SUPERVISOR/S: Jaimie Veale

PROJECT TITLE: Counting Ourselves 2022: Develop survey questions and support with the ethics process

FIELD: Multidisciplinary

DIVISION/SCHOOL: ALPSS - School of Psychology

PROJECT LOCATION: Hamilton

PROJECT ABSTRACT:
Counting Ourselves: The Aotearoa New Zealand Trans and Non-binary Health Survey was the first comprehensive national survey of the health and wellbeing of trans and non-binary people living in Aotearoa New Zealand. The first wave of Counting Ourselves took place in 2018, and we worked with a diverse community advisory group, as well as a team of health professionals, policymakers, and collaborating academics to design the questions that would have the most impact for trans and non-binary people. The survey had 1,178 survey participants. The Counting Ourselves project uncovered stark health inequities, particularly in the area of mental health; we also found high levels of unmet need for gender-affirming healthcare. The 2018 wave of Counting Ourselves also produced data showing widespread discrimination, harassment, and violence that trans and non-binary people face, but we also found that participants who reported more protective factors ‘such as social support and cultural connectedness’ were less likely to report mental health problems.

From the outset, Counting Ourselves was designed as collaborative, kaupapa Māori-informed research focused on informing changes to laws, regulations, policies and practice that would improve the health and wellbeing of trans and non-binary people. The first wave of the survey has been cited by the Prime Minister and other Cabinet Ministers and in multiple government reports, including as evidence for Budget allocations to Rainbow mental health and proposed changes to the law enabling trans and non-binary people to amend the sex details on their birth certificate.

Counting Ourselves will become a longitudinal project, with the second wave of data collection in 2022. The Transgender Health Research Lab is seeking a student to help us with a range of tasks this summer to finalise the questionnaire for the second wave of the survey. These tasks include identifying additional questions in other surveys that we can consider adding to the existing Counting Ourselves survey, obtaining feedback from collaborators and community advisory group members, and supporting the research team through the ethics approval process. The successful student will gain experience working on key parts of the formation of a survey research project, working with a community advisory group, designing a questionnaire, and going through a research ethics approval process. This is an opportunity to work with a supportive team that includes academic staff, postgraduate students, and external collaborators from multiple academic disciplines. The recipient of this scholarship will also be able to see how robust academic research can inform legal and policy development and clinical training and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand in this vital area.

This summer research scholarship is an opportunity for someone to join the Transgender Health Research Lab team, including students considering possible postgraduate study using Counting Ourselves data.

STUDENT SKILLS:
- Knowledge of survey questionnaires
- Experience with survey software, word processing, and spreadsheets
- Strong writing skills
- Competence working with rainbow, takatāpui, transgender, and/or non-binary people

PROJECT TASKS:
- Supporting the team to bring together a diverse trans and non-binary community advisory group for the Counting Ourselves project.
- Reviewing relevant national and international projects for comparable survey questions and identifying a small number of additional survey questions for the Counting Ourselves project to include in the second wave questionnaire.
- Obtaining feedback from the community advisory group and project collaborators regarding survey questions and working with the project team to make changes based on the feedback received.
Helping the research team finalise the survey questionnaire and skip logic
Programming the survey questionnaire into our survey software, Qualtrics
Assisting the project team with drafting the ethics application and administrative tasks related to going through the ethics approval process
Working with the project team on drafting a report of the survey’s methods which is the basis for the student’s final research poster

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:
- Student’s Research Poster (as per clause 6 of the Scholarship regulations)
- Helping to create a diverse community advisory group for the project
- Assisting the project team with creating a survey questionnaire that asks about a range of health and social determinants of health relevant to trans and non-binary people
- Supporting the creation of an ethics application
- Co-authoring a report outlining the methods used in the project