

LGBTQ+ Lives and the Women's Prison

Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity for research participants

The nature of the research, and the life history method it uses mean that the research interviews are likely to touch on sensitive issues. As part of the project's ethical commitments, all information collected for this research study will be treated as confidential and anonymous. The steps that will be taken to ensure this are set out below, and have been approved by the Open University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). A copy of that approval is available on the project's webpage, at www.tinyurl.com/LGBTQ-prisonlives.

Interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed to ensure that an accurate record of the discussion is produced for analysis. All the information (data) collected from research participants will be handled and stored very carefully to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. Written reports of the study will be produced for publication in, for example, academic journals, books, blogs, and practitioner and LGBTQ+ magazines. Great care will be taken when preparing material for publication to ensure that pseudonyms are used instead of participants' real names, and that no information is included that could directly identify a research participant.

Anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured in the following ways:

1. Interviews will be conducted out of the hearing of other people (unless an individual interviewee requests otherwise).
2. All information collected will be stored electronically in a password-protected area of the Open University's secure network.
3. No names or demographic information (e.g. date of birth or ethnicity) will be stored with interview transcripts. Transcripts will instead be labelled using either a numerical identifier or pseudonym.
4. Completed consent forms (which will show a signature) will be stored securely and separately from the transcripts, and without any information to connect them to the corresponding interview or identifier/pseudonym used.
5. Participants will not be required to sign the consent form using their real name.
6. The interviews will be transcribed by a professional transcriber who is also bound by a confidentiality agreement.
7. Any obviously identifying details of the life stories told during interviews will be removed from the transcripts. If there is any uncertainty about whether a specific piece of information could identify a participant, this will be done in consultation with them.
8. Potentially identifying details of individual participants' lives will be omitted from research publications. Where appropriate, minor details from participants' life stories (e.g. birthplace or number of siblings/children) may occasionally be substituted for others, in order to make it possible to tell an important part of a participants' story without identifying them, and where this does not create a misleading impression. Wherever possible, any changes of this kind will be agreed with the individual participant in advance.