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TRANS WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPATING IN INSIDER RESEARCH

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH APPROACHES

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Why Insider Research?

- Insider-led research with marginalised populations, particularly with Indigenous communities, has yielded in-depth, rich, and community-approved knowledge (Braun, Browne, Ka'opua, Kim, & Mokuau, 2014; Breen, 2007; Gair, 2012; Kanuha, 2000; Smith, 2012)
- Insider status can help build rapport and increase a researcher's accountability towards the community (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015; Unluer, 2012)
- Insider-led approaches produce immersive, reflexive, 'human ecology' oriented frameworks (Turner & Norwood, 2013; Wilson, 2008)

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Critiques of Insider Research

- Insider research can cause role confusion and blur expectations between researchers and the communities (Asselin, 2003; Birch & Miller, 2000; Kanuha, 2000)
- Being 'inside' does not mean having full access to an entire community's experiences (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015)
- Many of these can be addressed by reflexive practices i.e. journaling, soundboarding within an insider-outsider team (Court & Abbas, 2013; Couture & Zaidi, 2012; Humphrey, 2007)

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Insider Research with Transgender People

- Three levels of peer/insider research: 'The Insider Research Escalator' (Roche, Guta, & Flicker, 2010)
 - **Advisory:** Many studies, including several national studies, have had transgender peer advisors (Hyde, Doherty, Tilley, McCaul, Rooney, & Jancey, 2013; Strauss, Cook, Winter, Watson, Toussaint, & Lin, 2017).
 - **Employment:** Some studies have used peer ethnography and research assistants (Collumbien et al., 2009; Logie et al., 2017; Logie et al., 2018)
 - **Leadership:** An increasing amount of transgender peer researchers and authors (Ansara, 2012; Bornstein, 1995; Latham, 2018; Serano, 2016; Shannon & Smith, 2017; Stryker, 2013)
- However, the overwhelming majority of research is still conducted by cisgender researchers and teams, in many cases still on the **0th step** (Reisner et al., 2016)

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The Current Study: Methodology

- **Participants:** 6 transgender women who had participated in the researcher's previous study
- **Data Collection:** In-depth semi-structured interviews
- **Analysis:** Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2013) guidelines

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The Current Study: Results

- **Theme 1: The Impact of Trans-Led Research**
 - The 'Weight' of a Trans Researcher
 - Having Lived and In-Depth Knowledge of Trans Experiences
 - Trust, Rapport, Comfort, and Accountability-Building
 - Potential Mistrust of Cisgender Researchers

"If it comes from a trans person, I know you have a vested interest in reporting the truth; you're not doing this for shits and giggles"
Lilly

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The Current Study: Results

- **Theme 2: Researcher Approach**
 - The Benefits of Connective Communication Styles
 - Providing a Non-Judgmental / 'Objective' Space
 - Open-Ended Interview Approach
 - Clarity of Process
 - Follow-Up
 - Making Participation Worthwhile and Valuable

"I got to speak openly and freely about who I am in a way that nobody has heard before, or heard for a long time"
Abbey

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The Current Study: Results

- **Theme 3: Barriers and Facilitators for Participation**
 - Note: These reflect Owen-Smith et al.'s (2016) findings

"I'll vet a random cis person's study a lot more than I would a trans person's study"
Katrina

"Personally I do like the interview style and it makes me feel like you're not detached and I'm giving my experiences to a person"
Ella

- **Theme 4: Research Modalities**
 - Other Trans Research Experiences
 - Experiences of Qualitative and Quantitative Research

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The Current Study: Results

- **Theme 5: Who Dictates the Narrative**
 - Narrative Accuracy
 - Doubt about Use of Answers
 - Tropes and Assumptions
 - Heterogeneity of Narratives
 - Research as a Means of Representation
 - Ensuring the Community's Control Over Our Narratives

"If it wasn't a trans person [doing this research] I wouldn't be as confident that it would be used in a positive way"
Janey

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The Current Study: Conclusions

- Trans-led research has the potential to: encourage participation; overcome barriers of discomfort, lack of knowledge, and distrust; provide an environment that is more sensitive to the needs of participants, and; build rapport and co-accountability between researchers and their communities
- Both trans and cisgender researchers in the area can improve the quality of their studies by focusing on providing a non-judgmental interview environment and ensuring that they are well-briefed on and/or immersed in the lived experiences of trans people
- Qualitative research provides an in-road to more accurate depictions of trans narratives, which compliments and enhances quantitative epidemiological and community-wide data
- A sense of contribution, meaningful follow-up, and assurance of the accuracy of narratives portrayed all significantly improve the experiences of transgender research participants, and by extension make any published outcomes more valid and useful for the community

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Thank You!

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Questions?

GAHT, Sexuality and Intimacy

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