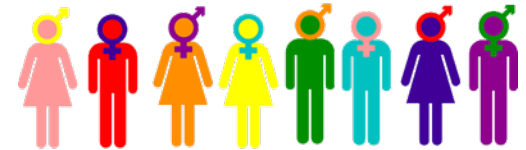


# A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO THE EXPERIENCES OF LGBT WORKERS IN THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR



---

Dr Sarah Barnard, Prof Andy Dainty & Sian Lewis

# Key take away points

- Our research has thus far shown that for some LGBT people, working in the construction sector has been a **really positive experience**
- Evidence in line with previous research around **the need to come out again and again** and how this can be challenging
- **LGBT networks in the sector are successfully raising the profile** of issues and are beginning to gain momentum

# Context of Sexuality in construction sector

- Survey by Architect's Journal found that:
  - Homophobia commonplace
  - Only 14% of gay employees felt they could be open about their sexuality
- Research by Chan (2013) and Wright (2013) identified:
  - Homophobia during contact with clients and colleagues
  - Heterosexuality normalised and explicit
  - Sexualised banter
  - Discrimination subsequent to individual's coming out

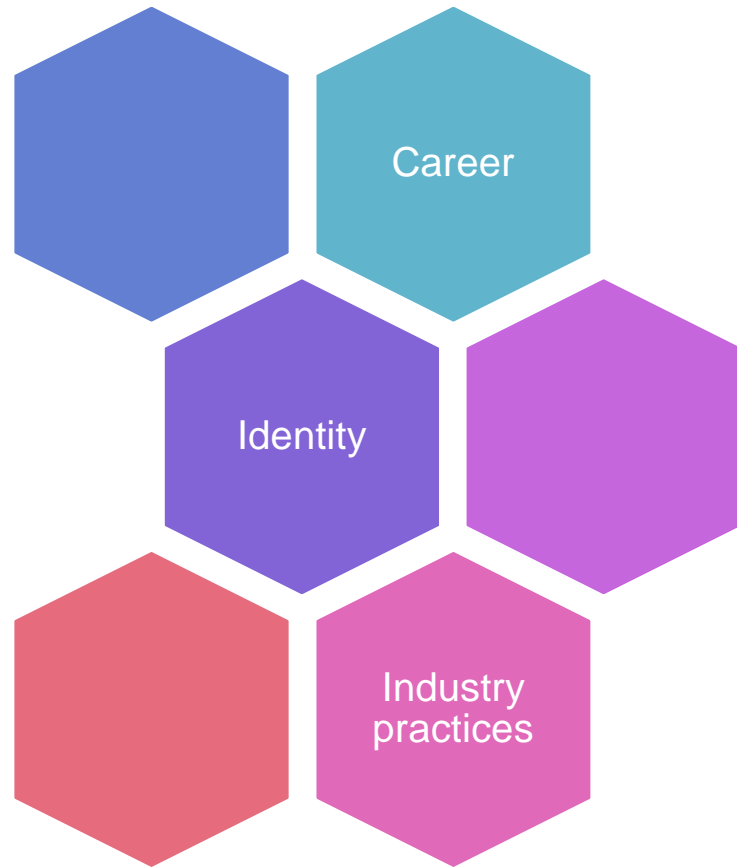
# Researching Sexuality at work

- LGBT may be considered more complex than some other identity issues in the sense that sexuality and gender identity is not necessarily something that is public or identifiable as such, rather ‘a concealable identity’ (Ng & Rumens, 2017: 110)
  - Therefore, ‘coming out’ an issue for people. Repeated disclosures, an ongoing process.
  - ‘Outness’ is also associated with greater levels of job/life satisfaction (Huffman et al., 2008).



# Methodology

- In-depth qualitative interviews exploring career/work experiences and professional development with 15-20 people
- A focus group and stakeholder workshop to respond to research findings and develop recommendations



# Reflections on the interviews so far

16 interviews conducted so far (1 trans man, 2 trans women, 7 men who identify as gay, 5 women who identify as lesbian, 1 bisexual woman). Mostly white-British office workers.

Themes include:

- Being able to be your 'whole self' at work
- The sociable nature of the job meant 'coming out again and again'
- Work as a safe space
- The preconceptions of the industry are 'worse' than the reality

# Importance of being whole self...

- Being your true self at work very important
- Coming out ongoing, repeated
- But also sexual identity only small part of who they are as a person

# Construction sector (relative) inclusivity

Work as a safe space

'I would have been another statistic, as in I would have committed suicide'

Experiences in sector positive

'I wanted to share my experience because I'm probably one of the lucky ones...to show it's not all bad'



# Differential experiences

- Lesbian women said their gender made more of a difference to their work than their sexuality

'I can hide I'm gay, but I can't hide that I'm a woman'

- Acknowledgement that office workers in the sector experience a different context than those working on site

# How heteronormativity is experienced

- Even those with positive experiences spoke of being careful about disclosures
- ‘my personal experience has been really positive but then I only really tell people I feel comfortable talking about it to’
- ‘I think barriers are beginning to break down, it’s okay to talk about gender issues. I still don’t think it’s okay to talk about sexual orientation issues’

# Key take away points

- Our research has thus far shown that for some LGBT people, working in the construction sector has been a **really positive experience**
- Evidence in line with previous research around **the need to come out again and again** and how this can be challenging
- **LGBT networks in the sector are successfully raising the profile** of issues and are beginning to gain momentum

# Next stages for the project



- Further analysis of interviews
- Focus group (Nov 2018) & stakeholder workshop (Feb 2019)

See our paper: Barnard, S., & Dainty, A. (2018, May). **Coming out and staying in: how sexual orientation and gender identity matters in construction employment.** In Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers - *Municipal Engineer* (Vol. 171, No. 3, pp. 141-148). Thomas Telford Ltd.

