

Reflections on Transgender Representation in Academic Publishing

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Kia ora everyone, after recently taking up a role as Associate Editor for International Journal of Transgenderism, I was invited to write an editorial for this issue of the journal. For those who don't know me, I'm a Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Waikato in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Until recently, I have been living in Vancouver, Canada, and as well as being a member of WPATH, I have been involved with ANZPATH and CPATH. I have published about transgender people's sexuality, identity development, and most recently, social determinants of health inequities for transgender people.

I am using this editorial as an opportunity to reflect on my position as a transgender person beginning in the role of an Associate Editor of the International Journal of Transgenderism. I am one of the first transgender people to be taking up this level of editorial position in this journal. A trend towards including transgender people in these roles mirrors the increasing numbers of transgender members of WPATH that I have noticed in my time as a member of the association. It has been pleasing to see initiatives like a space for transgender people to connect and network at the most recent WPATH Biennial Symposium in Amsterdam, the Netherlands to facilitate networking and support and I hope that there will be more initiatives like this in the future.

There also appears to be an increasing number of transgender researchers publishing in the area of transgender health and well-being. In the last two years this journal has published a number of articles by authors who publicly identify as transgender (e.g., Galupo, Henise, & Mercer, 2016; MacKinnon, Tarasoff, & Kia, 2016; Thomas, Amburgey, & Ellis, 2016; Thompson, Reisner, VanKim, & Raymond, 2015; Veale, Watson, Adjei, & Saewyc, 2016).

It seems to me that there are clear similarities between the fields of transgender health and women's health—the current representation of transgender people in academic writing in transgender health seems to mirror the representation of women in academic writing in women's health in the past. This similarity is most clearly expressed by the recent publication of the book *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves* (Erickson-Schroth, 2014), a book about transgender health and well-being written by transgender authors, which was inspired by *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (Boston Women's Health Book Collective, 2011), a book about women's health written by female authors, first published in 1971 when academic writing in the field of women's health was dominated by men who did not always have an appreciation of the perspectives and experiences of women (Boston Women's Health Book Collective, 2011). Today, there is greater representation of women in

academic writing in women's health: From a cursory look at the Editors of leading obstetrics and gynecology journals, it seems that around one-third of these are women and multidisciplinary women's health journals appear to have a roughly even split of men and women as editors. I hope that myself and other transgender people beginning in editorial positions will mark the beginning of a similar trend towards increased transgender representation in the transgender health discipline.

Why is this increased transgender representation within WPATH and the International Journal of Transgenderism important? I am sure that there are many reasons, but I will note two in this editorial that I believe are particularly crucial. Firstly, as a transgender person, I know first-hand some of the challenges with participating in organizations like WPATH where it can often feel like people are talking about you rather than to you. In other words, it can feel as though you are expected to be there as a patient or a research participant, rather than as a health professional or academic in your own right. Obviously, this is not the overt intention of most of the people currently involved in WPATH, but given the history of the organization (and by extension its journal) this can continue to be the perception. Increased transgender representation can help to break this perception down. Secondly, transgender people having a greater voice in what is written and spoken about us in the academic and health professional domains will enhance the sense of empowerment that we as a community have and this, in turn, will enhance the "health, research, education, respect, dignity, and equality" for transgender people, in keeping with WPATH's vision (World Professional Association for Transgender Health, n.d., para. 3).

I hope that readers of this editorial will agree with me about the importance transgender representation in the discipline of transgender health. Cisgender people involved in this discipline can help to make this increased representation of transgender people become a reality by choosing to mentor and otherwise assist transgender students and early-career professionals as well as continuing to grant opportunities to those of us who are already more established.

This brings me to the final point I would like to make in this editorial. I am greatly thankful and excited to have this opportunity to serve as Associate Editor of the International Journal of Transgenderism. As someone who is passionate about any work to improve the health and well-being of transgender people, I have an appreciation of those who have forged the way before us and I share the editorial board's vision for the future of the journal (e.g.,

Bouman, 2016). I hope you will all support our journal by continuing to publish and peer review manuscripts with us.

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Footnote

¹ While I do not know for certain the specific details of those who have come before me, it seems safe to assume that most, if not all, of the people in these positions previously have been cisgender.