

DOING TIME IN A GAUTENG JUVENILE CORRECTIONAL CENTRE FOR MALES

Written by Sasha Gear

During December 2004 and January 2005 the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVSR) conducted fieldwork to survey male youths' experiences of the Boksburg Youth Correctional Centre (BYC). Young men held at the Centre were randomly selected and interviewed on their experiences of violence, sex and sexual violence in prison as well as on more general personal features and situations in the institution. This brief gives a snap-shot of the youth, their reported views and experiences of certain aspects of life in the facility and issues related to HIV and AIDS, sexuality and gender.

The survey was part of CSVSR's Sexual Violence in Prison Project which grew out of concerns regarding sexual violence taking place behind bars, the high risk of HIV transmission, and the consequences for the people involved. Previous work on the project had showed us the importance of continued and urgent focus on the issues. This is because:

- Sexual violence and coercion in prison contribute to continuing cycles of sexual and other forms of violence, both in prison and when prisoners return to society. Related to this, destructive ideas about gender – what it means to be a “man” and “woman” – are endorsed and generated in the process. As such, sexual violence and coercion in men's prisons are directly related to broader processes of gender violence in South African society.
- In addition, consensual sex practises in prison and how these should be treated so as to promote safer sex, health, physical safety, dignity and human rights agendas are only beginning to be grappled with in South Africa and internationally.

The survey asked offenders mainly about life in the BYC and was intended to yield baseline information for a CSVSR pilot project planned with the Centre's staff. The taboo and fear surrounding sexual violence in prison and its male victims which was a key focus of the questionnaire probably limited what respondents were willing to share with us. The research was also constrained by the prison context and the mainly quantitative survey methodology. Nevertheless, substantial and useful findings emerged.

Our intention was not to “expose” practices or conditions in BYC as a specific institution. Rather it was to prepare the way for the pilot and to draw learnings that could also potentially benefit other correctional centres and organisations working with offenders, at the same time as building better understanding of our youth behind our bars.

Another brief in this series (Brief 2) focuses on the young men's reports of fear and violence including sexual violence in the institution (“Fear, violence and sexual violence in a Gauteng juvenile correctional centre for males”).

The full report of the study, Gear and Isserow with Nevill (2006) “Situational Analysis of Boksburg Youth Centre, Sexual Violence in Prison Pilot Project (Dec 2004-Jan 2005) is available from the CSVSR.

Who was involved?

Generous funding from Irish Aid made the project possible.

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Boksburg guidance and daily logistics: Mr Eugene Nelson and Mr ‘Pastor’ Molekwa

Project guidance and support: Amanda Dissel

Thanks to the young men in BYC who agreed to participate in the study, and to the following people who in various ways contributed to the process: Theresa Lynne, Mpone Moeketsi, Marike Fuchs, Warren Parker, Joan van Niekerk, Helen Hajiyanis, Toni Kruger, Helena Du Toit, Bilkees Vawda and Pule Rampa; and from DCS: Pelmos Mashabela, Cookie Moodley, Deng Mahlangu, Anna Molepo, Laeticia Heynes, Mr Magagula and Mr Botha.

The Sample

The survey was administered by fieldworkers who conducted face-to-face interviews with 311 randomly selected participants. At the outset of the fieldwork BYC held 462 offenders, and when completed, there were 438. The sample held a confidence interval of 99% and a 4% margin of error. While findings are not generalisable of the broader population of incarcerated male youth, they are representative of BYC, and are likely indicative of issues that are felt in prisons more broadly, if to differing degrees.

Who's inside?

Nationality

98% of respondents were South Africans and 2% came from other SADC countries.

Population group

91% were African, 7% Coloured, less than 1% Asian, and 1% were White. These proportions are in line with recorded figures for the province generally regarding sentenced males of 18-25 years during January 2005.¹

Age

Respondents' ages ranged from 15 to 29 years and the average age was 20. Most respondents (78%) were aged between 18 and 21. Nine percent (1 in 11) were younger than 18, and 13% were 22 years or older. Although BYC should have been housing only those between 16 and 21 years, there were a few 15 year olds, and just over 1 in 10 (13%) were 22 or older – a high proportion of offenders who should not still have been in the juvenile institution.

Education level

Forty three percent had completed either Grade 9 or 10, while 20% had completed Grade 3 – Grade 7 and 20%, Grade 8. Based on statistics of education levels for Gauteng male youth aged between 18 – 21, it appears that the young inmates have achieved lower levels of education than unincarcerated youth in the province (Statistics South Africa, 2003). This is most visible in the category Grade 11– Grade 12, where only 14% of the young offenders aged 18-21 reported having achieved this level as opposed to 54% of young males in the province aged 18-21 (although the population of BYC does not necessarily reflect other demographic features of the Gauteng or national context).

Prior home and relationship situations

As part of exploring who these young men are we wanted to learn more about their relationships and home situations before they came to prison:

Home situation:

- The greatest proportion of respondents (32%) had been living mainly with their mother (with or without extended family but without father/step father) before their incarceration.
- Twenty-four percent, or 1 in 4 respondents had lived with both their mother and father, and 3%, with a parent and a step-parent.
- Twenty-one percent, (1 in 5) had resided with their extended family but without a parent.
- Six percent (just over 1 in 20) had been living with siblings only and without an adult or someone of a parent generation.

Relationships

Ninety-five percent were in a romantic relationship before they came to prison. Of these, 50% had had a serious girlfriend and 30% had had more than one girlfriend (including those who had a serious girlfriend as well as other “not serious” girlfriends). One in five (19%) had a “not serious” girlfriend, and less than 1% were married. One percent had been in a relationship with a boy/man.

Fatherhood

Sixteen percent of respondents had children either living or deceased - 15% of total respondents having one child, and 1% having two. One person had 3 children. Of the respondents who had children, 60% were 20 years old or younger. Close to the same proportion of inmates aged 18 or younger had children as those aged between 19 or older.

Convictions and sentence

Convictions

While respondents may have been convicted of more than one crime, reports of aggressive crime convictions (59%, including sexual crimes but excluding possession of firearms, ammunition) slightly outweighed economic crimes (54%).

- Forty-two percent were serving time for the aggressive offence/s of robbery, bank robbery, hijacking of car/truck/cash-in-transit.
- Thirty-four percent of convictions were for burglary/attempted burglary,
- Twenty percent were for theft or shoplifting.

- Six percent were for crimes of murder or attempted murder
- Five percent were for sexual crimes.

Sentence

The length of sentences was influenced by the fact that BYC is a medium security institution. If offenders classed as “maximum” security are housed there, it is only for a short time until they can be transferred to a maximum facility.

- The average (mean) sentence was 4 years, 6 months with 28% serving sentences of between 2 and 4 years and 23% serving sentences of 4 to 6 years.
- Eleven percent of respondents were serving sentences of a year or less.

When interviewed, most respondents had served fairly short periods of their current sentences: 55% had not yet served 1 year. The periods that they'd spent in BYC specifically were similarly short.

- Sixty-two percent had been in BYC for less than a year.
 - Twenty-six percent had been there for between 1 and 2 years.
- These relatively short periods of time they'd been in BYC influenced how they answered other questions because many of these were concerned with respondents' experiences in BYC.

Prior convictions and experiences of secure care:

- Eighty percent of participants had no prior conviction.
- However, 68% (two-thirds) had previously spent time in a prison, police cell or other type of secure facility, separate from their current sentence or its awaiting trial period.
- Of the 213 inmates who had spent time in another institution, the greatest proportion (43%) had spent time in two different types of institution, 41% had spent time in one institution and 17% had spent time in three institutions or more.

The majority of respondents then had already, to some extent, been exposed to life “inside” – a factor which can influence prison experiences by providing a degree of familiarity with prison culture. It also points to a relatively high level of exposure to institutions and the criminal justice system amongst young people even when this does not culminate in conviction.

Table 1: Institution types where respondents had previously spent time (not as part of current sentence or its awaiting trial period)

	N (multiple response)	% of total sample (N=258) ²
Orphanage, children's home, safety facility (excluding institutions for those in trouble with the law)	6	2%
Prison - including juvenile sections, excluding awaiting trial sections.	31	12%
Institution for children / young people in trouble with the law – “stout school”, etc.	42	16%
Awaiting trial section of a prison (not related to current sentence)	79	31%
Never spent time in another institution	98	38%
Police holding cell	120	47%

Some aspects of life in BYC

Accommodation

Most of the young men (91%) were staying in communal cells where the recommended capacity for these cells was 30–40 people. They were sharing with 26–35 other people indicating that they were (mainly) not being held in overcrowded conditions.

² Due to interviewers having difficulties with this question near the beginning of field work, answers were not coded on this question for 53 respondents.

¹ Statistics supplied by the DCS, April 2007.

The sections of the facility are comprised of both 'single' and communal cells with 'single' cells usually being used to accommodate 2–3 offenders. Eight percent of respondents were held in the 'maximum' section – the only section of 'single' cells exclusively, and used to hold those being disciplined, facing further charges or awaiting transfer to a maximum security institution.

Involvement in activities in BYC

We asked whether respondents had been involved in any formal activities during the last six months in BYC. Interviewers went through a list of activities and also asked them to include any others not on the list. Responses referred to both brief and once-off interventions along with more lengthy intensive interventions.

Ideally offenders should be involved in various and regular developmental activities, as well as receive professional support on, for example, psycho-social issues. This is important for personal development and for promoting rehabilitative goals together with – as the offenders themselves pointed out – reducing frustration and aggression by providing positive outlets for self-expression and growth. (See respondents' recommendations for a safer prison in Brief 2).

- Participants were more likely to mention attending religious services (76%) or reading in the library (61%) than other activities.
- Forty-six percent had attended school at BYC in the last six months.
- Forty-one percent had accessed social work services or programmes, which may have included initial assessments on arrival at BYC.
- Twenty-seven percent had done work at the prison on a "work team".
- Twenty-five percent had been involved in health programmes.

Informal prison life

Gang membership:

- Fifteen percent of participants said they belonged to a prison gang. All but one of these were members of a "Numbers" gang – a collection of gangs which have for long been a powerful feature in South African prisons.

Table 2: Gang membership by gang

Gang	Gang's stated objectives	N	% of gang members	% of total sample
26s	Accumulate wealth through cunning and trickery	26	54%	8%
28s	Fight to improve prison conditions and organise and protect catamites ['wyfies'] for sex.	8	17%	3%
24s / Airforce 4	Both Airforce gangs work to escape from prison	5	10%	2%
23s / Airforce 3		4	8%	1%
Big 5s	Collaborate with authorities to obtain privileges	4	8%	1%
Other		1	2%	-
Total N		48	100%	15%

- Just over half of reported gang members belonged to the 26s. The gang with the next highest membership was the 28s. None mentioned the 27s (the gang associated with blood and offering protection to the 26s in return for material goods).

Drug usage:

- Thirty-nine percent of respondents had used drugs/ alcohol /mind-altering and prohibited substances during their time in BYC. While 25%, said that they had done so only once or twice, slightly more than 1 in 5 users said they used "almost daily" (8% of total sample).
- Gang members were more than twice as likely as non-gang members to have used drugs or alcohol in prison with 68% having used as compared to 30% of non-gang members.

"Outside" connections and visits

We got a sense of participants' links to aspects of their outside lives and outside support networks through questions on their visitors and relationships.

- While most participants were receiving visits, 18 % (almost 1 in 5) were not.
- Immediate family were the most common grouping of visitors: Sixty-four percent received visits from parent(s) and 53% from sibling(s). A smaller percentage of respondents reported receiving visits from "other relative(s)" and "girlfriends".

Visitors regularly represent a key source of both basic necessities and luxuries for offenders. Access to such goods is also an important facet of inmate power structures: those without access are often amongst the most vulnerable to these structures and the hardships of prison.

- Twenty-two percent said they didn't receive anything from outside, while money, toiletries and clothing were the items most likely to have been received by those who did receive things from outside.
- Of the 92% who were in a romantic relationship before coming to BYC, 58% were still involved with the person (or some of the people) when interviewed.

Of those still in these relationships, 67% had not yet served one year of their sentences, although many had likely been incarcerated for longer due to periods awaiting trial. There was a positive correlation between the period of time a respondent was incarcerated, and the sustainability of a romantic relationship with someone on the outside. The longer the period served, so the proportion of those no longer in their relationships increased, and those remaining in the relationships decreased. This trend was apparent in those who had served up to three years.

Personal connections and sense of self

Confidantes

- Eighty-three percent of respondents said they had someone in their lives with whom they could share personal information, "Stuff that [they] would not tell other people, things like feeling scared, anxious depressed... or having a problem that [they're] embarrassed about". However, 1 in 6 respondents said there was no one they talked to about these things.
- For nearly 60% of respondents who did have someone to talk to, confidantes were located exclusively outside of prison. One in 5 (18%) said their confidante was inside prison, and 23% had confidantes "both inside and outside".

Rituals of manhood

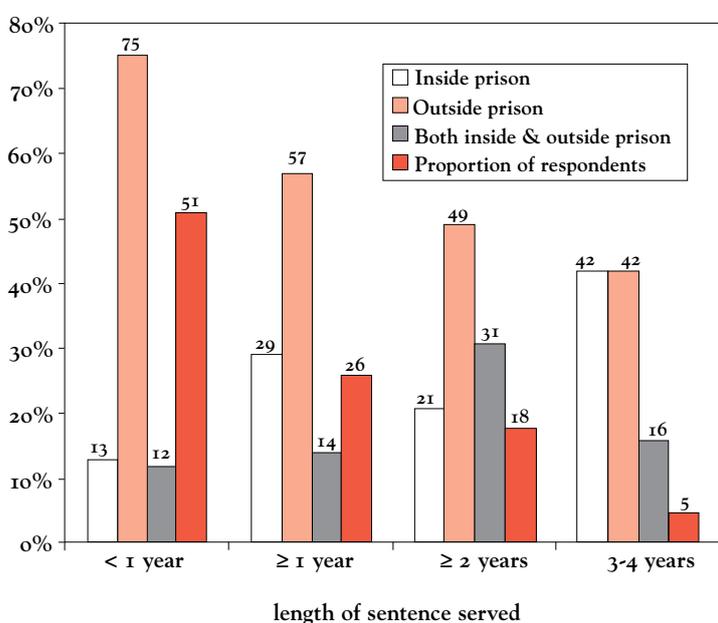
Because of the central role of ideas of what it means to be a "man" or "woman" in behaviour, attitudes and experiences (including violence), respondents were asked about their sense of themselves as men. Questions also sought to take into account the changing nature of these things and the influence of the prison environment.

They were asked if they had been through any processes, rituals or ceremonies that they felt had made them “from a boy into a man”. The emphasis was on their feelings and they were asked to include formal and informal processes as well as socially acceptable and socially unacceptable processes.

- Seventy-one percent said that they had gone through some process that they understood to have made them into a man, and named a wide range of processes.
- Of these, 64% said this/these process(es) had taken place outside of prison, 20% inside of prison, and the remaining 16% had been through processes both inside and outside.
- A total of 36% of respondents who considered themselves “men” therefore named processes inside of prison. This constitutes just over a quarter of the research population.

There was a positive correlation between the period that respondents had served and where the manhood ceremonies or rituals they had been through, had occurred. The longer they spent in prison, the more prominent manhood rituals that had taken place inside prison became.³

Figure 1: Where ‘manhood’ processes took place, by length of sentence served



When looking at the three biggest groups in relation to time served (< 1 year, ≥ 1 year, ≥ 2 years, 3-4 years) it is clear that as respondents had served more of their sentences, the influence of the outside processes diminished, and there was a growth in the impact of processes happening inside prison. This increase is represented in the combined growth of categories “Inside” and “Inside and outside”. In the group who had served between two and three years, these processes amounted to 52% (21% + 31%) – a considerable increase on the 25% (13% + 12%) amongst those who had served less than a year. At the same time the data underscores prison as an important socialising force even after relatively short periods of incarceration.

While more in-depth qualitative investigation is best suited to uncovering understandings of self, the youths’ accounts of what these manhood-bringing processes involved nevertheless provide useful insight into their gendered identities – how they perceive themselves as “men”. The following table summarises the main categories of rituals that emerged.

³ A more detailed analysis would require that previous time served also be taken into account.

Table 3: Summary of manhood rituals

Rituals of Manhood – Themes	Number of mentions (multiple response)	% of total sample (N=311)
SELF SUFFICIENCY (OUTSIDE)	76	24%
Economic responsibility	55	
Decision making and problem solving	13	
Independent Living circumstances	9	
GROWING AND CHANGING	54	17%
Helping and advising others	24	
Changing of ways from wrong to right	21	
Respecting others, communicating effectively	9	
MISCHIEF, CRIME AND VIOLENCE (OUTSIDE)	47	15%
Other than sexual	44	
Sexual violence	3	
DRUGS AND SMOKING	43	14%
Doing drugs or smoking cigarettes	41	
Quitting drugs or cigarettes	2	
SEXUALITY / INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS ⁴	39	13%
COMING OF AGE TRADITIONS / CEREMONIES	32	10%
FATHERHOOD	24	8%
CONVICTION / COMING TO PRISON	20	6%
PARTICIPATION IN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY	19	6%
SELF SUFFICIENCY (INSIDE PRISON)	16	5%
Economic independence	8	
Physical self-sufficiency, self-defence	8	
ACADEMIC, SPORTING OR CREATIVE ACHIEVEMENT	15	5%
MISCHIEF, CRIME AND VIOLENCE (INSIDE PRISON)	11	4%
Sexual violence	6	
Bullying/assault	5	
DO NOT BELIEVE THEY ARE YET MEN	9	3%
GANG STATUS (INSIDE)	7	2%
REFUSED TO ANSWER	3	1%

Facets of self-sufficiency and independence outside of prison were most frequently mentioned, including taking financial responsibility, decision making and independent living circumstances.

⁴ This category was intended to group responses that related to consensual sex. However at points in interviews it became clear that some respondents did not clearly differentiate sex from situations of sexual violence and coercion, and therefore may have been referring to situations of the latter even when their answer did not indicate this.

Having perpetrated some form of mischief, crime or violence either inside or outside was identified by a total of 19% of participants. Along with doing things without parental permission or behaviours like bullying, respondents more often referred to crimes such as stealing, robbery, housebreaking and hijacking in their explanations of outside activities. Regarding inside processes, assaults and sexual violence were mentioned (gang status and drugs were considered separately).

More positively, another much-mentioned group of processes which was categorised as “growing and changing”, related to an ability to tell “right from wrong”, a recognition of one’s own wrong-doing and taking steps to change criminal ways. This included offering help and advice to others, changing ways from “wrong to right” and practising respect and constructive communication.

HIV/AIDS related information and views on gender, sexuality and sexual violence

Thirteen percent of respondents who had spent anything from a few days up to two years in prison estimated that they had learnt most of what they know about sex while inside prison (excluding those who estimated that they’d gained similar amounts of information inside and outside). The emphasis on outside learning was no doubt influenced by the fact that 55% had not yet served one year of their sentence (although some may have spent significantly longer times inside whilst awaiting trial and/or as part of previous sentences). It is notable, however, that 8% of those who had served less than a year of their sentence estimated that prison had provided them with most of their information about sex.

HIV and AIDS information

Nearly all respondents (99%) said they had heard of HIV and AIDS.³ Most had also received some form of HIV and AIDS information whilst in BYC. Six percent had not received any such information. They were asked about a variety of sources of HIV and AIDS information ranging from having seen a poster, to getting information over the radio or participating in a workshop. The information received by respondents would have varied considerably both in terms of quality and intensity.

Table 4: Sources of HIV and AIDS information

In this prison, I have received HIV and AIDS information from the following sources.	N	% of respondents
Have not received any info on HIV and AIDS in this prison	18	6%
Telephone helpline	44	14%
Workshop / training programme / counselling / from NGO / CBO	79	25%
Information or counselling from a visitor or religious worker figure	121	39%
Classes / social work programme. Counselling from DCS member / nurse	136	44%
Information or counselling from another prisoner	163	52%
Leaflets, posters, signs or murals	204	66%
Plays or drama	205	66%
TV & / or radio	234	75%
Newspapers & / or magazines	239	77%

³ Of the 3 respondents who said they’d not heard of HIV and AIDS, one was aged 16, one 19, and the third person, 20. This 1% is on a par with national data on male youth who had not heard of HIV and AIDS (Pettifor et al, 2004)

Media – such as TV, radio, magazines and newspapers were the most reported sources of HIV and AIDS information received in BYC, suggesting the importance of inmate access to “outside” media.

A sizeable number of participants (66%) reported having learnt about HIV and AIDS through drama performances in BYC. This should be viewed in light of the recent presence of the organisation Themba HIV/AIDS, which works through interactive theatre. In the 6 months prior to fieldwork, two plays were performed as a result of Themba’s involvement.

With 52% of respondents saying that another inmate had given them information, the role that inmates apparently play in educating each other about HIV and AIDS is noteworthy, as well as their use of telephone help-lines to access information – especially in a context where telephone calls are such a precious resource. According to prison staff, inmates are only allowed one call per week regardless of whether or not it is toll free. Special requests can be made and granted in certain circumstances. We were told that there were only about two such requests each month. It is also possible – if less likely – that staff members were assisting offenders with additional calls to help-lines outside of the telephone quota system.

Forty-three percent of respondents had received HIV and AIDS information via a programme or counselling service offered by a DCS member.

Understandings of HIV and AIDS and related statements

Table 5: HIV transmission awareness

Please tell us whether you think the following statements are true or false	True	Don’t know	False
HIV can be transmitted by sharing utensils such as spoons & forks	7%	1%	92%
HIV can be transmitted by sharing tattoo needles	97%	1%	2%
Vaseline damages condoms	35%	40%	25%

- While the majority of respondents knew that HIV could not be transmitted through eating utensils but could through sharing tattoo needles, the proportion who did not know underscores the need for increased HIV and AIDS awareness.
- Many were unsure about the effect of Vaseline on condoms, with the greatest proportion of them not knowing that Vaseline would damage a condom. Given the pertinence of the information to prison practices, this is particularly concerning.

Attitudes on statements regarding gender, sexuality and sexual violence

Certain questions aimed at better understanding respondents’ perceptions and beliefs regarding sexuality and gender, including for example adherence to myths that support rape or intolerance, and destructive ideas about “manhood”.

	Strongly agree + Agree	Don't know	Strongly disagree + Disagree
If a woman wears revealing clothing, then it's her own fault if a man forces her to have sex with him.	26%	1%	74%
Gay people are sick.	41%	12%	47%
If I buy somebody a drink or take them on a date, then it is my right to have sex with them.	10%	2%	88%
When a young man gets an erection, it is a sign that he has a right to have sex with someone else.	29%	4%	67%
It is perfectly natural to masturbate.	63%	4%	34%

Unlike in relation to other attitudinal questions, respondents were polarised regarding the statement, "Gay people are sick". Similar proportions of respondents agreed and disagreed with the statement, and a large proportion also gave a "Don't Know" response. This uncertainty of opinion could point to a lack of familiarity with the issue, and/or a questioning of a previously held opinion, something that could conceivably be intensified in a prison environment. This context would benefit from initiatives to increase knowledge about and tolerance of sexual diversity.

- Ninety-one percent indicated a willingness to help care for another inmate who has Aids. This can to some extent be compared to information gathered from youth outside of prison, where 86% said they'd remain friends with a friend who was discovered to be HIV positive. Ninety-six percent said they'd be willing to care for family members if they became sick with HIV and AIDS (Pettifor, Rees, et al, 2004 p58). Although the data was collected via slightly different questions, and the outside study could conceivably have implied a stronger bond (in asking about "friend" and "family member") it nevertheless suggests that these in-prison youth shared similar attitudes in this regard. Similarly, a more recent study found 90% of Gauteng respondents 15 years and older were willing to care for a family member with Aids (Shisana, Rehle, et al, 2005).
- Less positively, just more than 11% of respondents (slightly more than 1 in 10) agreed that if they give another prisoner things like cigarettes or food, then it is their right to have sex with them.

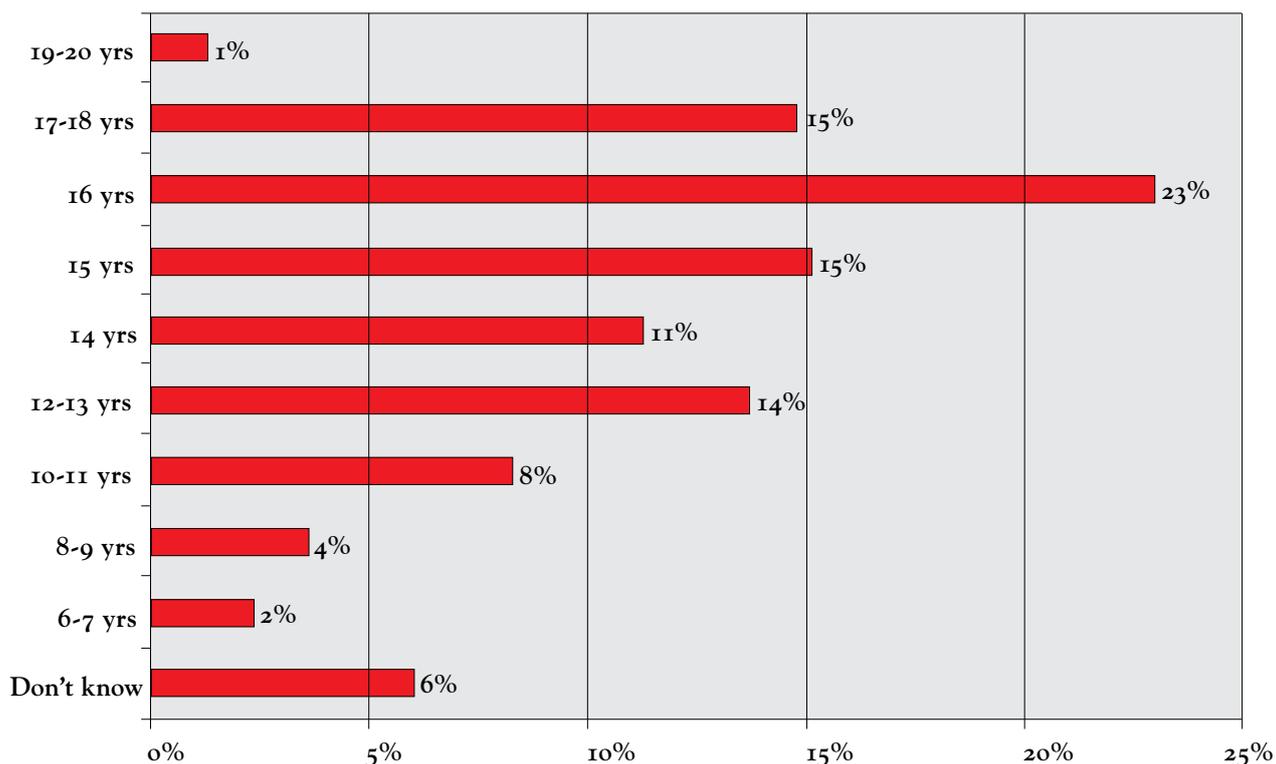
More respondents than not provided more progressive responses to questions on sexual issues and gender. However the proportions of those who reported attitudes to the contrary was sizeable:

- One in four (26%) agreed that "If a woman wears revealing clothing, then it's her own fault if a man forces her to have sex with him", and
- Three in ten (29%) agreed that, "When a young man gets an erection it is a sign that he has a right to have sex with someone else."

Sexual Experience

First sexual intercourse

Figure 2: Age at sexual intercourse debut.



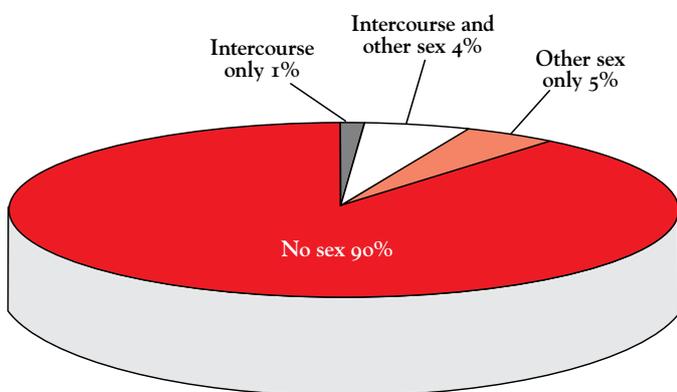
- The vast majority of participants (97%) had had sexual intercourse.
- The average age at first sexual intercourse as well as that of their first sexual partner was 14 years old. This is younger than for young men nationally where the average was found to be 16 (Pettifor et al, 2004; Shisana and Simbayi, 2002; Shisana, Rehle et al. 2005).
- Thirty-nine percent of the young offenders had had their first sexual experience before their 15th birthday. This is much higher than the 12% and 19% found in national studies amongst non-incarcerated 15 – 24 year old males (Pettifor et al, 2004; Shisana, Rehle et al, 2005). Although the BYC sample was comprised of slightly different age groups, the high percentage of BYC youth who had had sex before age 15 remains pertinent, and points to a heightened risk of HIV and AIDS.
- Six percent of respondents who'd had intercourse said they and their partner were nine years or younger the first time they had it. The youngest mentioned age of first experience of sexual intercourse was six years old.

Condom usage and access

- Just more than 1 in 3 (37%) of those who'd had sexual intercourse said they had never used a condom during sexual intercourse.
- Thirty-five percent (1/3) of those who had sexual intercourse used a condom the last time they had sex. This is markedly lower than the national data figure of 57% for young males' condom usage of those reporting ever having had sex (Pettifor et al, 2004, p44) as well as of those who'd had sex in the last year (Shisana and Simbayi, 2002). A more recent national survey found 73% of male respondents aged 15 – 24 reporting condom use during last sexual intercourse (Shisana, Rehle et al, 2005: 65).
- Thirty-two percent of respondents had at some point tried to get a condom whilst in BYC. Of these, 89% said they had managed to get a condom the last time that they tried.
- Respondents who had succeeded in obtaining a condom had most commonly sourced the condoms from another offender (28%). Slightly less (24%) had received it from a medical member of staff.

Sexual activity in prison

Figure 3: Whether had sex in the last 6 months inside prison



⁶The cited measures are not reported in the publication but were calculated from the study data supplied by authors (personal communication, Cathy Connolly and Warren Parker).

- Five percent of participants had had sexual intercourse in prison in the last six months, and 5% had had other types of sex (but not intercourse) such as thigh sex, oral sex or mutual masturbation in BYC.
- Those having sex in prison tended to have either “other kinds” of sex or intercourse as well as “other kinds” of sex rather than sexual intercourse exclusively.
- Six percent of respondents had, during their time in BYC, had “casual sex”. This was defined as “sex with someone once or a few times without paying or being paid anything, and without forcing or being forced to have it”. In all but one case - where it had been with a correctional officer - casual sex had taken place with another inmate.
- Five percent of respondents had, during their time in BYC, been in a “mutually agreed relationship” defined as where “neither one... was being forced or paid to be in this relationship”. These relationships were with other inmates, except in one case where the respondent had been in relationships with both staff member(s) and inmate(s).

These findings are importantly qualified however, by certain respondents potentially defining sex gained through trickery, manipulation or threat as either “casual” or “mutually agreed”.

A key goal of our study was also to investigate the young men's exposure to sexual violence in prison. These findings, which confirmed sexual violence and coercion to be a serious problem in BYC, are reported in Brief 2.

Concluding Discussion and Recommendations

Despite the fact that the vast majority of respondents did not have prior convictions, they nevertheless had previous exposure to the criminal justice system on occasions not related to their current sentences. The findings further establish the prison experiences as fundamental influences both on their understandings of sex and sexuality, and in their psychological and social development. These two issues are of special interest to us for their pivotal roles in the interrelated areas of inter alia, sexuality, sexual health, gender, violence and resilience. They underscore the critical impact that the experience of incarceration has on numerous young men exposed to it even after only short periods, and therefore the importance of, at best, using this opportunity to build resilience and positive learning, and at worst, to limit the harm and harmful influences that offenders encounter behind bars.

Clearly, awaiting trial facilities including prisons and police cells are key sites of exposure and as such could provide important opportunities for society to access and interact with young people. Government's current neglect of people awaiting trial however makes the optimal use of this interaction unlikely anytime soon. Again, and not least because of their formative role in many young people's development, it is imperative that we focus on ways to limit the destructive impact of these experiences.

The range of processes the youth identified as having made them into 'men' also shows how behaviours as different as hurting or violating others and mentoring or assisting others are different sides of the same 'masculinity' coin. As different as they are from each other, they are both routes to social status and sense of self and manhood. Processes that are able to mobilise the possibilities that this brings about, by encouraging and celebrating positive masculinities and viable routes for young men to achieve these, are invaluable both for personal and community empowerment- and violence prevention objectives.

The need for urgent attention to be focussed on what happens to our youth in correctional facilities is heightened by the fact that, according to our findings, they appear to be a group more likely to engage in risky sexual and other unhealthy behaviours (such as substance abuse). At the same time this makes the potential rewards of quality intervention in these areas particularly great:

reducing the risk and building resilience amongst a group associated with high risk would have a substantial impact.

While behaviours which are strongly associated with HIV and AIDS risks (early sexual debut, unprotected sex) are apparently at much higher levels amongst these in-prison youth than amongst their peers outside prison, their attitudes to people living with HIV and AIDS appear generally positive (and in this are similar to outside youth). These need to be built upon: there are very sizeable gaps in correctional centres regarding, for example, care-giving and peer education structures; and all available resources need to be drawn on to strengthen them. Innovative strategies should include inmates in this. In the process, skills that would be similarly invaluable outside (post offenders' releases) could be developed.

Certainly, further research is necessary to explore the extent to which these findings are indicative of youth incarcerated across the country, as well as to get greater depth of understanding of these findings. However, recommendations that we imagine would also be appropriate elsewhere include:

- Quality programmes to promote sexual health and risk awareness, as well as to explore sexuality and gender and transform harmful gender attitudes and homophobia are needed, as is the correction of misinformation, eg. regarding masturbation.
- These must take into account the particularities of the prison context. The evidence suggests that at least some of the existing programmes are lacking in this regard or on specific issues, at the same time as being too thinly spread. For example, while 94% of respondents had been exposed to HIV information in BYC, over 60% were either unsure about the effect of Vaseline on condoms, or wrongly believed it not to damage condoms.
- The exceptionally young age at sexual debut of a sizeable proportion of respondents similarly needs careful consideration by relevant professionals as to its reasons and impact, together with what kinds of intervention or support are appropriate.
- Peer educator models are relevant and valuable and are already operating, albeit informally - fellow offenders having been a key source of inmates' information on HIV and AIDS. These should be built on and expanded for health promotion.
- Condom availability requires improvement.
- Greater efforts must be made to keep adult inmates out of juvenile institutions, and children out of correctional centres.

Access to outside processes and people are important for offenders' health, emotional wellbeing, and educational and material support.

These connections should be nurtured and expanded.

- The media is a key source of HIV and AIDS prevention information, and access to it should be enhanced. While DCS and other service providers are unable to provide adequate, quality education and support on HIV and AIDS, offenders' ability to access this from outside is essential. Innovative strategies could include additional partnerships with relevant organisations and agencies which could feed correctional institutions regular and updated media materials of multi mediums for distribution in the prisons.
- Telephonic help-lines should be made more accessible to inmates: calls to such help-lines should not 'count' as part of an offenders' telephone quota.
- With religious services and activities reported as the most common organised activity engaged in by offenders, religious leaders and workers present a vital point of contact with young offenders, and a sector for government and NGOs to collaborate with and mobilise in harm reduction and health promotion objectives.
- Visits to offenders should be actively encouraged, and attempts made to secure visits and contacts for those inmates not receiving visitors. Connections with people outside prison are clearly important and regularly provide the young men with no doubt much-needed 'space', where they feel able to express vulnerability and look for emotional as well as material support.

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