

## Consensual Same-Sex Sexual Relationships in South African Female Prisons

**Caroline Agboola**

Department of Sociology  
University of South Africa (UNISA)  
Preller Street, Muckleneuk, Pretoria  
South Africa.

Email address: [agboolacaroline@gmail.com](mailto:agboolacaroline@gmail.com)

*Although consensual same-sex sexual relationships in female prisons have been a topic of scholarly discourse, it has received little attention in African countries, and South Africa is no exception. Consensual same-sex sexual relationships between females in African prisons have received little attention by researchers since studies on prison sex in Africa tend to focus on the sexual relationships between male prisoners, particularly the coercive nature of such relationships. Drawing on the retrospective narratives of six female former prisoners, this study examines the consensual nature of same-sex sexual relationships in South African female prisons. One of the findings of this study suggests that consensual same-sex sexual relationships in South African female prisons are pervasive. It was reported that the motivations for female prisoners' engagement in consensual sexual relationships with other females in prison are the desire to satisfy material, sexual, and emotional needs, as well as, the desire for friendship and companionship.*

**Keywords:** Consensual same-sex sexual relationships, female ex-prisoners, female prisoners, female prisons, homosexuality, imprisonment, incarceration, lesbianism, South Africa.

Homosexuality has been a controversial topic within prison environments and the larger society. It has been described as “*natural, unnatural, criminal, and as a type of mental illness*” (Pardue, Arrigo, & Murphy, 2011: 286). The authors explain that the term “homosexuality” was coined in 1869, a period during which homosexuality was classified as a mental disorder in the United States of America. It remained classified as such until 1973 when the American Psychiatric Association removed it from the classification of mental disorder. For the purpose of this paper, homosexuality and lesbianism will be referred to as same-sex sexual relationship and same-sex sexual acts since not all people involved in such acts want to or can be classified as homosexuals. It should however be noted that different authors and research participants use words such as lesbianism, homosexuality and same-sex sexual relationships interchangeably.

Consensual same-sex sexual relationships between females in African prisons have received little attention by

researchers since studies on prison sex in Africa tend to focus on the sexual relationships between male prisoners, particularly the coercive nature of such relationships. Tewksbury and West (2000: 372) point out that the perception of prison rape as social and institutional problems is the reason why it has received more attention than consensual sexual relationships in prisons over the years. Same-sex sexual relationships in female prisons have been of scholarly interest to researchers, with the majority of studies on the subject matter conducted in prisons of the United States of America (Einat & Chen, 2012: 25). Research on same-sex sexual relationships in South African female prisons is sparse. In line with trends on prison sex research in the United States of America, the focus in South Africa has been on the sexual relationships that exist between male prisoners and in male prisons. Sexual relationships among females in South African prisons can be either coerced or consensual. However, this article will examine only the consensual

sexual relationships that exist between females in South African prisons.

### **Methods**

The data for this study was collected using in-depth interviews. These interviews were conducted as part of a larger study which was conducted for my doctorate. This larger study looked at the experiences of females prior to, during and after incarceration in South Africa. Only six cases from the larger study are relevant to this article. Hence, the interviews of these six female former prisoners were used for this study. The six participants were selected using a list of female prisoners who were released from Pretoria central prison, South Africa in the last five years; snowball sampling was used to supplement this list. "Snowballing" refers to the "process of accumulation as each located subject suggests other subjects" (Babbie, 2013: 191).

It is noteworthy to mention that the inmates in Pretoria central prison are often transferred there from other prisons in South Africa; hence, although some of the inmates start their prison sentences in prisons outside Pretoria they sometimes finish their sentences in Pretoria central prison thereby giving them varied prison experiences. Indeed, some of the participants of this study belong to this category of prisoners.

Dantzker and Hunter (2012: 57) noted that a research interview refers to the interaction between two people where one of the person's goals is to obtain recognisable responses to specific questions. In order to obtain these responses, I used an interview guide during the interviews. The use of in-depth interviews enabled the probe into the participants' experiences so as to obtain a substantial amount of information that is relevant to this study. The use of in-depth interviews also encouraged the participants to respond on their own terms and in ways which they considered relevant and significant to their experiences. Some of the participants of this study engaged in consensual sexual relationships with other females while they were incarcerated, while some others did not engage in such acts, but witnessed the practice of such. The

lengths of the interviews ranged between thirty minutes and five hours.

### *Feminist Pathways Approach*

The work of Daly (1994) is one of the pioneering studies on the feminist pathways approach. Some of the pathways of women into criminal offending, as identified by Daly (1994), are abuse, addiction, and economic marginalization.

Belknap (2007: 71) contends that feminist pathways research:

*"...attempts to examine girls' and women's lives (and rarely, men's and boys') histories, allowing them, when possible, a 'voice' to understand the link between childhood and adult events and traumas and the likelihood of subsequent offending".*

Prior victimization and subsequent criminal offending in the lives of women and girls constitutes the main thrust of feminist pathways model. Burgess-Proctor (2012: 315) explains that:

*"feminist pathways analyses often use samples of incarcerated women and girls to identify how participants' trauma histories initiated, facilitated, or otherwise compelled their offending behaviors".*

Feminist pathways research provides an understanding of how the past traumatic experiences of females influence their propensity to commit crimes and delinquent acts.

The pathways of some of the participants of this study into crime are often reflected in their lives during and after incarceration. For instance, for the participants whose pathway into offending was poverty, poverty played a significant role in their lives behind bars as this was the reason why some of them engaged in same-sex sexual relationships with fellow females behind bars. However, some of the participants of this study deliberately break these patterns, particularly after incarceration.

*Consensual Same-Sex Sexual Relationships among Females in Delinquent Institutions and Prisons*

Studies on prison sex started in the early 1900s with an article, "A perversion not commonly noted" written by Otis (1913) in the United States of America. The author examined homosexual (same-sex sexual acts) relations between "coloured" and "white" female juveniles in an institution for delinquent girls. Otis (1913: 113) regarded the inter-racial sexual relationship that existed between the girls as an anomaly; he referred to this relationship as "a form of perversion". From Otis' (1913) study, it is evident that even though lesbianism (same-sex sexual acts) was the focus of her study, emphasis was placed on racism. The race of the girls in Otis' (1913) study played a crucial role in their practice of lesbianism. Otis' (1913) work shows that racism was entrenched in the penal system. The actions of the authorities of the juvenile institution that Otis studied towards the sexual relationships between the girls show that they perceived lesbianism as being intrinsically an inter-racial "problem", and not that of same-sex relations. The separation of the girls into the same racial categories denoted that girls of the same race do not practice lesbianism. It was assumed that putting girls of the same races together will put an end to lesbianism in the school. The act of segregating the girls, which was taken by the institution's authorities, suggested that "coloured" girls are the ones fostering lesbianism in the facility. This segregation seems to have been aimed at preventing the "coloured" girls from "tainting" the "white" girls, who seemed to be seen as belonging to a supreme race, that is, the "white" race. Despite the segregation of the girls into racial groups, Otis (1913) asserts that homosexual behaviour among the girls continued to the dismay of the institution's authorities. The author notes that the act of segregation served the latent function of strengthening homosexual relationships between the girls.

A study similar to Otis' (1913) was conducted by Selling (1931). In analysing relationships between delinquent girls, Selling (1931) noted that they form familial relationships in the institution as a way of coping with the pains of confinement. The development of families within juvenile

facilities and prisons is the inmates' attempts at achieving stability by simulating the kind of human interactions and relationships similar to the ones that they had, in the wider society, before they were incarcerated. Pogrebin and Dodge (2001: 531) state that: "[m]any (female) inmates strive toward normalcy by creating relationships and mores to supplant outside losses. In fact, early research on women inmates focused on the development of social structures based on family and traditional gender roles". Similarly, Owen (1998), Leger (1987), Larsen & Nelson (1984), Heffernan (1972), Giallombardo (1966), and Ward & Kassebaum (1965) observed that the formation of pseudo-families and relationship building, including same-sex relationships, were common place among women in prisons. These families of delinquent girls act as replacements for the loss of the families that the girls leave behind when coming to the institution, and are fashioned after the type of family structure, especially that which involves monogamous marriages and interactions, and which exists in the wider society. Thus, we have terms like "mumsy" for mother, "grannie" for grandmother, "popsie" for father, sister, and uncle used to address members of a family within the institution (Selling 1931: 251). However, these families have more complex structures than that which exists outside the juvenile facility. For instance, a girl could be a grand-daughter to another girl, but not a daughter to the child of her grandmother (see Selling 1931: 252 for details). In addition to providing members with the functions of an "ideal" family, families in the institution for delinquent girls that Selling (1931) studied also performed sexual functions. The term "honies" was used to describe girls that are involved in lesbian (same-sex) relationships within the institution. "Honies" was coined from the word honey, a term of endearment which the girls used to address one another within the institution.

As was seen in Otis' (1913) study, the main problem in Selling's work seemed to have been in the intimacies that developed between the "coloured" and "white" girls, and not necessarily the sexual relationships

between the girls. If the sexual relations between the girls, and not that which exist between girls of different races, is the focus of the two authors' studies, they would have gone further to investigate such among girls of the same race within the institutions, especially in Otis' study which saw the segregation of the girls into same races.

Sexual relationships have also been shown to exist in female prisons in several studies. Pollock-Byrne (1990) and Toch (1975) contend that these relationships are consensual and serve to fulfil the emotional needs of the inmates. As was evident in Otis' (1913) and Selling's (1931) studies, it was observed that female prisoners engaged in sexual relationships with fellow inmates as a coping strategy for being confined inside prisons. Pogrebin and Dodge (2001) explain that the pains of imprisonment and the development of prison subcultures are interrelated. Sykes (1958) identified the loss of liberty, goods and services, heterosexual relations, autonomy, and personal security as some of the deprivations faced by prisoners. Prison subculture, one of which is same-sex sexual relations, developed as a response and coping strategy to the loss stated above by Sykes (1958). In the 1960s, same-sex sexual relationships in juvenile institutions for girls wherein the inmates were involved in "girl-stuff" were documented in the United States of America. In a study conducted by Ward & Kassebaum, and Giallombardo in the mid-1960s, the existence of same-sex sexual relationship was reported to exist among females in prisons in the United States of America, where it was discovered that as much as 50% and 86% of the inmates had been engaged in sexual relationships with other female inmates during their imprisonment. As was evident in Otis' (1913) and Selling's (1931) studies, it was observed that female prisoners engaged in sexual relationships with fellow inmates as a coping strategy for being confined inside prisons. The studies carried out by Propper (in Hensley, Struckman-Johnson & Eigenberg 2000: 361), in the United States of America, between 1976 and 1982 found significantly lower participation in sexual relationships among female prisoners. Propper observed that 14%, 10%, 10% and

7% of the inmates were either married to or engaged in sexual relationships with other females; had kissed; written and exchanged love letters; and had been sexually involved with females behind bars. Leger (1987) argued that lesbianism (same-sex sexual relationships among females) in female prisons occurs due to the unavailability of men, and that "lesbians" have higher rates of recidivism, had been in prison longer, and are arrested at younger ages than "straights". In contrast, Morgan (1998), who was at the time serving the 16<sup>th</sup> year out of a 19 year prison sentence, gave an insider's view on same-sex sexual relationships in female prison in the United States of America. Morgan (1998) contended that "lesbianism" is a behaviour which female prisoners learn before their imprisonment, and that female prisoners meet their needs for support and companionship in these sexual relationships. Greer (2000) identified a change in the nature of interpersonal relationships in female prisons, stating that such relationships are less familial than those that existed in the past.

A recent study conducted by Pardue, Arrigo, and Murphy (2011) identified five categories of sexual behaviour in women's prisons; these are suppressed sexuality, autoeroticism, (consensual) true homosexuality, (consensual) situational homosexuality, and sexual violence. As the authors note, suppressed sexuality is characterised by the absence of sexual activity, either with the female prisoner herself (in the form of masturbation) or with any other female prisoner, and there is no violence involved in this category. Inmates who have suppressed sexuality usually exhibit behaviours like forming of pseudo-families which serves the non-sexual function of providing emotional support. Autoeroticism involves the female prisoner being sexually intimate with herself; this sexual intimacy manifests in the form of self-pleasure seeking behaviour like masturbation. A woman who was a lesbian prior to, during and after incarceration is said to practice (consensual) "true homosexuality". Female prisoners who belong in the (consensual) "situational homosexuality" category engage in homosexual relationships as a result of

being incarcerated. The true and situational homosexuals share some behavioural similarities, which are engaging in consensual sexual acts, establishing dyad relationships with other female prisoners, having relationships that are characterized by inherent harm, especially when the relationship becomes exploitative. There are three forms of sexual violence as identified by Pardue et al (2011), namely manipulation, compliance, and coercion. The authors observe that sexual behaviour in this last category include sex as a form of trade by barter, safety or protection, sexual assault, rape and in extreme cases, murder. This category of homosexuality is the most violent. Pardue et al (2011) point out that sexual violence exists in inmate-inmate, as well as, in inmate-staff sexual relationships. Forsyth, Evans and Foster (2012) observed that same-sex sexual relationships among women prisoners at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women (LCIW) are highly prohibited. The authors note that the penalty for being caught in a “lesbian moment” is 90 days in the maximum security cellblock. Some of the activities that constitute a “lesbian moment”, as noted by Forsyth et al (2012), are physical contact and a hug or kiss between the female inmates. The authors observed that economic reasons, boredom and curiosity are some of the causes of sexual relationships among women in the institution that they studied. Young-Jahangeer (2013) explains that even though the South African Constitution regard “homosexuality” as a right and gay marriages are legal in South Africa, “lesbianism” is frowned upon in South African prisons. Just like Morgan (1998), Young-Jahangeer (2013) contends that women in prison practise sexual relationships with other females prior to their incarceration, with over 80% of the women in her study belonging to this category. Young-Jahangeer’s (2013) foregoing contention is based on a study that she conducted on the inmates of Westville Female Correctional Centre in Durban, South Africa, and has to be verified by studies with representative samples of female prisoners.

## Results and Discussions

The findings of this study are discussed as follows:

### *Pervasiveness of Consensual Same-Sex Sexual Relationships among Females in South African Prisons*

Consistent with studies on consensual same-sex relationships in female prisons, findings from this study indicate the occurrence of such relationships in South African female prisons. One of the women interviewed explained:

*“Lesbianism happens a lot in prison, but I was not put in that situation because I had a pastor woman friend [her fellow inmate] that I spend most of my time with in prison...Some inmates came to the prison ‘straight’ and later became lesbians in prison...”* (Nomsa).

In some cases, the absence of males with whom female inmates can have sexual relationships with in prison is as an enabler of sexual relationships in prison as inmates turn to alternative ways, for instance same-sex sexual relationships, of relieving their sexual urges in the absence of heterosexual partners. Hensley (2002: 2) states that “[t]his deprivation [of heterosexual activity] forces prisoners to turn to alternative methods of achieving sexual gratification [such as] masturbation, consensual same-sex activity...”. Most of the participants of this study talked about the pervasiveness of consensual prison sex among female incarcerates in the prisons that they were imprisoned in. One of these participants even estimated that about ninety-five per cent of female prisoners play “scondai”<sup>1</sup>, although this participant’s claim has no scientific backing, nevertheless it gives some sense of how pervasive she believes the practise of “scondai” is in the prison that she was incarcerated.

Some of the females who are imprisoned for the first time do not know about the pervasiveness of sexual relationships among female prisoners until they are

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<sup>1</sup> Scondai is the slang for consensual same-sex sexual relationship among females in South African female prisons

locked-up. Sometimes, engaging in sexual relationships with other female inmates is met with strong opposition by some of the first time female prisoners. In discussing her first few days in prison, one of the women narrated her initial experiences of a same-sex sexual encounter. Hitherto, this woman had never had sexual relationships with other females. The initial sexual advances that other female inmates made to this woman were met with resistance from her. She stated:

*"First of all, when I was there, né? I think it was two days or one day, they said to me, 'you are a nice chick, you can be my girlfriend'. So because I'm rude you know. I'm this violent person. I don't take...sorry to use the word, né? I don't take shit! I said, 'You know what? You don't fuck with me! You want to fuck with me?! Come, let me show you!'. Eish! I used to hate it when they tell me, 'you are a nice chick, be my girlfriend'" (Gail).*

Explaining the response of the female inmates who made sexual advances towards her to her disinterest in their advances, Gail continued:

*"When I told them [her fellow inmates] that I was not interested in being a lesbian partner, they didn't leave me alone. They wanted to fight me. I had to fight back, but not like physically. We had to fight with words. I swear at them [laughs]"*.

However Erin stated that some of the resistance put up by female prisoners upon their initial encounter with same-sex sexual relationships in prison wears thin with time. According to her:

*"You can say no you don't want if you are new, but later, you start to want those things that they are doing because you see the way they help each other. So, even you too will start to think that if I do, I will have this and this and that"*.

This participant, who was a novice inmate when she had her first encounter with same-sex sexual relationships in prison, had this to say:

*"What about the scondai thing? You know scondai? [I told her that I do not know what 'scondai' is] Me too I did not know [laughs]. You know when they say to me 'Let's play scondai'. I said 'Ja, let's play'. I thought maybe it's a game [chuckles]. Some of them [female prisoners] they start laughing at me. They say the two ladies they sleep together [have sexual relations]. Inside [prison] they call it 'scondai'" (Emily).*

The fact that Emily's fellow inmates knew about and wanted her to participate in sexual relationships with them in addition to having a specific term for the relationship suggests that such relationships exist on a larger scale in South African female prisons than has been reported up to now.

It was reported that consensual same-sex sexual relationships exists not just between female prison inmates but also between female inmates and female prison wardens. One of the women interviewed narrated the following: *"I was sexually engaged with some ladies inside there [inside prison]. Lesbianism is very common in prison, it's like normal eh. It's normal. You will even find the prison wardens they are busy 'dating' female inmates"* (Juliet). Consensual sexual relationship between South African female prisoners and female wardens is also portrayed in the work of Dirsuweit (1999). The author notes that *"[w]hile some members (wardens) were extremely homophobic..., others (wardens) were lesbians themselves (some even in relationships with prisoners...)"* (Dirsuweit, 1999: 77).

Erin affirms the occurrence of consensual sexual relationships between females inside prisons. She stated that she had a long term consensual sexual relationship with a fellow female inmate during her incarceration. The different lengths of her prison sentence and that of her partner led to the end of their

relationship because her partner was released from prison before her: She stated:

*“There are many people ‘dating’ each other there in prison. Females ‘date’ each other inside. It usually start as friendships. Later they start telling each other I love you...I do [engaged in same-sex sexual relationship] once, but the person that I do with go quickly [left prison before her] because she was having a small sentence while me I have a big sentence” (Erin).*

Consensual prison sexual relationships occur not just between female incarcerates, but also between female incarcerates and the prison wardens. The initial disapproval and resistance on the part of the first-time female prisoners sometimes wear-out as they eventually engage in consensual sexual acts with other females in prison.

#### *Socialization Process*

A lot of consensual sexual relationships between females in prison often start out as “ordinary” friendships, with the party interested in a sexual relationship initiating the friendship. Sometimes females behind bars become friends with the hope that their friendship will blossom into a sexual one as Erin’s preceding explanation points to. Another of the participants provides this account:

*“So there was this girl who used to like me...and I did not know that this girl loved me...so, the girl loved me so much. So, we became closer and closer cos we could see each other in the church every Sunday...and she could invite me in everything...So, I used to go with her everywhere, but I didn’t read her intentions...what was going on. Then suddenly we started practicing what they are practicing there inside [same-sex sexual relations]” (Gail).*

Female inmates are sometimes lured into consensual sexual relationships by the exchange of gifts and favours from the interested party to the prospective partner. According to Valerie *“Them doing you a*

*favour or being friendly with you is a trap. Their friendship is never pure friendship, it is conditional”*. Juliet confirmed that most consensual sexual relationships in female prisons often begin with friendship. She added that the party that wants to engage in such a relationship with another has to woo the other party. According to Juliet: *“In prison, the interested person in a lesbian relationship woos the other person by being nice to her, giving her things, eventually she will come around”*.

In some cases, the sexual advances of a female in a platonic friendship are met by resistance and refusal by the other party. Some times this refusal does not go down well with the initiator of the sexual advances as this party might have been nursing the hope of a sexual relationship blossoming out of the platonic friendship that she has with the other inmate, this hope is sometimes the bane of this female’s involvement in the friendship. This refusal is often not taken kindly by the party whose sexual advances are turned-down and may lead to the unwilling party being coerced into sexual acts.

#### *The Enabling Factors*

The desire to engage in consensual same-sex sexual relationships in South African female prisons is partly borne out of sexual curiosity and fulfilling sexual needs. More so, the absence of males in female prisons which leads to the lack of heterosexual sexual relationships make females in prisons, especially the inmates, resort to sexual relationships with other females so as to express their sexual desires. In addition to the fulfilment of sexual urges, emotional, social, and financial needs are some of the other reasons why some female inmates, especially the ones who did not practise same-sex sexual acts before going to prison, engage in such acts inside prison. Pollock-Bryne (1990) contends that homosexuality in female correctional facilities tends to be consensual with the need for emotional fulfilment the bane of establishing such relationships. In Toch’s (1975) opinion, female prisoners’ strongly desire emotional support. Financial and/or material gains and the need for emotional fulfilment were the reasons why some

inmates engage in sexual relationships with their fellow prisoners:

*"Their love is serious. They help each other. My relationship with another female inside was good because she was helping me all the time because if her family they buy things for her, they buy for me too. So, everything that they buy for her is two two"* (Erin).

Erin's above narration suggest that, in some cases, same-sex sexual relationships are accepted by the family members of female inmates who practice such acts inside prisons. Gail narrates the emotional fulfilment that she derived from the sexual relationship that she had with another female inmate during her incarceration:

*"So, we can't touch each other. So, the only thing we do is to write down a letter, or you write down something, and then you throw it [into her partner's cell], and then if she is happy about it or whatever...and then she is going to answer and then throw back".*

The confinement of female prisoners in correctional facilities enables same-sex sexual relations between them to flourish. Sykes (1958: 63) note that prisoners suffer a lot of deprivation, particularly, the loss of goods and services, and that this may create a breeding ground for sexual battering and exploitation. According to Pardue et al (2011: 289), sexual battering in prisons is part of the institutions' underground economy and it may be reflected in sexual exchanges between the prisoners' and prison staff.

#### *Male and Female Roles*

The gender roles that females in prison play in consensual same-sex sexual relationships is similar to that which exists in consensual heterosexual relationships outside prisons in that there is a "male" and "female" partner in such relationships. While describing the gender roles in consensual same-sex relationships in female prisons, Juliet's stated: *"[In prison] the male in a lesbian relationship is called the butch, while the female is called the*

*femme"*. Female inmates who exhibit masculine traits, such as, aggressiveness, masculine appearance, and masculine way of talking and walking tend to play the roles of "males" in consensual prison sexual relationships with other females. Gail's following statement indicates that she was the "male" in the sexual relationship that she had with another female prisoner during their incarceration:

*"So there was this girl who used to like me. And I did not know that this girl loved me. She wanted me to be her boyfriend...Ja, because of the way I used to act. I acted like a boy, you know...a guy".*

However, there are no strict boundaries between the male/ female roles in consensual sexual relationships amongst females in prison; these roles are fluid. For instance, an inmate could be the "female" in a consensual sexual relationship today, and a "male" in another of such relationship next month. The desire to be the "male" in a consensual sexual relationship among females in prison is often a result of the desire to wield the type of power that "males" in such relationships do. When asked if there are more "males" or "females" in consensual same-sex sexual relationships in female prisons, Micaylah said:

*"It is confusing. I think most of them want to exercise their power to be males because they know the power that males have in relationships. You could find this week, a female inmate is a girlfriend to another female inmate, and next week she is boyfriend to another female inmate. It is confusing...Remember if you are a girlfriend to a female inmate [who is the male in the relationship], you have to clean for her and treat her like a man by doing things that girlfriends do for their boyfriends. I guess they [the girlfriend] get tired of that and think that 'Why can't I be the one that everything is being done for?' So it's confusing to say if there are more females acting as males or*



*females in those relationships, you can't keep track of it".*

These male/female roles were also found in the consensual sexual relationships among the male South African mine workers where older men take on "male roles" and the younger men "female roles" wherein the latter perform domestic chores for the former, as well as satisfy their sexual needs in exchange for money and material things (Niehaus, 2002: 78 and 84). Although the male/female roles that is said to exist among males in the South African mining compounds is similar to that which this study found to take place between females who are engaged in consensual same-sex sexual relationships in South African female prisons, there is a major dissimilarity in that the male/females roles in the mining compounds are not fluid as it is in the female prisons.

Another determinant of the male/ female roles in consensual prison sexual relationships among female inmates is seniority. This seniority is predicated on the length of prison sentence and prison time done so far by the inmates. The female prisoners with the lengthier sentences and who have stayed longest in prison usually take-up the "male" roles in consensual sexual relationships among females in prison.

#### *Conclusion*

The documentation of consensual same-sex sexual relationships in female prisons and delinquent institutions for girls started about a century ago. From the earliest studies on the practise of consensual sexual relationships among women in prisons and girls in juvenile institutions until now these relationships have been beset with several problems, one of the greatest being antagonism from the institutions' authorities which resulted in measures put in place to stop the practise. Despite the implementation of these measures, such relationships continue to flourish. The pathways, particularly, poverty, of some of the female prisoners into offending was identified as one of the enabling factors in the practise of consensual sexual relationships among

female prisoners in South Africa. Some other reasons that emerged as being responsible for the practise of consensual same-sex sexual relationships in South African female prisons are sexual, emotional and social needs.

#### *Acknowledgements*

This work was supported by the University of South Africa (UNISA), South Africa; and the South African Association of Women Graduates (SAAWG).

The author will like to express her gratitude to Prof. Marlize Rabe for her constructive criticisms of this work.

#### *Notes on contributor*

Caroline Agboola is a doctoral student in the department of Sociology at the University of South Africa (UNISA), South Africa. Her research interests include gender and crime, women and children, and qualitative research methods.

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