

CPATH Ethical Guidelines for Research Involving Transgender People and Communities

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Summary With increasing visibility of transsexual, transgender, non-binary, two-spirit, and other gender-diverse (trans) people, the number of research projects involving trans-identified people is also increasing. Through the development of a series of trans-specific guidelines for research, we provide guidance for student, academic, community, and clinical researchers who are working with, or considering working with, trans communities.

1. Relevance

Interest in researching trans experiences has increased dramatically with greater public awareness of trans existence. This enhanced attention to communities that experience marginalization also highlights a number of ethical tensions. In Canada, all research involving trans people and communities is governed by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. However, research projects may obtain formal Research Ethics Board approval but still be experienced as stigmatizing, oppressive, and/or unethical by trans individuals and communities, particularly in a context of prior pathologizing research.

2. Aims & Objectives

The Canadian Professional Association for Transgender Health (CPATH) recognized the need to create an ethical framework for research that addressed concerns not necessarily included in the Tri-Council policy. The goal of this project was to promote greater research integrity through the development of ethical guidelines for research involving trans people.

3. Methods

Draft ethical guidelines were developed over a two-year period through a series of consultations at national and international conferences, targeted in-person consultations with individual community and research experts, and an online feedback form distributed broadly to CPATH membership, trans community members, and researchers in Canada.

4. Results

The consultation process has resulted in the identification of six overarching principles for trans research, and a series of seventeen guiding questions. The overarching principles underline the importance of: 1) Attentiveness to Issues of Legitimacy and Community Impact, 2) Community Engagement, 3) Consent and Confidentiality, 4) Consideration of Diversity, Power, Marginalization and Representation, 5) Accountability to Participants and Trans Communities, and 6) Reflexivity on the Part of Researchers and Research Teams.

5. Conclusions

The development of these guidelines highlighted specific ethical concerns in the arena of research with trans individuals and communities. For student, academic, community, and clinical researchers who focus on gender diversity in their research, increased attention to research integrity in relation to trans individuals and communities is warranted.

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