



Researching Sexual Violence with Trans Women of Color in Australia

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the research process that was employed in understanding the lived experiences of sexual violence among trans women of color in Australia, and the outcomes that had been planned and achieved. Transgender (trans) refers to individuals whose gender presentation differs from their sex assigned at birth. The term transgender includes a range of identities such as trans woman, trans man, nonbinary, or gender diverse. Gender incongruence, where one may experience a discrepancy between their gender identity and their gender assigned at birth, often result in gender expression and behavior that do not conform to the traditional gender binary. Within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community (LGBTQ), trans individuals are most stigmatized and yet least understood. Existing research regarding trans persons tends to focus on White, middle-class trans women. Limited research has focused on sexual violence among trans women. Importantly, little is known about the lived experiences of being a trans women of color in Australia and their experience of sexual violence. This research filled the gap in the health and social science literature. This chapter will generate great interest from health and social care researchers who aim to embark on research concerning sensitive issues and vulnerable and marginalized individuals in the future. The chapter discusses an innovative means that can promote social inclusion in research among trans women of color. This project provides a valuable example of inclusive research with a group of marginalized individuals. The authors also hope that our project and its findings will lead to better health and well-being of trans women of color living in Australia and elsewhere.

Keywords

Trans women of color · Lived experience · Sexual violence · Research process · Photovoice method · Mixed method research

1 Introduction

This chapter discusses research procedures that were developed for undertaking research on the experiences of sexual violence among trans women of color living in Australia. Transgender (trans) refers to individuals whose gender presentation differs from their sex assigned at birth. The term transgender includes a range of identities such as trans woman, trans man, nonbinary, or gender diverse (Levitt and Ippolito 2014; White Hughto et al. 2015; Jones et al. 2015; McCann and Sharek 2016; Reisner et al. 2016; Schilt and Lagos 2017; Winter et al. 2016; Nolan et al. 2019). Gender incongruence, where individuals may experience a discrepancy between their gender identity and their gender assigned at birth, often result in gender expression and behavior that do not conform to the traditional gender binary (Girshick 2008; Miller and Grollman 2015).

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health suggests that transgender should be viewed as a culturally diverse human phenomenon rather than disorder (Coleman et al. 2012). However, as a result of transgressing traditional

binary gender systems, as well as the lack of appropriate information to understand transgender experience, trans populations are often considered abnormal or are outsiders placed in, and living at, the margins of society (Winter et al. 2016; Wylie et al. 2016). Consequently, trans people are likely to encounter a range of negative lived experiences and health indicators, causing high prevalence of adverse health outcomes, such as stigma and various forms of social oppressions and discrimination, including sexual violence (Moolchaem et al. 2015; Fernandez-Rouco et al. 2017; Reisner et al. 2016; Stotzer 2009; White Hughto et al. 2015; Ussher et al. 2020a, b). Not surprisingly, the health and well-being of trans people, including trans women, is affected by these factors, leading to considerable difficulties and complexities in their lives (Moolchaem et al. 2015).

A metasynthesis of the literature pertaining to the lived experiences of trans individuals was conducted and it was found that many people had experienced physical problems related to transgender identity, psychological distress, discrimination, and social exclusion (Moolchaem et al. 2015). Trans individuals experience various forms of violence, including sexual abuse, physical and verbal harassment, forced sex, theft, physical assault, and they are at an increased risk of being murdered (de Lind van Wijngaarden et al. 2012; Khan et al. 2009; Sausa et al. 2007). Additionally, the meta-analysis demonstrated that many trans individuals experience psychological distress related to stigma, shame, anxiety, depression, sexual violence, and low self-esteem, occasionally leading to suicidal ideation (see also Dispenza et al. 2012; Khan et al. 2009; Lui and Wilkinson 2017; Melendez and Pinto 2007; McCann and Sharek 2016; Miller and Grollman 2015; Nemoto et al. 2006; Owen-Smith et al. 2016; Reisner et al. 2016; White Hughto et al. 2015; Ussher et al. 2020a, b). Significantly, Sausa et al. (2007) suggest that trans individuals of color and who live in a different culture from their birth are more likely to encounter multiple layers of stigma, discrimination, and sexual violence.

Within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community (LGBTQ), trans individuals are the most stigmatized group, and yet the least understood (Meyer 2003; Lui and Wilkinson 2017). Existing research regarding trans people tends to focus on White, middle-class trans women (de Vries 2015). There is limited research that focuses on sexual violence among trans women (see Fernandez-Rouco et al. 2017; Duke and Davidson 2009; Grant et al. 2011; Lombardi et al. 2001). Importantly, little is known about the lived experiences of being a trans women of color in Australia and trans women's experience of sexual violence. This research addressed the gap in the literature. Specifically, the research aimed to:

1. Explore the lived experience of being a trans person among trans women of color
2. Examine the discourses of sexual violence among trans women of color
3. Investigate the experiences of sexual violence among trans women of color
4. Identify strategies that trans women of color employ to cope with sexual violence in their everyday life and mechanisms that can promote their health and well-being
5. Use the voices of this marginalized group to inform culturally sensitive prevention and responses to sexual violence experienced by trans women in Australia
6. Develop resources for policymakers and health providers for working effectively with trans women of color

In this chapter, the authors discuss the research processes that we employed in understanding the lived experiences of sexual violence among trans women of color and the outcomes that we had planned and achieved (see Ussher et al. 2020a).

2 Intersectionality: Theoretical Framework

In this research, we situated our approach within intersectionality theory which recognizes the multiple intersections in a woman's life (Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Nixon and Humphreys 2010; de Vries 2012; Vaughan et al. 2015). Intersectionality theory considers the multiple dimensions within which individuals exist, including gender, age, developmental stage, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, minority group status, and migration experience. Thus, an intersectional lens goes beyond the traditional boundaries of gender, race, and social class (Collin 2000) to include other social categories such as migration status, sexual orientation, educational attainment, language, and many other categories that influence the individual's life situation. As Anthias (2013, p. 4) posits, intersectionality embraces a range of positions. Essentially, it is "a heuristic device for understanding boundaries and hierarchies of social life." Using an intersectionality lens, researchers have expanded to account for other social positions including the connection of gender, race, social class with age, religion, disability, nationality, sexuality, and domestic violence (Collin 2000; Nagel 2003; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005; Ludvig 2006; Yuval-Davis 2006; Ghafournia 2014). For trans women of color, other social realities also form a central part of their identities. Using the single axes of either gender or ethnicity will not present a complete picture of the individuals' lived experiences and cannot fully answer questions about their existence and experiences. Therefore, this research examined the intersection of gender, race, social class, age, religion with sexuality, migration, and sexual violence in the construction and lived experiences of sexual violence among trans women, who come from culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD) (trans women of color). This research offered a new perspective on intersectionality that can be valuable for health and social care in Australia and elsewhere.

3 The Research Design of the Study

This project used a sequential mixed methods design to address the study aims. This involved both qualitative and quantitative methods within a study sequence illustrated in Fig. 1.

3.1 Feminist Action Research: Methodological Framework

This study utilized feminist methodology to explore trans women of color's experiences of sexual violence. This methodological framework assists in engaging with

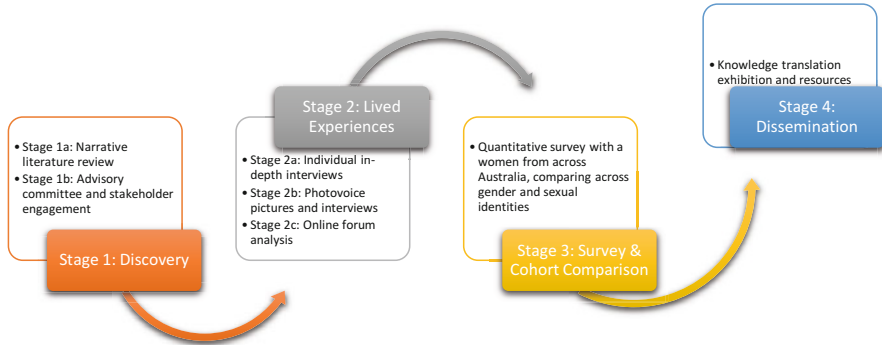


Fig. 1 Sequential mixed methods research design

women’s actual voices and lived experiences to develop greater understanding of sexual violence at the nexus of culture and sexuality (Liamputtong 2007, 2020; Hesse-Biber 2014, 2017). Within the umbrella of feminist methodology, this research best fits within feminist action research. This research achieved the aims of action research by engaging with and centering the perspectives of trans women as they chose to present them. Further, this methodology is highlighted in the fact that privileging trans women’s experiences and voice resulted in the dissemination of research findings in academic spaces, but also audiovisual exhibition pieces to ensure findings were shared with community in a meaningful and accessible way. Aspects of participatory research and feminist research cohere ontologically and epistemologically as both seek to shift the center from which knowledge is generated (Reid 2004). Further, they both work toward social justice and democratization. As noted by Reid (2004, p. 4) “by combining feminist research’s critique of androcentricism with participatory research’s emphasis on participation and social change, feminist action research provides a powerful approach to knowledge creation for social and personal transformation.”

Feminist action research as a conceptual and methodological framework enables a critical understanding of women’s multiple perspectives and works toward inclusion, participation, action, and social change while confronting the underlying assumptions the researcher brings into the research process (Reid 2004). Feminist action researchers facilitate building knowledge to change the conditions of women’s lives, both individually and collectively, while reconstructing conceptions of power so that power can be used in a responsible manner (Reid 2004).

Based on the participatory action research model, key stakeholders from policy, practice, research, and community collaborated in the development of the project around the key research questions, engagement with collecting and analyzing women’s experiences, and disseminating the project findings across a range of platforms (Higginbottom and Liamputtong 2015). This approach also ensured that stakeholder perspectives, voices, and experiences were understood and presented in meaningful and impactful ways that facilitated translational policy, research, and practice outcomes.

3.2 Research Designs

To effectively explore the multidimensionality of trans women of color's voices and lived experiences of sexual violence, the study was conducted in four stages. In line with the sequential mixed methods design, each of the stages are interconnected and support the development and execution of the following stage. The stages were:

Stage 1: Discovery

Stage 1a: Narrative literature review

Stage 1b: Advisory committee and stakeholder engagement

Stage 2: Lived experiences

Stage 2a: Individual in-depth interviews

Stage 2b: Photovoice pictures and interviews

Stage 2c: Online forum analysis

Stage 3: Survey and cohort comparison

Stage 4: Knowledge translation exhibition and resources

3.2.1 Stage 1: Discovery

Stage 1a: Literature Review

A literature review was conducted of peer-reviewed and grey literature in Australia and internationally on experiences of sexual violence of trans women of color, compared to other LGBTQI+ and cisgender heterosexual women. The findings helped to contextualize the experiences and perceptions of sexual violence among trans people globally. Notably, the literature review indicated that many of the poor health outcomes faced disproportionately by trans people are closely associated with their experiences of sexual victimization and these inequities are intensified for trans people of color. This review of the literature and emergent recommendations provided us with a better sense of the main gaps to address and explore with trans women of color in Australia.

Stage 1b: Advisory Committee and Stakeholder Engagement

Drawing on the feminist action research model, an advisory group consisting of policy experts, researchers, service providers, and other community group members with expertise in sexual violence and/or trans health and well-being was established at the start of the project. The engagement of national stakeholders is an essential component in research involving marginalized and vulnerable research participants (Liamputtong 2007, 2010). This approach also ensures that stakeholder perspectives, voices, and experiences are understood and engaged with in meaningful and impactful ways that allow for translation to policy, research, and practice outcomes that address the specific needs of the community of focus (Higginbottom and Liamputtong 2015). The advisory group was engaged, via email and videoconference every 4–6 months across the project timeline, to assist and provide feedback at each stage of the project.

3.2.2 Stage 2: Lived Experiences

In this stage, a qualitative approach was adopted. Qualitative inquiry refers to “a broad approach” that qualitative researchers adopt as a means to examine social circumstances (Creswell and Poth 2018; Liamputtong 2020). Qualitative inquiry is based on an assumption that people utilize “what they see, hear, and feel” to make sense of social experiences (Rossman and Rallis 2017, p. 5). Qualitative inquiry permits researchers to ask questions, and to find answers, that can be difficult or impossible using quantitative approaches (Hesse-Biber 2017). Qualitative research is essential in research involving marginalized, vulnerable, or hard-to-reach individuals and communities (Liamputtong 2007, 2010, 2020; Taylor et al. 2016; Flick 2018). This is particularly so when they are “too small to become visible” in quantitative research (Flick 2018, p. 452). More importantly, due to their marginalized, vulnerable status and distrust in research, most of these individuals tend to decline to participate in research. The nature of qualitative inquiry will permit qualitative researchers to be able to engage with these individuals.

The following strategies were used to tap into the lived experiences and phenomenological perspectives of trans women of color.

Stage 2a: Engagement with Trans Women

1. Individual In-Depth Interviews

Interviewing is the preferred method of research for investigating subjective experience within CALD communities, facilitating involvement of individuals who may not be comfortable with completing written surveys, or may not have high levels of literacy (Liamputtong 2007; Ussher et al. 2017). In-depth interviewing is a technique used to understand participants’ “perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words” (Taylor et al. 2016). This method is essential in learning about the life of the research participants in great depth (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015; Morris 2015; Serry and Liamputtong 2022). Through conversation, researchers will learn about the “hidden perceptions” of their research participants (Marvasti 2004).

In-depth interviews were undertaken by a researcher who is a trans woman of color, with trans women of color from a range of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds living in Melbourne, Brisbane, and Sydney. Interviews were done face-to-face at the location that suited the participants or via videoconferencing for those who were unable to meet face-to-face. There is some research literature that considers interactional differences between semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted by telephone or face-to-face (Irvine et al. 2013; Sturges and Hanrahan 2004). Similar to past research (Sturges and Hanrahan 2004), there was no discernible difference in the content of interviews undertaken either by videoconference or face-to-face. The interviews were conducted in English, digitally recorded, and most took between 60 and 120 min. But there were some interviews that lasted three to four hours as participants had a lot of things to discuss. Participants were provided with a participant information sheet and signed a consent form before the interview.

To help reduce the power dynamic between participants and the researcher, the interviewer asked participants to elect an appropriate venue to carry out the interview. Prior to the interviews, the interviewer would talk to participants on the phone, usually two or three times, to organize a time and date, check they were still available for the interview the day before it occurred, and reschedule if a participant could not make the original time or date. This gave the interviewer the opportunity to chat and get to know women prior to the interview and facilitated a greater level of comfort and trust leading into the actual interview. The interviewer disclosed that she was a trans woman of color, and was open when asked personal questions. Aligned with the research aims, the interview participants were asked about their life as a trans woman of color, with a focus on experiences of transitioning, their definition and experiences of sexual violence, strategies used to respond to sexual violence, experiences of support, and what health and social care providers and policymakers need to do to address sexual violence experienced by trans women. While we had a semi-structured interview schedule to guide the discussion, the interviews were conversational in nature, and often did not follow the set order of questions.

2. Photovoice

Participants were invited to chronicle important aspects of their lives that highlight their understanding, experiences, perspectives, and personal safety strategies used to try to minimize their risk of sexual violence. This was done using participants' own smartphones or other electronic gadgets such as an iPad. As part of the photovoice method, participants were asked to capture pictures to help stakeholders visualize elements of an individual's life that were pertinent to a particular phenomenon (Liamputtong 2010; Teti et al. 2019). Situated within the PAR feminist methodology, the method of photovoice has emerged as an innovative means of working with marginalized people and in cross-cultural research. The photovoice method rejects traditional paradigms of power and the production of knowledge within the research relationship (McIntyre 2008; Teti et al. 2019). The researchers were concerned about developing critical consciousness and empowerment among their research participants, allowing the participants to lead the direction of conversation depending on the images they had taken. The photovoice method, thus, tends to be used in collaborative and participatory research (see Wang 1999; Lopez et al. 2005a, b; McIntyre 2008; Wang and Pies 2008; Teti et al. 2019).

Methodologically, photovoice requires the participants to take photographs which represent their understanding and meanings of life. The photographs are then used as the basis for discussions in later interviews, which often occur in group settings or individual interviews. The discussion of the photographs permits the participants to articulate their understanding and interpretations of their images they have taken (Teti et al. 2019). In this study, interview participants from Stage 2a were invited to take at least two photos to chronicle important aspects of their lives that highlight their experience of being a trans woman of color, their experiences of sexual violence, and their strategies to stay safe with regards to sexual violence. They were then invited to a second follow-up interview to discuss their series of

photographs. Written and visual information was provided to aid in the photovoice process, assuring participants there was no “right” or “wrong” photo and that the focus was more on the meaning of the image, rather than photography skill. The discussion of the photographs permitted the participants to articulate the understanding and interpretations of their images they had taken (Teti et al. 2019).

To protect anonymity, participants were asked not to take pictures that would reveal their own and/or someone else’s identity. However, they were given the option of taking identifiable photographs if they wanted to do so, and the opportunity for photos to be pixellated to disguise their identity. All women provided permission for their photographs to be used in publications, being sent a copy of the images we chose and the accompanying text for approval. Additional permission was sought for the exhibition of the photographs. Trans women of color and trans community stakeholders were involved in the decision-making process for selection of exhibition images and accounts, and had control over way they appeared in the exhibition (see below).

3. Research Participants, Sample Size, and Recruitment of Stage 2a

Purposive sampling techniques were adopted to select participants for the interview and photovoice stages of the study. Purposive sampling refers to the deliberate selection of specific individuals, events, or settings because of crucial and specific information that they can provide relevant to a particular experience or phenomenon that cannot be obtained so well through other channels (Creswell and Poth 2018; Liamputtong 2020). Purposive sampling focused on trans women of color from a range of CALD backgrounds with the aim of seeking their perspectives on the lived experience of being a trans woman, their understanding of sexual violence, and for some their lived experience of sexual violence.

In research involving marginalized individuals, recruitment must be done sensitively (Liamputtong 2007; Manohar et al. 2019). In this research, participants were recruited from a range of contexts that were found to be successful in our previous research, including organizations focusing on LGBTQI+ communities such as Twenty10 and The Gender Centre; organizations focusing on CALD populations such as the Community Migrant Resource Centre (CMRC); and through social media. The social media advertisements asked for participation from those who were a “trans woman of color” or “trans woman from a non-English speaking background” to take part in interviews about sexual violence. Snowball sampling was also used to recruit participants. Snowball sampling involves asking study participants to pass on the study information to someone who they know who would fit the sampling criteria (Bryman 2016; Hesse-Biber 2017). This technique is employed extensively in research with groups whose members are difficult to locate or unlikely to be willing to take part without referral from others in their own network, such as trans women (Liamputtong 2007, 2010).

Using these techniques, 31 trans women of color completed the first interview, and 19 completed both the initial and photovoice interviews, between September 2018 and September 2019. The mean age of participants was 29 years old, with the

range of time since migration for migrant women being 4 months to 44 years. It was anticipated that data saturation would occur around 20 or 25 participants. With 31 participants, saturation was achieved in this part of the project (Morse 2015; Bryman 2016; Hennink et al. 2017; Liamputtong 2020). Women who took part in the photovoice contributed on average seven photographs each (range 1–15 photographs) (see Hawkey et al. 2020; Ussher et al. 2020b, 2021).

To recognize the participants' time, they were provided with a gift voucher of AUD\$50 for each interview. Such compensation is essential when working with marginalized groups to acknowledge their effort and contribution to social knowledge (Liamputtong 2007, 2010).

Thus far, we have written three papers from the in-depth interviewing and photovoice methods, and all three papers have been published (see Ussher et al. 2020b, 2021).

Stage 2b: Online Forum Discourse Analysis: Australia Wide

To contextualize how gender identity and sexual violence is understood, experienced, and managed by transgender people in the broader sphere, we collected qualitative data from preexisting and publically accessible Internet forums where transgender and nonbinary people discuss gender transitioning and sexual violence. Online forums have been described as an “unobtrusive method” (Lee 2019) which produces more “naturalistic” data, as the researcher does not affect the outcome in the same way they might in interviews or participant observation. Due to anonymity, participants are likely to be less restrained in discussing sensitive or taboo topics.

Equally, as the division between the virtual, or online, and face-to-face communication breaks down, identity formation and negotiation of sexual violence is influenced by and takes place online in addition to offline spaces. This can be particularly the case for marginalized groups who may not be able to express and develop their identities in public or at home. Cavalcante (2016) argues that recent media and technology developments have facilitated movements toward more mediated gender transition. He characterizes online forums as “care structures” or “architectures of organised care and concern” (Cavalcante 2016) where connections are formed and a sense of belonging is created.

Potential forums were searched in Google in 2018 using the terms “transgender forums,” “trans forums,” and “transsexual forums,” to identify active, public, up-to-date online transgender forums. To respect trans communities who were uncomfortable with their forums being researched, all forums which explicitly stated “no researchers allowed” were excluded. In the remaining eligible forums, we only viewed publicly available posts and did not subscribe as forum members. All relevant forums were screened for their relevance to the study's research questions and inclusion of trans women of color. Four forums were selected for analysis: three forums (“subreddits”) from Reddit: r/asktransgender, r/transsupport, and r/transgenderau and one forum from TransPulse. Only discussions which were relevant to the study's research questions were selected for analysis. Since the people who posted their stories to such forums may not have intended for them to be read by an

outsider to the forum, de-identifying procedures (e.g., use of numbers rather than tag names; presenting aggregate data in themes rather than cases) were used to ensure anonymity and respect the privacy of contributors (Liamputtong 2007, 2020). Two papers have been published from this phase of the project (see Liamputtong et al. 2020; Noack-Lundberg et al. 2020).

3.2.3 Stage 3: Survey and Cohort Comparison

To understand the experiences of trans women of color in relation to other women's experiences of sexual violence in Australia, an online survey was developed to be administered nationwide. Within the survey, the project set out to compare the experiences of trans women from CALD backgrounds (target number 100) with (a) non-CALD transgender women (target 100); (b) cisgender heterosexual women (target 500); and (c) cisgender lesbian, bisexual, and queer women (LBQ) (target 500).

The survey, which focused on women's experiences of sexual harassment and assault, was developed by the research team, informed by the findings from Stages 1 and 2. The survey was reviewed by the advisory committee and staff at ANROWS (the funder of this research project) who made suggestions for changes to ensure relevance, accessibility, and readability across diverse cohorts of women in Australia. Prior to its launch, the revised survey was uploaded to Qualtrics and piloted with 20 women, purposively sampled across the above comparison groups. After piloting and revision, the survey was launched digitally across all major social media platforms as well as through LGBTQI+ organizations and groups across Australia from August–October 2019. The final survey of 26 questions used a combination of closed and open items. There were no forced completion or compulsory items, and respondents could exit the survey at any time by closing the survey window.

To ensure that diverse women were directly targeted in recruitment, the survey was launched with three different versions of the introductory text and images specific to: 1) trans women (CALD and non-CALD); 2) lesbian, bisexual, and queer women; and 3) cisgender heterosexual women. As with the interviews, survey respondents were recruited from a range of contexts, including organizations associated with the investigators and advisory group; LGBTQI+ communities, Twenty10 and The Gender Centre; organizations focusing on CALD populations such as the Community Migrant Resource Centre (CMRC); and through social media and snowball sampling (respondents passing details of the study on to others). No incentives were offered for participation.

3.2.4 Stage 4: Knowledge Translation Exhibition and Resources

To support LGBTQI+ networks, health workers, tertiary health and social science professionals and researchers, and the wider Australian community, the data from this study was disseminated across three formats.

First, the project findings were developed into resources for policy and practice. These resources include a summary powerpoint presentation of the findings, practice guidelines, and policy recommendations that can also be used to inform the delivery of workshops and training on trans women's safety, and practice to policy

recommendations (see <https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/crossing-the-line-lived-experience-of-sexual-violence-among-trans-women-of-colour-from-culturally-and-linguistically-diverse-cald-backgrounds-in-australia/>).

Second, an exhibition of trans women of color's lived experiences from the findings of the study was created, in collaboration with trans women on the stakeholder group, a curator, an illustrator, and a web designer (see <https://www.crossingtheline.online/>). This was a crucial component of the photovoice method. The exhibition showcased the voices and experiences of the CALD trans women who chose to participate in the photovoice portion of the project. It also summarized the quantitative comparative findings to highlight the need for acknowledgment of and engagement with trans women's perspectives on sexual violence. The exhibition was therefore an innovative and intersectional means to share the knowledge collected through the project with a range of LGBTQI+, mainstream, practice, policy, and government stakeholders. This sharing activity also helped to enhance the profile of sexual violence as experienced by trans women of color and those from CALD backgrounds, as well as empower and recognize the importance of the information and lives shared by the participants. The exhibition findings were translated into a printed book as a gift for participants, and for distribution to stakeholders.

Post-exhibition stakeholder workshops had been planned to present the findings of the research and engage in experiential and developmental training on how to support CALD trans women who are at risk or may experience sexual violence. However, due to the 2020 crisis of COVID-19, this happened as a webinar (see <https://kapara.rdbk.com.au/landers/6c6217.html>).

3.3 Ethical Issues

In research concerning vulnerable people, such as trans women, the safety of the research participants must be considered seriously. Ethical conduct is therefore an essential part of research (Creswell and Poth 2018; Hesse-Biber 2017; Israel 2015) and ethical guidelines were strictly observed prior to, during, and after the project completion.

This project was approved by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee (H12530) and the Twenty10 ethics committee. The participants were provided with information that clearly explained involvement, their rights in the research, and the project funding. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the project at any time if they decided to do so and that their withdrawal would not have any repercussions on their current and/or future relationships with the researchers and supporting organizations. Participants were invited to provide consent before taking part in the project, which could be rescinded at anytime during the project. Participants who were interested in taking part in the photovoice aspect of the study and having their photograph presented at the exhibition were informed that they could withdraw their photograph at any time without prejudice. Those who decided to have their photograph exhibited were informed of

the potential risks of doing so and were given ample time to decide whether they wanted to provide a photo and/or have it displayed.

The participants were also briefed about how to protect themselves during the research process, particularly when taking photographs for the photovoice project. All participants were ensured that their identity would be protected in all research reports and publications, unless they explicitly gave permission for an identifiable image to be used. Only their signed consent form contained their real name, and these forms were kept securely during the research process, separate from the data, and will be disposed of 7 years after the completion of the project.

Where participants became distressed during the research process, the interviews were paused and the participant given the option to discontinue or resume at a later time, if they felt ready to do so. All participants completed the interviews with no such incident. All participants were provided with information for mental health services in the participant information sheet and in the interviews. However, most of the women already had links to mental health providers as part of their regular modes of self-care. Support was also provided for the interviewer, who engaged with the interviewees over a number of occasions, and listened to many accounts of sexual violence that were emotional and potentially distressing to hear. This included regular debriefs with the chief investigator on the project who is a trained psychologist, and funding to access external psychological support if needed.

4 Conclusion and Future Directions

To the knowledge of the authors, this research was the first project that examined the lived experience of being a trans person and sexual violence among trans women of color in Australia. This project contributed in-depth knowledge about the discourses and lived experience of sexual violence among trans people, which had not been examined previously. It also adopted inclusive research approaches that other researchers can adopt in their future research. The knowledge gained from this project can be used to develop resources to prevent sexual violence among these individuals and for health and social care providers to implement sensitive and culturally appropriate health and society for trans women from CALD backgrounds.

The authors argue that the research will benefit several groups. Transgender people, particularly trans women, are likely to experience stigmatization, marginalization, and social isolation which can have a considerable impact on their quality of life and well-being. By participating in this proposed research, their voices and needs could be heard within the health and social care system and in the wider society. The findings of this study can lead to the prevention of sexual violence among these individuals and in communities. The project has established a cluster of researchers in the area of transgender which will support early career researchers (ECRs) and research students at Western Sydney University and within Australia.

This project will benefit trans women of color, trans communities, and health/social service providers in Australia as it has addressed underresearched aspects of transgender lives and their experiences of sexual violence. It will benefit Australian

society as it promotes the development of knowledge as well as inclusive research strategies that can help to reduce sexual violence among vulnerable groups of Australian people. This research will help to address specific conceptual, policy, and programming challenges that result in very high social, cultural, and economic costs. The project has offered valuable insight into the lived experiences and needs of trans women of color within an international context where migration patterns are rapidly changing the interdisciplinary scope and importance of sexual health and rights. Findings from this study are important for the development of culturally and sensitively sexual violence prevention policy and programs that can cater for the needs of trans women. Individuals will only seek care if the care provided meets their needs. The findings of this study can be used to promote a better understanding of the public about the lives of these individuals, which may lead to the eradication of stigma and discrimination toward them in Australian society.

The project has led to several collaborative arrangements. Through dissemination and training processes, the project will establish a close collaboration between research institutes and stakeholders (health and social care organizations and policymakers) which ultimately would lead to the establishment of health and social care services. These findings can be used to create culturally and sensitive health and social care for a vulnerable group of individuals in Australia. An important part of the research was to establish an advisory committee to oversee the project. The authors made strong links with members of not only the transgender communities, but also other LGBTQ groups. This has created further collaborations between research institutes and LGBTQ communities. Through this project, the authors have created connections with transgender communities residing in other parts of Australia and overseas and this will lead to further research grant applications at the national and international levels.

The authors hope that this chapter will generate great interest from health and social care researchers who aim to embark on research concerning sensitive issues and vulnerable and marginalized individuals in the future. The authors have discussed an innovative means that can promote social inclusion in research among trans women of color. This project provides a valuable example of inclusive research with a group of marginalized individuals. The authors also hope that our project and its findings will lead to better health and well-being of trans women of color living in Australia and elsewhere.

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