

*Research Summary*

## Experiences of cisgendered women partnered with transmasculine persons during their transition: An Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Australian study (short form summary)

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**Keywords:** Interpersonal relationships; transgender; gender transition; cisgender partner experiences; transmasculine

Understanding the experiences of cisgender women during the transition of their transmasculine partner is an under-researched area. Literature on this subject has begun to emerge since 2006, albeit minimal. These studies generally use samples that are white, middle-class people, based predominantly in the USA (eg, Alegria, 2010; Bishop, 2016; Brown, 2009; Platt & Bolland, 2017). There have been two previous studies conducted Aotearoa, New Zealand (NZ) studies (Chester et al., 2017; Jennens, 2018). Both stated a need for more research to understand the complexities, experiences and needs of being a partner of a trans\*<sup>1</sup> person and called for an Aotearoa, NZ-based research on this subject.

The limited research in this area has largely focused on struggles for the cisgender partner around identity (sexual identity) and relationship satisfaction. These are areas that require more research to develop the evidence base. Previous research has identified cisgender partner's mental health during the transition, religious beliefs, and fertility as being of importance, however, this has not yet been studied, leaving critical gaps in the literature. This study will help to address those critical research gaps. Consequently, the study seeks to explore the question: What are the experiences of cisgender women during the transition of their transmasculine partner in the context of Aotearoa, NZ, and Australia?

The current study uses a mixed-methods, two-phase concurrent research design and it is philosophically underpinned by critical realism. The two phases employed are a survey (which includes quantitative and qualitative data collection) and semi-structured interviews. Critical realism encourages the use of mixed methods for gaining a robust understanding of the questions explored. The online survey incorporates both Likert scale questions and open-ended questions. Survey responses will be utilised to explore the breadth of the experiences across a wider range of participants and include questions across a range of areas that have been informed by the literature and the author's previous research on the topic. The data obtained from the survey will be analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The data gathered in the semi-structured interviews phase will be analysed using thematic analysis. Such interviews capture the depth of experience, nuances and complexities within human experiences, and will offer rich thick data. A mixed methods design offers both in-depth understanding and quantifiable findings relating to the experiences of the participants. The implications of this research are likely to include the provision of new knowledge within this under-researched area. Which may be of relevance for medical and mental health care professionals, for service delivery and design in responding to the needs of partners of transitioning people. Additionally, it may provide a valuable resource for those who are in a

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<sup>1</sup> Trans\* is used by the author to encompass all variants under the transgender umbrella and is not limited to those that begin with "trans", for example, genderfluid and non-binary.

relationship with a transitioning person to assist in making sense of their experiences and needs.

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the support from my thesis supervisors, Dr Paula Collens and Dr Elizabeth du Preez.

## Biography

Elizabeth holds a Master of Arts degree in Psychology (with distinction) and her PhD is due for submission in March 2024. Her research is primarily concerned with the experiences of cisgendered women partnered with transmasculine persons. She also assists in research in other areas, such as family harm. She currently is a teacher's assistant for psychology and is a guest lecturer to postgraduate psychology and psychotherapy students on the topics of gender and sexual diversity.