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# Troubling Vulnerability: Designing with LGBT young people's ambivalence towards hate crime reporting

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## ABSTRACT

HCI is increasingly working with 'vulnerable' people, yet there is a danger that the label of vulnerability can alienate and stigmatize the people such work aims to support. We report our study investigating the application of interaction design to increase rates of hate crime reporting amongst Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender young people. During design-led workshops, participants expressed ambivalence towards reporting. While recognizing their exposure to hate crime, they simultaneously rejected ascription as victim as implied in the act of reporting. We used visual communication design to depict the young people's ambivalent identities and contribute insights into how these fail and succeed to account for the intersectional, fluid and emergent nature of LGBT identities through the design research process. We argue that by producing ambiguous designed texts alongside conventional qualitative data, we 'trouble' our design research narratives as a tactic to disrupt static and reductive understandings of vulnerability within HCI.

## Author Keywords

Hate Crime Reporting; Design Workshops; LGBT Young People; Ambiguity in Design.

## ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Miscellaneous;

## INTRODUCTION

This paper reports on a study with the initial aims of exploring the potential design of digital and wider design tools to increase reporting of hate crime amongst Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) young people. However, as the study unfolded we observed how the young people participating challenged and resisted the criminal justice framing of reporting and expressed ambivalence towards being identified as vulnerable. This

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resistance to being identified as being 'vulnerable' echoes concerns within HCI and other fields, that simplistic ideas of vulnerability ignore vulnerable people's resilience and capacities, and can become a stigmatizing label and open the door for paternalistic controls [14, 45, 46].

In response to this, we consider how HCI research can communicate the risks people face without reproducing stigmatizing narratives of passive vulnerability. We reflect upon the ways that visual communication design was used to communicate our findings by depicting ambivalence towards vulnerability to hate crime. We argue that by including ambivalent elements in our communication design we can 'trouble' ideas of vulnerability and resist static narratives about our participants' identities.



Figure 1: Young people and police officer in workshop 1

We conducted two design-led workshops intended to engage participants, drawn from LGBT youth groups and criminal justice workers (CJW). We used design to structure discussion on the topic of hate crime and discrimination and used making activities to explore the design space. The first workshop (see Figure 1) was centered on a discussion on reporting and the impact of hate crime. Here participants were often quick to distance themselves from the impact of such crime. However, when asked to produce a magical device [4] to report hate crime in the second workshop, many of the participants produced devices which enabled an immediate response suggesting a desire for action and justice albeit one not oriented towards the existing criminal justice system.

From our analysis of the workshops we gained insights into the importance of recognizing and confirming individual's identities to their engagement with reporting processes and a preference for community oriented framings of hate crime reporting. This paper also contributes to the understanding of the potential of design to inform critical and reflexive practices in HCI through its capacity to use ambivalent elements to trouble narratives of vulnerability.

## BACKGROUND

For many young LGBT people living in the UK, increased civil rights, legal protection and popular acceptance has led them to be more open about their sexual and gender identities from a young age. However, homophobia and transphobia are still common experiences across all areas of life including in schools, in public places, in the home, and increasingly on social media [16]. These experiences of hate crime and hate incidents can span from clearly-identified criminal acts to discriminatory and anti-social behavior, such as verbal abuse or harassment. Having these experiences of hate recognized as an issue is key to any kind of civic, criminal justice or public action against hate crime [46]. However, there is also a risk of alienating young LGBT people or other vulnerable populations through narratives which portray them as being passive victims [32]. Narratives which present vulnerability too simplistically not only ignore the history of activism in LGBT communities, but also introduce a further risk that the label of ‘vulnerability’ becomes stigmatizing and can pave the way for paternalistic controls [14]. For HCI researchers working with LGBT people, a balance needs to be found between articulating the issues LGBT people face, also to both research and broader publics, while not reproducing reductive narratives around risk and vulnerability.

Within HCI there is limited work specifically looking at LGBT populations. Within the literature we found work focusing on three areas: healthcare, sex and relationships (especially case studies of app use), and identity management across different social media platforms. In these papers, LGBT users are identified as being at risk of loneliness and homophobia [43], depression [28], bullying [23], sexually transmitted diseases [25], or public exposure on social media [9]. How then to address these risks and challenges faced by LGBT people without (unintentionally) reproducing negative clichés about their identities? As Hardy and Lindtner point out, there is a need for a situated understanding of LGBT identities that looks at the ‘articulations of queer desires’ [27, p23]. When done successfully, HCI researchers balance articulating the real risks faced by LGBT people with highlighting the tactics they develop to negotiate and reshape their own technology use (see [8, 24, 27]).

However, even within HCI research which explicitly aims to work with users as equal partners, narratives about passive, vulnerable participants can reassert themselves, especially when the research is represented to a broader public. Irani and Silberman have reported on how the ‘Turkopticon’ project was repeatedly framed by journalists as a story of ‘exploited workers’ and ‘design saviors’ to the chagrin of both the researchers and the participants [29]. Irani and Silberman point to the need to actively resist the ‘design savior complex’ and to provide alternative narratives which represent the multiple agencies involved in any HCI project.

## Policing LGBT hate crime

As the body of work which represents LGBT identities in HCI is still small, it is informative to look to the approaches of police and criminologists in supporting LGBT people experiencing hate crime. There are lessons to take from this example about how institutions, infrastructures and academic practices that intended to support vulnerable people can over time become problematic. While we will focus on a UK context in which our study takes place, the victim- and community-centered model used by police here has had an influence on policing in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the USA [6].

In the past 25 years there has been a concerted effort across police forces in the UK to better protect minority communities as the likely targets of hate crime. Police and criminologists recognized these communities as being ‘doubly vulnerable’: they are targeted for hate attacks, while at the same time are less likely to turn to the police for help due to a history of being over-policed and under protected [26]. In order to better serve victims of hate crime, there has been substantial additional investment in community- and victim-centered policing, including more specialist community liaison officers, establishment of third party reporting centres, and outreach work to engage minority communities. These combined initiatives have had some success in repairing trust in the police [35]. However they have also created ‘a series of institutional artefacts that have ossified policing responses’ to hate crime [6].

These artefacts result in hate crime-policing efforts being organized around static identity categories (disability, gender-identity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation) on which current hate crime and anti-discriminatory legislation is based. Criminologists have recognized the shortcomings of the model as failing to acknowledge that identities and vulnerability are situational [17] and *intersectional* (i.e. gender, race, disability, class etc overlap rather than operate independently [40]). These static categories are particularly in conflict with the fluid and emergent nature of LGBT identities, along with established identity labels such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or queer. In our study we encountered newer terms such as non-binary (a person who identifies as neither male or female), genderfluid (a person whose gender identity varies) and asexual (a person who does not experience sexual attraction). For young people, the terms they use to describe themselves can shift and change with their developing sense of identity, so relying on static models of diversity can require them to define themselves in ways which they find alienating [1].

Identifying and supporting people who are vulnerable to hate crime is a priority for anti-hate crime policing. However, there is a risk that this label of the ‘vulnerability’ can become an identity which LGBT people are forced to embody by and for somebody else. This echoes the way in which hate crime is both an attack motivated *by identity* and

an attack *on identity*: the attacker reinforces their own sense of identity by casting the victim as a hated ‘other’ and in doing so the victim ‘is *forced* to embody a particular identity by and for the perpetrator of the crime’ [2, p55].

Therefore, central to any system or service designed to support people at risk of hate crime is engaging users without imposing alienating labels. In an effort to develop a more situated understanding of vulnerability, many criminologists and police forces increasingly conceptualize hate crime as an ongoing process of harassment and discrimination, rather than a single criminal event [26]. This has led to police initiatives that aim to record more ‘low level’ incidents as part of a wider move towards data gathering [18]. However, reporting rates of these non-violent criminal acts remain very low [16]. This policing agenda and a victim-centered tradition in criminology informed the initial impetus for this research.

### PROJECT BACKGROUND

This project was based upon previous victim-centered criminology research into LGBT young people’s experiences of hate crime undertaken by the fourth author, as well as being informed by his role as a youth worker. The initial aim was to gain a better understanding of why LGBT young people do not report hate incidents in order to inform the development of interventions intended to increase their reporting rates. In the broader HCI literature on crime prevention, there is evidence of a potential for digital platforms to support community policing [31] but no work had been done looking specifically at LGBT young people. While there is a substantial body of research in criminology examining the barriers LGBT people face in reporting hate crime, there has been little focus on the factors that motivate people to report hate crimes. These factors would be critical to informing any designed intervention that aims to support young people. In order to explore this design space and understand young peoples’ experiences and attitudes to reporting, we devised two design-led workshops informed by perspectives and methods from criminology, youth work, communication design, participatory design and HCI.

### Design workshops

A popular method for opening up the potential design spaces within HCI is to use performance or designed elements to help structure discussion on potentially sensitive subjects. Such methods help participants grapple with, discuss and envision potential future technologies by supporting them in articulating their various wants and needs [19, 44]. With this in mind, we designed workshops to bring together young people and Criminal Justice Workers (CJWs) to engage them in discussion and making activities. Our participants were drawn from two LGBT youth groups from the North East of England where one of the authors is employed part time as a youth worker. Nine young people aged between 15 and 22 years participated across the two events. While we invited a mix of people

with a range gender identities and sexualities, no female or lesbian identifying young people could attend the scheduled sessions. While it is regrettable not to be able to include the perspective young women in our study, this does perhaps reflect a growing trend amongst young LGBT people to identify with a broader range of labels such as genderfluid or non-binary. In addition, through the fourth author we recruited four specialists CJWs: three police officer and one civilian CJW, all of whom were interested in promoting better reporting of LGBT hate crime and related harassment. The workshops took place on neutral ground in a hired community meeting space.

Each workshop began with an ice breaker and familiar activities to help build trust and rapport between the young people, the CJWs, and the research team. We avoided direct questioning, instead focusing on more hypothetical scenarios to give participants more control over what they chose to disclose in the group setting. The presence of the CJWs was also carefully considered; while we wanted to promote dialogue between the CJWs and the young people participating, we were also aware of the inhibiting effect of adult authority figures, particularly the uniformed police officers. To mitigate this, the CJWs were invited to the first half of each workshop only.

The first workshop was grounded in existing experiences to help inform the design of the second workshop. As an ice breaker, participants and researchers introduced themselves with their names, the pronouns the wish to be referred to by (a growing practice in LGBT-inclusive spaces to recognize non-binary and other gender variant identities) and posed an ice breaker. The main discussion method asked participants to indicate the severity and likelihood of reporting, by placing a scenario on a ‘washing line’ scale. Our design workshop methods had shared characteristics with those used in youth work and as a result were familiar to the young people. This was important, as we aimed to create an environment in which the young people would feel secure and able to reflect upon and share sensitive insights into experiences of hate crime and discrimination/harassment.

The second workshop, which ran one week later, was modelled on Anderson’s ‘magic machine’ format, which combines critical perspectives from speculative design and participatory arts practices to ‘allow users to imagine future technologies in accordance with their own concerns through the making of speculative objects’ [4, p627]. We began the design activity by generating scenarios about hate incidents which went unreported to be used as a ‘design brief’ for creating a magical device for reporting the incident described. The participants then spent around 30 minutes making their device with the materials provided and presented these to the group. The workshop ended with a group discussion that returned to more grounded concerns and hopes for design interventions and/or digital technologies.

| <b>Workshop 1</b> <i>If you were an app, what app would you be?</i>  | <b>Workshop 2</b> <i>If you had superpower, what would it be?</i>   |
|--|---|
| <b>Alex</b> (15, bisexual, genderfluid/non-binary) Tinder<br><b>Chris</b> (15, gay, cis man) Instagram<br><b>David</b> (17, gay, cis man) Twitter<br><b>GayArtist</b> (22, gay, non-binary/trans man) OKCupid<br><b>Liam</b> (15, gay, cis man) Snapchat<br><b>Sapphire</b> (19, gay cis man) Snapchat<br><b>Janet</b> (Police Officer) Twitter<br><b>Sarah</b> (Police Officer) Calendar<br><b>Tessa</b> (Police Officer) GoogleMaps<br><b>Susan</b> (Civilian CJW) Lottery Results | <b>Alex</b> (15, bisexual, genderfluid/non-binary) Invisibility<br><b>Chris</b> (15, gay, cis man): flight<br><b>GayArtist</b> (22, gay, non-binary/trans man) the ability to make people see the others point of view<br><b>Matthew</b> (20, gay, cis man) the ability to inhabit other people's bodies<br><b>Quinn</b> (15, gay, cis man) flying<br><b>Sapphire</b> (19, gay cis man) mind reading<br><b>Steve</b> (17, gay, trans man) shape shifting<br><b>Susan</b> (Civilian CJW) teleportation |

**Figure 2** Table of workshop pseudonymous participants and responses to ice breaker question

Both workshops were audio recorded and documented with still photography. The audio was transcribed and then distributed in print and as a PDF to the co-authors. Ethical clearance and procedures followed University protocols. The young people participating selected their own pseudonyms, with some opting for 'drag' names or username-style descriptors. A thematic analysis [13] of the workshop transcripts was conducted by the second author in an iterative process, developing from lower-level codes to higher-level themes. These themes were then member checked with the other authors to ensure a good fit with the data. The themes were then refined into thematic areas. This led to an analysis informed by a discursive perspective, examining participants' accounts for what their language 'does'.

For the second workshop, we expanded our approach to include analyses informed by multimodal discourse analysis [39], mapping individual participants' journeys through the course of the workshop using the transcribed audio and photographic documentation. Our aim here was to adopt a more person-centered approach (see [32]), to detail how individuals revealed, expressed or disguised their identities through the workshop. We were interested both in what the young people said and did (i.e. discussions and interactions with others, what they designed as an artifact and how they interpreted this in words) and how this positioned their identities. Analysis involved cross referencing across the corpus of workshop transcriptions, photographic documentation and final designed objects.

#### **FIRST WORKSHOP: ESTABLISHING POSITIONS**

The aim of the first workshop was to engage the young people and CJWs in dialogue around the reporting of hate crime. It was structured around participant responses to scenario cards which depicted different experiences of homophobia and asked participants to rate them by severity and the likelihood of reporting them to the police. The police officers present encouraged reporting and were keen to reassure the young people that they would be treated with respect and taken seriously. Occasionally, the police expressed uncertainty about the legally ambiguous nature of the scenarios. Consistently, they reverted back their official line of 'tell us everything'. The other CJW, a civilian not

directly involved in policing, took a more nuanced stance and was keen to manage expectations around reporting.

Despite these positive messages, the young people, for the most part, gave accounts of why they, personally, would *not* report the incidents. Yet their reasons for not reporting varied as presented in our three themes. Underpinning the themes is the concept that officially reporting homophobic behavior in some way compromised their identities as young LGBT people. Our first theme discusses how young people positioned themselves as regularly experiencing homophobia, but in 'just trying to get on' ignored potential homophobic abuse and avoided reporting.

#### **Theme 1: Just About Coping**

Participants often highlighted the prevalence of homophobic and transphobic incidents. For example, Sapphire's friend was "*getting bullied all the time*" and Alex had to "*move school's because the bullying was so bad*". Yet despite highlighting the impact homophobia and transphobia have had on their lives, there was resistance to reporting amongst these young people. A key example of this was Liam's account of a recent incident. We created a new scenario card in workshop in response to the discussion of this incident. It read: 'Billy's father throws out any of Billy's possessions he considers to be "gay" or too "feminine", such as make up and clothing.'. Liam responds: '*I would report it because, I mean, I've just experienced this, like, with my Dad, [who] doesn't agree with me wearing makeup. And, like, he threatened me into not wearing it and stuff. Like I would report it and stuff. (Alex, participant: And did you report it in the end?) No. (Liam, 15, gay man)* There is a contradiction here: Liam is recognizing the severity of the *scenario* of a father throwing out feminine clothing, through stating he would *hypothetically* report. However, when questioned he states that he has not reported his recent, similar experience. This indicates a strong ambivalence between the ideal and practice of reporting.

The perceived consequence of reporting incidents to the police was often questioned by the young people. There was clearly a perception that, by reporting, young people may be making their situation even worse. In discussing the

incident with Liam's father, Alex suggests: *"yeah like you don't want your family to hate you for wearing makeup, but then they will hate you even more if your dad had to have a talk with the police"*. The inability of the police to *act* on many reported incident was also highlighted by the civilian CJW present who emphasizes to the group *"there are some things which will never result in being prosecuted"* in reference to incidents of verbal abuse. Here, the position taken by the participants is grounded in feeling downtrodden, deprived of both criminal justice in reporting incidents, and of social justice in expressing one's identity.

### Theme 2: Resilient and Fabulous

In contrast to the 'Just About Coping' position, participants also characterized their non-reporting through a narrative of resilience, individually resistant to incidents of homophobia: *"Nick has decided to go home when a group of students see him walk out of the club and ask him if he's a bender."* *I think a lot of people would find that offensive because they don't like to be called a bender, but if that was me I would just be like "yeah, bye."* (Chris, 15, gay man) Here, Chris positions himself relative to other LGBT people. Whilst, he claims, many would take objection to name calling, he distances himself from this negative response. He claims he would deal with such a scenario on his own terms. In this way, Chris is exercising a position of resilience; that of being able to deal with homophobic abuse, in a way others may not. Elsewhere, Sapphire builds on this narrative of resilience. In response to a scenario describing someone being followed and mocked for having a gay walk, he says *"that I hear quite a lot because apparently I have a really gay walk when I have music on, which I know I do"* (Sapphire, 19, gay man). Sapphire builds on the idea of resilience: he "does" have a "gay walk". This camp and 'fabulous' position was maintained primarily by Sapphire, but also more subtly by other participants. Accounts of non-reporting were grounded in accounts of assertive identity. To explain reasons for reporting required the young people to take into account the 'bigger picture' and to assert their LGBT citizenship, by reporting incidents for the greater good of their communities.

### Theme 3: the 'Greater Good'

Our participants often spoke more favourably about reporting on another's behalf. The following quotes come from Sapphire: *'Although I won't report things myself, when I was working on the gay scene I was always reporting things that I heard from someone else'*. Sapphire implicitly states he has not reporting incidents for his own gain. He goes on to introduce the idea of a 'ripple effect', of reports helping the greater good. This framing was commonly used by the young people to account for why they saw reporting as important: *'Yeah because they might not just do it to you. Like, if you don't report, that could be another five, ten, fifteen gay people that could suffer ... it is like an attack on the whole community'* (Alex).

This framing acknowledges the community impact of homophobia in contrast to the other themes of individual fatigue and/or assertiveness. Herein lies the tension: all of the police present highlighted the importance of reporting. Indeed, some asserted it was young people's duty to report. *'If it isn't recorded then it hasn't happened as far as our bosses are concerned'* (Janet, Police Officer). Yet, overall, despite acknowledging the need for reporting, none of the participants stated that they had reported any incidents to the police. For some this was because of the fear reporting will cause *'everyone will hate you'* (GayArtist). While for others, reporting compromised their position of being individually resilient.

### Police response

The police address the young people as vulnerable individuals whom it is their duty to protect: *'making sure that you are safe that is the number one priority from our Chief Constable'* (Sarah, Police Officer). However, the participants either do not fully recognize themselves in this, or do not trust in the police's claims about keeping them safe. This institutional understanding of 'vulnerability' stems from a simplistic understanding of being a minority by the police, who view it 'as inherently disadvantageous, with little acknowledgement of the resilience that emerges from outsiderhood.' [6 p93]. This stops the police from addressing the young people as members of a resilient community. They are therefore unable to build a compelling message around the 'greater good' position, from which the most positive attitudes to reporting were expressed. Only the civilian CJW addresses the positions of the participants in this way: *'... for everything that happens to you, you need to make a personal choice as to whether to report or not and what you are comfortable with. But I would just throw that into the mix, that the more that gets reported, the more that the police have statistics then the more we are able to say, actually you know, homophobia is still rife.'* (Susan, civilian CJW). While the police officers did, at times, recognize a more nuanced understanding of LGBT lives, their professional role determines this repeated positioning of participants as vulnerable young people.

We see how community-policing strategies have translated into messages delivered by specialist officers. These messages, while intended to build trust and positive relationships with young people, fail to be sensitized to the young people's identities and so the young people respond with ambivalence. One form this ambivalence towards reporting takes, is what we've termed the 'just about coping' position. Participants who took this position acknowledged the hurt done to them by homophobic and transphobic incidents, but were unconvinced of the police's reliability to deliver either criminal or social justice. In a second form of ambivalence ('resilient and fabulous'), participants distance themselves from the vulnerability and victimhood implicit in the act of reporting, in order to remain defiant.



It is telling, that it was the civilian CJW who most explicitly addressed the positive ‘greater good’ position and who does not work directly for the police. While the CJW was aware of the community policing policy, they were able to address the participants outside of this framework. These findings reinforce questions raised by social policy researchers ‘about how far young people’s feelings about their own identities shape and inform the systems and processes by which their lives are governed.’ [13, p382].

## WORKSHOP 2

In the second workshop, we used a speculative framing through the making of magic devices in order to begin to explore what systems and processes designed around and for young people might look like. The second workshop was held a week after the first and was attended by seven young people, four of whom had taken part in the first. The same civilian CJW was also in attendance, though declined to take part in the making activities as she felt uncomfortable with their ‘creative’ nature. Two police officers were meant to attend the workshop as well. However, due to a break-down in communication, they could not find the workshop venue. This unexpected absence of the police officers became a running joke throughout the workshop: at various times both the researchers and the participants comment that they are glad the police weren’t here to witness ‘inappropriate’ jokes, subjects or designs. While not planned, the absent presence of the police not only had a disinhibiting effect on the participants, it also shifted the focus of the workshop even further beyond the framing of reporting and criminal justice.

The workshop began again with ice-breaker introductions that also established the more speculative framing by asking participants ‘if you could have a super power what would it be?’ (see Figure 2) Having reintroduced ourselves and established the idea that we were going beyond the possibilities of the everyday world, we began the design activity by generating scenarios about hate incidents which went unreported. Participants were given sheets of paper with prompts printed on them that asked them to produce their own scenario, like the ones discussed the week before, with an added space to describe why this incident was not reported. These scenarios were then anonymously swapped between participants and became the ‘design brief’ for a magical reporting device for the person in their scenario. The participants then spent around 30 minutes making their device with the materials provided, and presented these to the group.

### Camp Machines

The outcomes of the magic machines workshop in some ways build upon the positions taken in the first workshop, but also allow the participants to play with positions not currently available to them. We will examine these outcomes and the design considerations that emerge from them, before turning to reflect on how participants

‘troubled’ our stable reading of the workshop data. The magic machine most grounded in both the ‘resilient and fabulous’ and ‘just about coping’ positions was made by Chris (Figure 3). Chris introduced his scenario and design:



Figure 3 Chris presenting his ‘suit of armour’

*‘Stuart leaves Powerhouse and gets verbally harassed by some drunk students. He doesn’t report it because he doesn’t think it’s serious enough for the police to take notice’. Now I think its very serious [laughter], so I’ve made this ... I was originally going to go for a suit of armour, like your words don’t hurt me, but due to time and cost I had to scale it back to ‘fuck off please’ [laughter]. [...] this little thing [indicates windmill], I thought if it got too heated you could spin this and local authorities could be contacted and then I put this [indicates ‘I love camping’ sign] in to reassure myself and the students that I’m really camp and that I accept myself for who I am and they can fuck off please. (Chris, 15, gay man)*

As with many of the devices, reporting is also a secondary feature, added only as an afterthought. Here the reporting aspect is a back-up system, a helping hand if things get out of control. This rejection of the ‘reporting’ framing continues throughout the workshop, despite the researchers’ many attempts to reintroduce this idea. Chris’s design is centered around a humorous juxtaposition between the expletive ‘fuck off’ and the polite ‘please’, underscored by his deadpan delivery. This design strategy of ‘words can’t hurt me’ echoes the ‘water off a duck’s back’ sentiment he expressed in the first workshop. However, the confrontational language used and his closed-off posture adopted while presenting, suggests that these experiences do bother him, and that underneath the armour is someone who is ‘just about coping’.

It is also noticeable that Chris shifts his positioning from that of designer of the device, to that of user. His citation of a camp identity echoes Sapphire’s from the previous workshop. Chris cites camp as a quality of a resilient and likeable LGBT identity. Camp is a common feature of LGBT cultures and it one highly visible to the participants through TV shows like RuPaul’s Drag Race (which the participants frequently referenced). Camp is seen as a resource for resilience, perhaps as it has a distancing effect: ‘To perceive Camp in objects and persons is to understand Being-as-Playing-a-Role’ [41, p57]. Camp, in this case is a means to distance oneself from harm, is recognized by the participants as tactic employed by LGBT people to foster

resilience and agency in the face of hate crime and social injustice. Chris's deadpan delivery of *'now I think it's very serious'* also reveals an element of camp in the police message of taking reports seriously. Sontag notes that, in some cases camp, 'the essential element is seriousness, a seriousness that fails' [41, p58]. This 'failed seriousness', identified by the participants, of the gap between the police's desire to gather data, and their ability to action, undermines any claims of taking reports 'seriously'.

### Weaponising Empathy



Figure 4 Sapphire's 'Hate Crime Bomb'

In Chris' prototype, the homophobic behaviors of the perpetrators are dismissed as pointless and inexplicable. In the first workshop, there was limited discussion of what motivates perpetrators of hate crime (for instance ignorance, bigotry, or internalized homophobia), as you would expect in the victim-focused framing of the workshop and policing policy. However, some of the participants' magic machines brought the perpetrators into focus. The Hate Crime Bomb produced by Sapphire (see Figure 4) is thrown at homophobic attackers and covers them with rainbow-coloured paint. After Sapphire introduced the device, the group collaborated in refining and extending the idea, with even the civilian CJW joining in. Chris offers that it would make the attackers' 'idiotcy' visible *'so you'll be walking home and they'll be covered in paint and you'll be like, that idiot is a homophobe'*, but the group shifts the focus to thinking about how it might make the attacker feel. In the end, Sapphire describes the effect of the rainbow paint on the attacker as *'everyone will think they're gay and they'll have to deal with what we have to deal with'*. In doing this, the group has shifted the function away from simply publically shaming an offender, towards the offender being forced to experience and acknowledge the harm done to victims. This is similar to the central tenant of restorative justice, which is difficult to practise in cases of hate crime due to the power imbalance and social disconnection between offender and victim [47]. However, the violent imagery of Sapphire's 'Hate Crime Bomb' (and the 'Pronoun Corrector' below) evens the score by putting the power in the hands of the victim.

GayArtist's 'Pronoun Corrector' (see Figure 5) shares this function of reflecting the harm back on to the perpetrator, but was designed in response to a scenario where set in an LGBT space. He described its functions thus: *'It has a*

*beacon on the top so everybody around you will know exactly what pronouns you prefer [...] and then when there is just a very stubborn person there is like a little mini army man on the top and it will shoot them with the pronoun you prefer and knock them back in to queerness.'* He goes on to clarify the function of the device (*'shoots them and also they get misgendered'*) building on the weaponized empathy idea that emerged from discussion of the hate crime bomb. GayArtist goes on to contradict his desire for the device to be a clear signal of his gender identity, by adding *'and also it's invisible so there is no way they can blame you for [being misgendered]'*, echoing the group's fears that reporting (or other actions) will only make things worse for them. None the less, the device gives GayArtist space to imagine what taking action might feel like, even if he cannot overcome his fear of negative consequences.

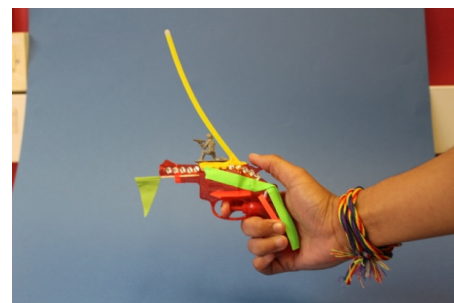


Figure 5 GayArtist's 'Pronoun Corrector'

### Making trouble

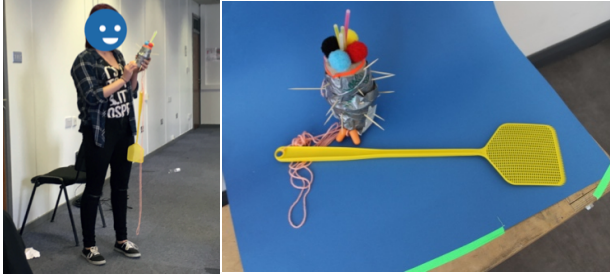
We now turn our attention to the manner in which the participants disrupted and 'troubled' our readings of these positions. Queering is a tactic employed by LGBT people when faced with heteronormative culture and societies which don't meet or recognize their needs and perspectives. The concept of 'troubling' or 'queering' as applied to design in HCI is described by Light as a form of 'practical naughtiness' that can have a critical role within design, but which 'is not an analysis to inform design, but an ongoing application of disruption as a space-making ploy' [33, p433]. We will focus on how one participant 'made trouble' throughout the second workshop by seeking to obscure or disrupt their identity in a way that made them difficult to position.

Alex (15, non-binary, bisexual) plays multiple workshop roles from the 'good workshop participant' (asking clarifying questions, offering thoughtful reflections) to 'provocative trouble maker' (use of provocative language, talking over others, playing with doing things 'the wrong way'). Through these processes Alex plays with, and troubles, how they are perceived by the other workshop participants (accepting peer group, supportive youth worker, the researchers and participating CJWs). However, the workshop also created a space in which they could be less self-conscious in their self-presentation.

The performed presentation format enables Alex to dissociate from the ongoing responsibility of representing



themselves to the world. Alex briefly inhabits a less managed persona, in the knowledge that they will not be taken literally. This gives them permission to explore and discuss violence in an animated tongue-in-cheek way, while also expressing their anger towards LGBT injustice as manifest in their violent design weapon. While other workshop participants also incorporated violent elements (water pistols, toy soldiers and balloon bombs), for Alex the device's central purpose was to comprise a weapon.



**Figure 6 Alex presenting their device**

*[Reading scenario] 'Esther is on the [Underground] ... is jolted by a man wearing a swastika badge. She doesn't report it because he didn't say anything and she thought it wouldn't be taken seriously...' So, I know I'd be pretty intimidated ... so [gesturing to their device] like, if they are like getting close connect with them and that would stab them with the spikey thing. Alex continues; 'blinding flash', 'deafening noise', fly swatter for persistent 'fly-like people'. And similarly, the device's various defense features (ear plugs, flash bangs, escape routes). While solidly constructed, Alex's device lacks conceptual coherence and narrative. Rather, in its design and presentation, it is structured as a series of semi-improvised 'and then's', which add attack and defense design features, but with little regard to how these cohere or interact as a whole. Alex's presentation could be interpreted as child-like, an effect that is reinforced by their highly animated style of presentation – standing and physically preforming the potential use of the device with sound effects ('This one is like a big force field, so like pheew'). This was in stark contrast to the other participants' low-key presentations.*

Despite the performative nature, this presentation and the designed device had a provocative effect on the researchers and Susan, the CJW. On leaving the session, Susan commented to one researcher 'we need to talk about violence'. As researchers, knowing how to respond to these expressions of violence was difficult. On one hand, we had explicitly given the young people space, and actively invited personal responses, to the broad theme. On the other, these expressions didn't fit within our understandings of what an appropriate response to "victimization" might be [13]. In the closing discussion, in response to the researcher-youth worker's comment that the designs had 'been a bit too violent, slightly on the terrorist side' Alex responded 'Well, you know what, it's time we fight back... I'm sick of being the minority.' The manifestations of anger

in the gleeful cartoon violent and power fantasies of many of the devices is here openly articulated as anger by Alex.

This troubles the purpose of participatory design workshops: how do we turn anger into 'implication for design'? Once we had given anger space to be expressed, what do we do with it? This question of what to 'do' with anger long troubled feminist and queer theorists: Ahmed acknowledges that anger should not be denied or ignored, but neither should it form the basis of a 'wound culture' in which we become too attached to pain [2]. The cause of this anger cannot be resolved with the immediacy of the participants' magic devices. However, making space for the anger to be externalized and acknowledged, though it may trouble us, makes space for changes to emerge over time.

## DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

Throughout both workshops, the participants expressed contradictory positions in regard to their experiences of hate crime and attitudes towards reporting. The gap between how they identify themselves, and how they felt they will be identified by the police, creates multiple forms of ambivalence. In the first workshop, some participants positioned themselves as 'resilient and fabulous', to distance themselves from the harm that both hate crime and being seen as a 'victim' does to their sense of self. This was developed into a form of 'armoured glamour' by Chris, whose device deflected and dazzled in order to distance the user from harm while his presentation hinted at the vulnerability underneath such a camp performance.

Others acknowledge the pain that being 'othered' caused them, but feared reporting would lead to them being further misunderstood. In response to this, devices emerged which weaponised empathy in the name of social justice. The hate crime bomb inverted power relations to force perpetrators to experience the impact of homophobia and transphobia. However, we also saw that fears of further othering were hard to escape even within a speculative frame.

Across both workshops, we observed how ambivalence towards hate crime and reporting resulted in inaction: participants resist or avoid reporting hate experiences because they cannot resolve the contradictions it creates for how they perceive themselves. These outcomes point towards how reporting methods could be reshaped around young people's identities to resolve some of these ambivalences. There is value in building upon the 'greater good'-framing of reporting, which sidesteps individual's personal misgivings about reporting and directs them towards the position as a member of a resilient community. This reflects previous findings on resilience in vulnerable populations [46] and on preference for grass roots community-oriented platforms for tackling crime over police run websites and apps [3130]. There is also a need for further work to be done to understand links between the wider public acknowledgement and understanding of the experiences of young LGBT people and the likelihood of reporting experiences of hate crime and harassment.

However, it is also important to acknowledge that the ambivalence we observed cannot, and perhaps should not, be resolved entirely. Instead we propose that this ambivalence can inform design and research processes. We suggest that by *designing with ambivalence* we can trouble our sense of our participant's vulnerability. Like in the case of the anger expressed by Alex, in representing and reproducing the ambivalence, we acknowledge that we cannot design a solution but we can design use to make sure these experiences are heard. Secondly, we recognise ambivalence can become a resource for navigating complex and contradictory situations as seen in Chris's deployment of deadpan humor and camp. Designing with, rather than trying solve, ambivalence upsets any static ideas about our participants allowing us to see them as both vulnerable and capable simultaneously.

### Designing with Ambivalence

To understand what designing with ambivalence might mean, we present and reflect on two subsequent designs informed by the workshop and produced for a public engagement event by the first author. The first design is a set of posters and postcards depicting three of the workshop devices, with annotations that communicate their function. The second was an 'UnBinary' badge-making activity (Figure 7). The posters and postcards were arranged in a display on a market stall at a regional LGBT Pride Event attended by the researchers. GayArtist's 'Pronoun Corrector', Sapphire's 'Hate Crime Bomb' and Steve's 'Trollinator 3000' were used to represent the outcomes, as they most clearly articulated the workshop themes. At the event, these designs provoked interest and engagement with many people commenting they were drawn in by the bright colours and the amusing and provocative titles. While viewers were initially uncertain of what to make of these devices, once engaged with the associated stories, the majority of people understood the humour or could relate to the need for such devices.

By presenting the devices and workshop in this way, we could tell a different story to the public about hate crime. One which recast young LGBT people as active and powerful agents rather than passive victims. In doing this we reproduced the 'resilient and fabulous' position favored by many of the participants. However, despite all these positive aspects, the narratives we presented did not fully capture the contradictions and ambivalences of the workshops. The more we rehearsed the stories of these workshops, the harder it became to adopt multifaceted aspects. We found it easier to present a homogenized identity for the participants than discuss the ambivalent position by the young people. The version of the workshops we had constructed had the potential to become our own 'party line', as we noticed in the police messaging.

In contrast, the badge-making part of the display, if messy and hard to explain, allowed us to design with ambivalence in co-production with members of the public. This was

done through a badge-making activity that allowed people to assemble their own ambivalent identity label and then take it away to wear. Members of the public were invited to choose two phrases printed on semicircles and to assemble them to be made into a badge. As the badges were a simple form of fashion accessory, they tapped into the ways in which clothing is uniquely adept at 'registering the culturally anchored ambivalences that resonate within and among identities' [20, p25]. Many added them to the other badges and labels they had assembled as part of their outfits for the day.

The phrases were derived loosely from transcripts of the workshops. We generated these phrases as possible positions or identities a person might take on in response to experiences of hate crime. These included direct quotes from the workshops (e.g. 'fck off pls', 'just be nice') others were descriptions of positions derived from our coding of the workshops (e.g. 'armoured glamour', 'just about coping', 'public shamer') or from cultural references we felt were relevant (e.g. 'ask me anything', 'dangerous queer', 'model victim'). The phrases could either be selected to complement or contradict each other, and could be worn either way up, suggesting a flexibility of presentation.

The design of the badge-making activity disrupts the possibility of static narratives and identity positions, they introduced dialogue and improvised meaning making. They still have enough coherence to have meaning, but are ambiguous enough to be generative of multiple meanings and narratives. While the badges were inspired by our data rather than the product of thematic coding, they do speak of and speak to the dialogue within the workshops.



**Figure 7 (left) a range of UnBinary Badges (right) Sapphire's badge**

Sapphire was at the event, working on security. He visited the stall and, after being amused to see our presentation of his hate crime bomb, made a badge (Figure 7). He selected the phrases 'kinda normal' and 'armoured glamour'. Pleasingly, 'armoured glamour' was a phrase we had developed in response to Sapphire's 'resilient and fabulous' position, while 'kinda normal' hints at a less performative version of Sapphire we did not get to see in the heightened frame of the workshops. He added it to his high-visibility vest, before heading off to keep an eye on the 'scene', still working for the greater good.

## DISCUSSION

During this study, we reframed the research in response to the ways in which the participants expressed ambivalence towards vulnerability, and by extension, to the way in which reporting hate crime is framed by the criminal justice system. Shifts in focus such as this are not uncommon in participatory design research (e.g. [2, 36, 10]) if not a central reason for using such methods [34]. However, it would be unfair to say the initial assumptions of the research were not attuned to the experiences and perspectives of the participants: They were based upon extensive interviews with LGBT young people and criminal justice workers, as well as being grounded in the fourth author's youth work experiences and informed by a tradition of victim focused criminology. These assumptions were challenged when introduction of multidisciplinary perspectives and the open-ended nature of the design methods used, created a space for the participants to question and go beyond the victim centered criminology framing we initially presented.

However, the lesson here is not just that we started from wrong assumptions and through participatory methods found a better understanding of the participants (though that did happen). We should be cautious to claim that the design or multidisciplinary methods are superior to those found in criminology. This would not only unfair to the previous work and contributions of the fourth author, but it would be a return to the narrative of (participatory) design as saviour. Instead the lesson we take from this experience is the importance of troubling how our research is framed and presented on an ongoing basis.

In our case, the way in which our participants troubled the framing of research led us to look to practices of 'queering' as a means of resisting closing-down the meaning of the workshop into a single narrative. By welcoming elements of ambivalence and ambiguity into our design research processes, we reflexively troubled our research narratives and made space for new ones to emerge. The tactics we used were inspired by critical design and queer theory, but also by attending to the manner in which our participants troubled our data and, our sense of them.

### Ambiguity in participatory design

This use of ambiguity in design research is perhaps at odds with some conceptions of a participatory design. Firstly, it conflicts with a sense of participatory design as a decision-making process; Bratteteig and Wagner argue while participatory design should initially open up possibilities for participants, the ultimate goal should be concretising participants' wants and needs into designs [11]. However, recent studies have identified the need for ambiguous or underdetermined designs to enable users' flexibility and adaptability, especially in the context of community activism [5].

Secondly, work which uses ambiguity in this 'designerly' way is often positioned antithetical to participatory work.

Certainly, it has often been the case that critical design has been practiced and disseminated in ways that are inaccessible to many [11]. However, our participants produced work with the same capacity to 'trouble' as any critical design. In order to attend to the ambivalence expressed by the participants, we have had to include ambiguous elements in our designs, in order to keep this trouble making visible to ourselves and wider audiences.

Instead, this use of ambiguity points to the place where participatory design research and critical design can meet. Designs such as the 'UnBinary Badges' further produce ambivalent identities and disseminate ambiguous texts created in dialogue with the research data and the LGBT community at Pride. Our use of ambiguity as a way of 'troubling' relates to ideas of queering as not only 'reinterpreting the heteronormative for new queer uses, but also reinterpreting the queer for further queer meaning' [27, p24]. This does not mean the narratives of the devices we presented in the posters and postcards were 'bad' designs. They were necessary to frame and make sense of the UnBinary Badges. Queering alone would not work, as it a process of 'infinite deferral.' [33, p433]. However, by combining queering with more conventional design and research processes, we introduced an element of 'trouble', that helped us resist static understanding of our participants by remaining open to their ambivalence.

## CONCLUSION

Making space for stories of experiences of hate crime and resilience to circulate is one of the ways in which design research can support vulnerable people [46]. However, there is a need for reflexive awareness of our role in shaping such stories and a need to actively work to disrupt narratives that cast participants as passive victims [29]. As we learnt from our experience presenting our research at a Pride event, it is easy for research accounts to become static clichés that close down meaning making, and so the troubling of narratives needs to be an ongoing process.

Ambiguity is often cited as a resource for design within HCI and design research [22], but its role in design research has been less clearly defined. In the context of this project, we found that ambiguity was a resource for an ongoing 'troubling' of artefacts, narratives and identities which emerged from the research process. It forces us to be engaged with reflexivity, not as a one-time declaration of our positions, but an on-going practice of looking hard at oneself and listening carefully to others. It draws our attention to the edges and outliers of our data, but, perhaps most importantly, opens up space from which new meanings and understandings can emerge.

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