks (2018; online edn, Oxford Academic, 2 June 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199948154.013.2>.
- Mogul, Joey L., et al. *Queer (In)Justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States*. Boston, Beacon Press, 15 Feb. 2011.
- Nellis, Ashley. "Mass Incarceration Trends." *The Sentencing Project*, 21 May 2024, www.sentencingproject.org/reports/mass-incarceration-trends/.
- Pemberton, Sarah. "Enforcing Gender: The Constitution of Sex and Gender in Prison Regimes." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 39, no. 1, Sept. 2013, pp. 151–175, <https://doi.org/10.1086/670828>.
- "PREA Resources | Washington State Department of Corrections." *Washington State Department of Corrections*, 2023, www.doc.wa.gov/corrections/prea/resources.htm.
- "Prison Facilities | Washington State Department of Corrections." *Washington State Department of Corrections*, 31 Dec. 2024, www.doc.wa.gov/corrections/incarceration/prisons/default.htm.

“Prison Rape Elimination Act.” *National PREA Resource Center*, 2023,
www.prearesourcecenter.org/about/prison-rape-elimination-act.

“RCW 49.60.030.” *Washington State Legislature*,
app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=49.60.030.

Small, Mario Luis, and Jessica McCrory Calarco. *Qualitative Literacy: A Guide to Evaluating Ethnographic and Interview Research*. 1st ed., University of California Press, 2022,
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2vr9c4x>.

“The Rights of Transgender Individuals in Jails and Prisons.” *ACLU of Washington*, 22 June 2023, www.aclu-wa.org/pages/rights-transgender-individuals-jails-and-prisons#_ftn7.

The Sentencing Project. “U.S. Criminal Justice Data.” *The Sentencing Project*, 2020,
www.sentencingproject.org/research/us-criminal-justice-data/.

The White House. “Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government.” *The White House*, 20 Jan. 2025,
www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal-government/.

Washington DOC Health Plan. Washington State Department of Corrections, 10 June 2022.