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Beyond Insider vs. Outsider: Occupying a Shared Space in Nursing Research

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Individuals who identify as transgender are often discriminated against and marginalised by society, based upon the perceived challenges to heteronormativity and/or an assumed psychiatric condition known as gender dysphoria. Traditionally, research about transgender people was conducted within a biomedical discourse; where the “subjects” were dissected and pathologised from surgical and psychological perspectives. This objective, scientific approach to a marginalised group of people, while embedding psychiatric and medical knowledges as all powerful, demeaned transgender people as something outside of what is accepted as normal, essentially creating the “other”.

This objectivity also removes the notion of what it is like to be a nursing researcher who also happens to be transgender and views the world from multiple realities using qualitative approaches to research. This paper evolved from a PhD project undertaken from 2012 – 2016 on the psychosocial experiences of transgender people who underwent sex reassignment surgery. That study explored the everyday life experiences of transgender people undergoing surgery and concluded that transition, like life, is messy. My relationship with the participants was equally as messy as an insider or was I an outsider and how do you navigate that phenomenon? This presentation will show that the dichotomies known as insider and outsider cannot neatly be compartmentalized and that the nature of this type of research goes beyond sameness and difference through a dynamic relationship with the participants.

Biography:

Belinda is a lecturer in nursing, with 8 years experience teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels including research and evidence based practice and cultural safety. Her research interests are concerned with the health and wellbeing of transgender people and as such her professional activities are closely linked to this with her association with two world leading organisations in transgender health, WPATH and ANZPATH (where she is secretary). Belinda is also a board member of NTAHC, the premier HIV/AIDS body in the Northern Territory and a recipient of an Australia Day Award for her community service.