

Exploring the Effectiveness and Impact of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*:

Learning from the Experiences of Trans- Youth in Manitoba High Schools

by

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Abstract:

Scholars have started to explore the experiences of trans- athletes and sport including the intense surveillance and exclusion of these identities. However, there is a general lack of focus on trans- youth in sport, an even less focus on trans- youth in high school sport, and an absence of trans- voices within this research. Through the use of five semi-structured interviews with policy stakeholders and four interactive semi-structured interviews with trans- high school students aged 16-18, this thesis analyzes the creation, implementation, and impacts of the Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association's 2015 policy, the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*. The daily experiences of a sample of trans- youth in sport settings in Manitoba high schools are analyzed by listening to and learning from trans- youth directly. From the interviews with stakeholders, much feedback was sought from various stakeholder organizations throughout the processes of creating the policy. However, an absence of the voices of trans- youth within these conversations is present. From the students participating in this study, it was found that none of the four participants knew of the policy prior to engaging in this research. It became clear that the policy is not entirely effective in creating safer, inclusive high school sports and the spaces sport is taken up in. Trans- youth call for social changes to take place within schools in order for a policy such as the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* to be effective.

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Chapter I: Introduction

“The way I often sum it up in my head is:
I love my school, my school does not love me.”

Jane¹

Throughout my youth, I experienced similar emotions every time I participated in sport and for days before the sporting event—worry, anxiety, nervousness, frustration, fear. The same questions surfaced: how will my outward appearance be questioned? Will I be called names and targeted aggressively? How will opposing teams challenge my presence on a women’s high school team? During this time, I was completely aware that my non-conforming masculine gender presentation was the crux and foundation of discrimination I experienced, an intolerance that has been recognized generally by Krane, Barak, and Mann (2012), and I was also aware (and terrified) this discrimination was not going away. These concerns were present from the earliest point in which I began engaging in sport at the age of nine; it was these same concerns that held me back from participating sooner. It is a combination of such memories, the present-day flood of similar fears and caution that resurface when I participate in sports, and the opportunity to attain a more in-depth understanding of social injustice that has inspired this thesis. My interest in gender and sport, in particular trans-² youths’ participation in sport, stems from reflection of my personal experience as a trans- person actively involved in sport throughout my life. My experiences form the foundation of my research interests and give space to critically question the limitative institution of sport that have always been present for me, and potentially for many

¹ Jane is one of four students who participated in this research.

² See section 1.3 for explanation of the use of this term.

other young trans- individuals.

Feminist sport scholars have shown the exclusion apparent within mainstream western sport for decades, largely remaining a male domain (e.g. Downing, 2001; Hall, 2002; Hall, 2013; Harrigan, 2003; Hoerber, 2007; Hughes, 2013; Kidd, 2002; Robertson, 2013; Symons, Sbaraglia, Hillier, & Mitchell, 2010). Contributing to this exclusion is an organization of sport that is rooted in a “deep and long standing reliance on sex and gender as a central organizing principle” (Buzuvis, 2011, p. 3). Many scholars have started to explore trans- athletes and sport, including the intense surveillance and exclusion of these identities and a general questioning of the intent of sport policy. However, there is a general lack of focus on trans- youth in sport, and even less focus on trans- youth in high school sport.

1.1 Objectives and Rationale

The Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association (MHSAA) enacted the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* in February 2015. However, the policy’s effectiveness in providing athletic spaces that are safe and accepting for trans- youth has not been established. For example, research shows that spaces associated with physical activity and sport, such as change rooms, washrooms, and gymnasiums, are perceived as unsafe by many trans- youth (Caudwell, 2014; Sykes, 2011; Taylor et al., 2011), suggesting a “correlation between the policing of gender and youth not feeling safe” (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 18). The deep and profound violence experienced by trans- people in sport draws attention to the overall lack of research focused on trans- experiences, from the voices of trans- people themselves, that are endured, daily, when attempting to engage in sport³. This Master’s thesis is necessary in order to begin understanding trans- experiences at the high school sport level, from trans- youth directly, and to challenge an

³ These topics will be presented and addressed in detail in Chapter II.

“unthinkable” (Lemert, 2007, as cited in Travers, 2013a) gender binary in which sport, high school sport in Manitoba included, has long been organized; radical transformations of entire (sport) cultures within Manitoba high schools, and what the “cultural experience of ‘going to school’” means (Short, 2013, p. 14) in Manitoba, will be discussed.

Policy changes address some but not all of the problems of discrimination (Lenskyj, 2003) that minority groups experience. Policies, such as the MHSAA policy, have been created in the interest of positively impacting sport for people who have largely been excluded. However, it is unclear whether or not the MHSAA policy addresses other factors that are directly related to minority groups’ experiences of discrimination when participating in sport. In order for policies to be successful, they need to be accompanied by the experiences of those directly impacted by the intended policy in order to fully ensure that these experiences are recognized.

In the United States context, Lucas (2009) claims that the “current structures of physical education classes and youth sport do not meet the needs of or protect transgender youth from homophobic and transphobic bullying” (p. 10); the knowledge of whether or not the MHSAA’s intended trans- inclusive policy is making an impact for trans- youth is unknown. Therefore, with this policy in mind, this thesis listens to and learns from the voices of trans- high school students and their experiences in physical education and sport⁴ in order to begin understanding the effectiveness and impact of the MHSAA policy in the lives of trans- youth in Manitoba.

1.2 Research Questions

The goal of this thesis is to better understand the daily experiences of trans- youth in sport settings in Manitoba high schools by, first, listening to and learning from trans- youth

⁴ My usage of ‘sport’ throughout this thesis includes organized sport teams, such as high school sport teams, and organized Phys Ed/gym class. This usage excludes unorganized sport activities that take place, such as recreational skateboarding or biking.

directly and, second, analyzing the impact of the Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association's newly enacted one-sentence *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* that states "any transgender student athlete may participate fully and safely in sex-separated sports activities in accordance with his or her gender identity" (MHSAA, 2015a). Yet, the existence of a policy does not necessarily make it easier, more encouraging, or accepting for trans- high school students to participate in sport and sport culture. For example, the MHSAA policy does not identify protections for trans- athletes in change rooms and overnight travel for sport, or the role of coaches and administrators in upholding this policy, allowing one to question the aim of the policy and its success for individuals most affected. As Travers (2006) argues, "transgender inclusive policies tell us little about the inclusiveness of the environment for transgender participants. Still policy changes pave the way for greater inclusion and challenges to the gender binary-based sex segregation of sport" (p. 443).

It is crucial to provide space for trans- youth to have a voice in "making changes in the environments they navigate, to support their being and their becoming, their growth and their transition to adulthood" (Veale, Saewyc, Frohard-Dourlent, Dobson, Clark, & the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey Research Group, 2015, p. 71) rather than continuing to speak on behalf of, and ultimately exclude, trans- youth. Valuing the lived experiences of trans- youth is important because it can directly inform how schools in Manitoba can better support and encourage the participation of all athletes. Due to the recent enactment of the MHSAA's intended trans- inclusive policy, it is necessary to begin understanding the inclusiveness of this environment for trans- youth. Thus, the research questions driving this thesis are: 1) how do trans- youth in Manitoba navigate and experience high school sports, and 2) what, if any, are the impacts of the new policy for trans- youth? This thesis is grounded in the understanding that

trans- youth are “the best experts on their own experiences and lives” (Short, 2013, p. 5) and that the knowledges they articulate are worthy, imperative, and fundamental to this research.

1.3 Terminology

First, it is important to provide a brief overview of terminology that is used throughout this thesis as “language is a central site—theoretically, practically, politically, and ethically—for the negotiation of meanings in any field” (Valentine, 2007, p. 25). Significant to the consideration of language used throughout this thesis is that, as Sykes (2011) explains, “the implications of intersex, transgender and transsexual subjectivities have not been seriously considered within physical education” (p. 35). This omission includes a lack of consideration of their experiences, but also a lack of exploration offered to these identity labels and language itself. Language is not static but constantly changing over time and across cultures.

There has been a plethora of terms constructed by theorists within trans- and queer scholarship to address individuals who do not, or choose not to, identify with or conform to either category within the western binary gender system. Within scholarship, the term ‘transgender’ is widely used as an “umbrella term” in an attempt to broadly include multiple gender identity categories of those who “exhibit gender-nonconforming identities and behaviors, or in other words, those who transcend typical gender paradigms” (Grossman & D’Augelli, 2006, p. 112). The term ‘transgender,’ however, has been met with contention. While many scholars view the term as representative of a disruption and denaturalization of gender-normative and heteronormative constructions, other theorists view this “all-inclusive impetus” as countering the urgency to resist this interpretation in favour of an ongoing revolt toward binary based boundaries (Travers & Deri, 2010, p. 490) and conflation of identity.

Within sport scholarship specifically, this controversy is less apparent in favour of a

generalized usage of ‘transgender,’ or ‘trans,’ to describe “*the movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place*—rather than any particular destination or mode of transit” (Stryker, 2008, p. 1 emphasis in original). Scholars such as Lucas (2009) choose this usage specifically in favour of centering the “movement” away from rigid sex-gender binaries associated with the term (p. 5).

The importance of critically considering the language used throughout this thesis is based on awareness that “knowledge is embedded in language, which does not always reflect ‘reality’ [. . .] Language is not an expression of unique individuality. Rather, there is an enormous social influence in the construction of an individual’s identity” (Peter & Taylor, 2012, p. 79). Labels such as ‘transgender’ and ‘trans,’ then, are culturally constructed and used to signify specific experiences according to those cultural ascriptions. This thesis is informed by the understanding that multiple realities exist; an important consideration in relation to language and terminology.

Working within a queer-feminist perspective recognizes that language is “critical to the process of de/re/constructing knowledge and reality. An individual’s ability to define and understand her/his/self is dependent upon language” (Lucas, 2009, p. 17). Working from a position that attempts to avoid identity constructions only further reproduces the exclusions that will be discussed throughout this thesis. In the review of literature presented in Chapter II, I have chosen to represent the language used within each source as it is important to acknowledge and respect the social decisions of language that have arisen from varying cultural and time periods that may differ from my cultural decisions in the present context. Aside from the use of authors’ chosen terms in the literature reviewed, such as ‘transgender,’ ‘transgendered,’ ‘transsexual,’ ‘Two-Spirit,’ and ‘trans’ when speaking of people and identities that do not conform to and/or resist western constructions of gender normativity in a multitude of ways, I use the term ‘trans-’.

The dominant discourse of trans- narratives is to understand these as linear, a journey from one point or location in life to another, where the transgressive space that is at one point in time embodied is forgotten in order to fully embody a new location (Bhanji, 2013, p. 515). Bhanji (2013) argues that the transition journey becomes merely a “link between locations—a sort of gendered non-zone between origin and destination” (p. 515), where the prefix ‘trans’ within this discourse has the potential to signify some type of crossing but it remains within a “very confined nexus of homecoming and belonging, of borders and centers” (p. 515). In order to move beyond this limited discourse, Bhanji (2013) suggests:

As a spatial marker of possibility, the prefix, *trans-* does not just signify movement across or beyond a schism. Instead, it is also evocative of the *transgressions*, *transmogrifications*, and *transmutations* of established norms. Indeed, one of the functions of *trans-*, [. . .] is to destabilize the notion of space as a controlled location. (p. 521 emphasis in original)

Due to the possibilities inherent to move across or beyond a schism, the term *trans-* destabilizes the control of language and space. Therefore, apart from the terms directly used by theorists in Chapter II and the identity labels chosen by trans- youth in Chapter V, I use the term *trans-* throughout this thesis as I investigate the effectiveness and impact of the MHSAA policy in the lives of trans- youth in Manitoba high schools, while attempting to destabilize the control of language, identity, and space within physical education and sport contexts.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of literature discussing queer-feminist and trans- scholars' perspectives of gender theory and research needed to inform an investigation of trans- youths' experiences in sport and physical education. Specifically, this review provides a summary of literature on: (1) gender theory and the overarching reliance on binary understandings of gender in western contexts such as Canada, (2) the ongoing reliance of this binary throughout the history of western sport, (3) exclusionary aspects apparent in sport due to a limited understanding of a multiplicity of gender identities, in particular the exclusion of trans- people from sport, (4) trans- youths' perceptions of school climate in Canadian high schools, (5) dominant discourse of sport and physical activity in western contexts, (6) unsafe physical activity and sport spaces identified by trans- youth, and (7) trans- youths' experiences in school-based extra-curricular activities and high school sport. Gaps in literature will be identified through this review, which this thesis will attempt to address.

The review of literature that follows includes peer-reviewed scholarly articles, book chapters, books, and reports identified using databases such as SPORTDiscus, Scopus, Academic Search Complete, Taylor and Francis online journals, and Women's Studies International. Keywords used to find these sources include: Canada, transgender, gender, youth, high school, education, sport, and policy. The literature reviewed here dates between 1990-2017.

2.1 Gender Theory

Feminist scholars have theorized gender as a socio-cultural construction separate and distinct from understandings of sex, although these terms are often used interchangeably in mainstream contexts. During the 'second wave' of feminism in western contexts, many feminists in the 1970s began to argue "gender" as distinct from "sex." In gender theory, the current

understanding of gender as a socio-cultural construct and sex as biological is dominant in literature and discussion. This theorization implies gender, as socially constructed, categorizes people as feminine/woman or masculine/man while sex, as biological, denotes anatomical, physiological, genetic, and hormonal components of dichotomous female and male bodies (Krane, Barak, & Mann, 2012; Lucas, 2009; Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2011). Comprehending the two terms as distinct arose from an awareness of gender as a learned, cultural performance which people enact daily to meet social expectations. As a culturally constructed term, Judith Butler (1990) has shown gender has a “specific definition created in and reinforced by sociocultural forces in a specific historical moment” (Lucas, 2009, p. 3). Therefore, gendered terms such as masculine, feminine, woman, and man, are not static but constantly shifting categories that are transformed and negotiated over time and across cultures. However, the medicalization of various socio-cultural constructs remains prevalent in Canadian and westernized contexts, such as the wide-held assumption that gender is determined by biological sex.

The conflation of the medicalized term ‘sex’ and the cultural construction of ‘gender’ has been argued by humanities scholars, activists, and medical practitioners for decades. However, feminist-biologist-scientist Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) presents a compelling argument that challenges the ongoing sex/gender debate by questioning the simplicity of dichotomous systems that attempt to represent bodies. Specifically, Fausto-Sterling (2000) insists that “a body’s sex is simply too complex. There is no either/or. Rather, there are shades of difference” (p. 3), where both gender and sex, and the perceived naturalness of a gender/sex binary, are products of cultural understandings and social decisions. To identify and label someone as a “woman” or a “man” is a social decision: scientific knowledge may be drawn on to help make this decision, however Fausto-Sterling (2000) defends that “only our beliefs about gender—not science—can

define our sex. Furthermore, our beliefs about gender affect what kinds of knowledge scientists produce about sex in the first place” (p. 3). The cultural understanding of gender in western contexts influences biological and scientific assertions as these are simply social decisions—a doctor’s proclamation of the sex (female or male) of a child when they are born based solely on genital appearance is a cultural observation based on socio-cultural ideas of what comprises the gender of girls/boys, women/men. Supporting Fausto-Sterling’s (2000) overall argument, Lucas (2009) explains the importance of recognizing that since gender is a social construction it is dependent on the historical moment and culture in which it is created. In the current Canadian context, there is recognition of “two-and-only-two” (Lucal, 1999, p. 783) normative genders that are strictly enforced. The gender binary, and the subsequent surveillance of this binary, remains recognizable in all areas and institutions of everyday life in the Canadian context.

Feminist and trans- theorists highlight the power attached to a gender binary system that has been institutionalized in all social processes of everyday life within western contexts (Butler, 1990; Jones & Barron, 2007; Namaste, 2006), acknowledging that a polarized view of gender normalizes the existence of only two gendered and opposite groups (Lucal, 1999). Judith Butler (1990), acclaimed feminist scholar and gender theorist, originally introduced the interpretation of gender as a repetition of ritualistic acts performed consciously and unconsciously throughout everyday life which come to be understood as naturalized within the body (p. xv). Butler’s (1990) understanding has since been adopted by many feminist scholars. Gender is an organizing power that is “promulgated through language and behaviour” (Symons et al., p. 40), where the application of binary labels, such as woman/feminine and man/masculine, appear as necessary for a variety of reasons. One such reasoning includes that gender is drawn on to indicate “appropriate” interactions between individuals (Lucal, 1999). In understanding binary categories

of gender as separate and polar opposite, a context is established in which gender is a main identity (and identifying) aspect used to navigate interpretation at the beginning of, and all throughout, social interactions depending on the gender of those involved. Butler (1990) reaffirms the use of gender within interactions explaining the moment in which “one’s staid and usual cultural perceptions fail, when one cannot with surety read the body that one sees, is precisely the moment when one is no longer sure whether the body encountered is that of a man or a woman” (p. xxiv), often result in discriminatory responses. The repetition of gendered, interactive “performances” discussed by Butler (1990) and Lucal (1999) are dependent on culturally established displays of gender including “sets of behaviors, appearances, mannerisms, and other cues that we have learned to associate with members of a particular gender” (Lucal, 1999, p. 784). Everyday encounters and interactions are reliant on performative gender displays.

The reliance on normative performances of gender affirms the “common sense” and taken-for-granted assumption that every individual can easily be placed into one mutually exclusive category (Lucal, 1999, p. 783). Butler (1990) explains that gender is presumed to be an “internal feature” or essence of oneself. However, the perceived “naturalness” of this system can easily be called into question when performances of gender do not correspond with, or intentionally seek to challenge, “appropriate” appearances and identities. While gender may be perceived as a core part of one’s identity, Ziegler and Huntley (2013) advise that the complexity of gender is most often unacknowledged.

Reflecting on their personal experiences on the boundaries of gender, Lucal (1999) questions the implications of living within a gender system that recognizes and accepts “two-and-only-two” genders and acknowledges the consequences for those who do not follow the rules of gender (p. 782). The culture of surveillance attached to this dichotomous system is

apparent within various institutions and public and private spaces, presenting few locations where the performance of non-normative gender identities is not heavily scrutinized. The continual institutionalization of gender contributes to negative everyday lived experiences (Lucal, 1999, p. 785) for individuals whose performances of gender are targeted as inappropriate. Subsequently, constructing identities anywhere outside of or beyond this dichotomy can be challenging. Those who fail to “do gender right,” according to static binary requirements, are regularly punished (Butler 1990; Lucal, 1999).

Krane et al. (2012) emphasize there are “countless combinations of gender, sex, gender identity, and gender expression that can exist” (p. 20), yet continue to be marginalized, excluded, and rejected within various social institutions organized by dichotomies. This ongoing bifurcation is especially apparent throughout the history of westernized sport, and remains present in current Canadian sport contexts.

2.2 Gender Binaries in Sport

Sport remains a predominately sex-segregated social institution that reinforces normative binary constructions of gender (Symons et al., 2010). The histories and current practices of sport have a “deep and long standing reliance on sex and gender as a central organizing principle” (Buzuvis, 2011, p. 3). At all levels including recreational, community, and high performance, sport is usually, and with few exceptions, visibly sex-segregated, dividing participants into women and men’s teams. The long-held dichotomous construction of mainstream sport in Canada is rooted in the acceptance and reinforcement of biological differences between women and men (Travers, 2006). This is a clear example of Fausto-Sterling’s (2000) insistence that understandings of sex and biological differences are social decisions based on socio-cultural understandings of gender. Segregating sport based on perceived biological differences is a

decision based on “traditional notions about gender [that] hold that men are better athletes” (Lucas, 2009, p. 78). Working from a queer-feminist perspective, Lucas (2009) simplifies that it should be no surprise that sport is organized along, and reinforces, gender norms as sport is a social institution that “both reflects and informs societal practice” (p. 7) such as the institutionalization of binary conceptualizations of gender. Engaging in ethnographic studies of transinclusive policies in lesbian softball leagues, Travers (2006) and Travers and Deri (2010) demonstrate the power attached to gender systems revealing that even sport organized outside of the mainstream, such as lesbian softball leagues, often uphold a sex-gender binary system. Similar to most other social institutions, as Krane et al. (2012) pointedly explain, sport is grounded in the understanding that individuals easily accept, identify, and “fit” into one of two gender options, and therefore perform the ‘appropriate’ displays of gender accordingly.

Many sport scholars have observed the ongoing surveillance and strict control of “appropriate” athlete behaviour and appearance throughout histories of sport (Downing, 2001; Hall, 2002; Lenskyj, 2003; Lucas, 2009). Jones and Barron (2007) explain that gender differences are socially constructed and are therefore a result of constructed hierarchies of knowledge and power that center within all areas of life (p. 27). Identities and everyday ways of living, including sport participation, are shaped by these socially constructed ideas, or “common sense ideologies” as referred to by Hall (2013, p. 43). Differences between women and men’s behaviours, interests, body movements, characteristics, and perceptions of physical bodies are also characterized by one’s position amongst such hierarchies of power. These differences are largely recognized and accepted as truth, and are written into and shape everyday understandings, legislation, and policy in mainstream sport.

This general acceptance and complicity of a binary gender system and the perceived

differences between binary categories of women and men underlines Sartore-Baldwin's (2012) suggestion that traditional gender roles are reinforced through sport "such that any indication that sport's dominant patriarchal ideals are being challenged or that gender boundaries are being crossed can elicit negativity toward perpetrators" (p. 141). Masculinity and femininity have largely been considered the "two-and-only-two" (Lucal, 1999) distinct gender categories within sport, effectively reinforcing binary understandings as common sense and prompting such negative and discriminatory responses as discussed by Sartore-Baldwin (2012). As many gender theorists and scholars demonstrate, "not all people fit into this 'oppositional' two sexes and two genders model of humanity" (Symons et al., 2010, p. 57) and therefore the entire binary system deserves questioning; this is especially significant for social institutions such as sport that rely significantly on common sense constructions of gender.

Scholars insist that organizing sport according to binary logic promotes sport as exclusive to certain bodies and identities. Through a questioning of how the institution of sport is organized, it is clear that sport operates on the assumption that individuals uncomplicatedly fit into binary categories of woman/man (Krane et al., 2012, p. 15). Further, individuals who seek engagement in sport must align themselves as female or male and join the corresponding team, creating unique challenges for individuals who do not, either intentionally or not, fit into this dualistic view (Krane et al., 2012, p. 15). In the Canadian context, this forced binary alignment promotes the exclusion of particular identities resulting in further discrimination and oppression.

There are, however, groups that have started to explore alternative mechanisms to organize sport. Many of these attempts to reimagine sport do so without subverting a binary organization altogether. For example, this is apparent in co-ed sport leagues that restrict athletes to women/men categories and regulate the number of each gender on the field at one time. This

type of organization further reinforces a binary, rather than challenging and re-envisioning this system, and reproduces sexist presumptions about the physicality of women (Travers, 2006). Alternative organizations of sport such as co-ed leagues highlight a deep investment in a gender binary, where sport can be reimagined to be ‘inclusive’ as long as it is reimagined within a restrictive binary framework. Writing on the potential for subversive conceptualizations of western sport, Anderson (2013) purports that in order for cultural changes to take place actions must go further than addressing attitudes of athletes, parents, and coaches to “also reconsider the structure within which we play these sports—not necessarily the rules of the games themselves (although sometimes this is required to remove violence), but the way we organize, control, and determine who plays, and when” (p. 98).

Most notably, Travers (2006; 2010; 2013a) has explored the ways in which lesbian softball leagues “organize, control, and determine who plays” and who is welcomed in their leagues. Analyzing transgender inclusive policies in selected lesbian softball leagues within North America, Travers (2006; 2010) observes that many leagues have attempted to incorporate such policies yet do so through a binary gender framework. In relation to the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a), this statement reinforces a binary gender framework by literally writing into existence binary pronouns stating students can participate “in sex-separated sports activities in accordance with his or her gender identity” (MHSAA, 2015). Travers (2006) agrees with scholars such as Butler and Fausto-Sterling who advocate for the acceptance of “self-identification as the criterion for access,” in order to deconstruct essentialized categories (p. 437). Self-identification is arguably the first step of reimagining sport away from binary understandings; a step the MHSAA has implemented in their policy. However, self-identification is limited within a binary structure that fails to allow for all identities.

Agreeing with scholars who began conversations that critiqued the apparent sex segregation in sport in the mid 1990s, Travers (2006) calls for a “queering” of sport. Rather than “queering tendencies,” actions to queer sport include “a wholesale challenge to sex segregation in sport (Rothblatt, 1995), or a more nuanced approach that sees sport increasingly organized according to a gender continuum rather than a binary (Kane, 1995; Theberge, 1998)” (p. 432), and ultimately demands for the “reorganization of sport away from a two-sex system” (p. 431). However, as longstanding dichotomous constructions of gender have remained entrenched in western sport, rather than a complete challenge or eradication of this system, trans- individuals who continue to transgress, live beyond or outside of, binary gender categories often feel the exclusionary effects of limited trans-inclusion policies (Travers, 2006, p. 437).

Speaking of baseball and softball contexts specifically, one action that Travers (2013a) views as possible in order to achieve this reimagination is the “sex-integration” and abolishment of “male-only baseball while both maintaining existing softball programs and developing specific (trans-inclusive) baseball programs for girls and women” (p. 90). Re-envisioning sport away from the current male dominant sporting culture works to develop girls’ and women’s sporting abilities alongside boys and men, if they desire, and “by destabilizing assumptions of essential difference between men and women and eliminating binary normative sporting structures, it opens the door to cultures of overlapping ability, more fluid understandings of sex and gender identity and greater opportunities for transgender inclusion” (Travers, 2006, as cited in Travers, 2013a, p. 91). However, this reimagination has yet to be realized, in part, due to the “unthinkability” (Lemert, 2007, as cited in Travers, 2013a) regarding gender and sport.

Advising on actions to achieve this reimagination, Travers’ (2013a) analysis draws on an “unthinkability” discourse (Lemert, 2007, as cited in Travers, 2013a) to link the sex-segregation

of all levels of North American baseball, and sport more broadly, to “the dominance of the ideology of the two sex system” (p. 78). This discourse interprets the unthinkable, or “aspects of a group’s culture that are systematically excluded from consciousness and public discussion” (Lemert, 2007, as cited in Travers, 2013a, p. 79). Injustices around organizing sport based on sex and/or gender, such as inequitable access to “professional/occupational [sporting] opportunities” (Travers, 2013a, p. 80), are not considered by sport organizers or the general public. As Travers (2013a) argues, organizing sport by gender is “unthinkable;” in relation to professional baseball, the “all-male-ness” is unthinkable (Travers, 2013a, p. 84). Similarly, organizing high school sport by gender is unthinkable. Further, the fact that no appeals are apparent to the segregation of baseball, as Travers (2013a) specifically advocates for (p. 92), or the entire organizational bifurcated structure of high school sports, indicates the deep investment in a binary system of gender. In relation to sexual and gender minority students in Ontario high schools, Short’s (2013) research exposes this unthinkability, stating “normative positions remain unchallenged and, in fact, are reinforced, thereby ensuring the continuity of each student’s individual heteronormative experience and at the same time valorizing and sustaining the heteronormative experience of schools generally” (p. 160-161). This is ever present in Canadian high schools, and high school sport specifically.

2.3 Exclusionary Aspects in Sport

Central to much feminist and subversive literature on histories of gender and sport is the understanding that “sporting practices are historically produced, socially constructed and culturally defined to serve the interests and needs of powerful groups in society” (Hall, 2013, p. 45). Within a patriarchal context, historically and socially constructed ideas of gender and the differences between gender dichotomies are central to the exclusionary practices apparent

throughout histories of Canadian sport, many of which remain in place today. These exclusionary processes work to serve the interests of particular people within Canadian society, mainly white, middle-upper class, heterosexual males, and ultimately produce what Lenskyj (2003) refers to as a gendered hierarchy in everyday experiences of sport and physical activity (p. 56).

Although sport has been recognized as a community by sport scholars such as Kidd (2002), feminist sport scholars, including Kidd (2002), also highlight how this community is exclusive to a specific group of people and is often inaccessible to those who do not fit in. Addressing the historical exclusion of particular people and bodies from sport, Robertson (2013) observes an ongoing problem explaining, “we do not yet have a system for everybody; we have a system that limits the opportunity for women, multi-cultural groups, disadvantaged people, and people with disabilities to have a positive and enjoyable experience” (p. 34). Providing space to begin envisioning transformative sport beyond the myth that western sport exudes “fairness” and “social equality, and social mobility,” Travers (2013b) shares Robertson (2013) and other scholars’ acknowledgment, describing their agreement with Kaufman and Wolff’s (2010) position that the current organization of mainstream sport reflects and reinforces “various hegemonies of oppression and inequality such as sexism, racism, able-ism, and homophobia” (p. 154-155). Travers’ (2013b) concern is centered on the question, “how can sport be transformed to cultivate more socially just relationships?” (p. 4), a question surfacing from critical awareness of exclusionary practices within Canadian westernized sport as a “male domain.”

For decades, scholars have acknowledged the ways in which Canadian sport has consistently remained a male domain (Downing, 2001; Hall, 2002; Hall, 2013; Hoeber, 2007; Kidd, 2002; Robertson, 2013; Symons et al., 2010, Travers, 2013a). Within historical accounts of

Canadian sport, some scholars continue to center male narratives when examining histories of sport and dedicating, in comparison, little discussion of “alternative” and resilient herstories/histories of women and other minorities. Bruce Kidd’s (2002) *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* attempts to present a more inclusive account of sport, but only elucidates particular struggles of Canadian sport, largely male, which arguably obscures historical understandings of overlooked struggles within sport. For example, with little room allotted to discuss the plethora of experiences of women from different social locations, a single chapter out of seven, his analysis often results in essentialist understandings of women’s sport experiences as one, single experience. Recognizing the history of male dominance within sport and historical texts that reproduce this dominance, scholars such as M. Ann Hall (2002) provide subversive narratives to highlight the complexities of sport in Canada.

These accounts include discussions of women’s progressive and ongoing resistance to male dominance in sport (Hall, 2002), sociohistorical constructions of gender and associated implications to the perpetuation of myths about women’s bodily comportment and physicality (Downing, 2001), the intersections of gender and sexuality that produce specific experiences of discrimination (Lenskyj, 2003), and the overall lack of narratives that centre the experiences of working class women and women of colour (Hall, 2002). Similarly, Buzuvis (2011) also recognizes women’s overlooked history in sport claiming “though women have participated in sports since colonial times, sporting practices have historically been dominated by men” (p. 4), arguably implying that only at the point of colonization did women begin participating in sports. Buzuvis’ (2011) point is rooted in a colonial myth that history uncomplicatedly begins at the point of colonization, which effectively ignores Indigenous women’s experiences of sport prior to colonization and dismisses the reality that colonization remains ongoing. Thorpe (in press)

acknowledges the “dangers of repeating the same stories,” such as a colonial story of sport, in arguing that re-telling these same stories “re-centres colonial encounters—the ‘beginning’ of the story, as many of us learned—as the main event, and in so doing re-centres privileged bodies” (in press). Important as it is to highlight the ongoing exclusions in mainstream sport and sport literature that reproduce these same exclusions, it is also noteworthy to draw attention to the continual reproduction of the same stories that re-center within sport literature the dominant gender binary and those who fit neatly into these categories. Historical and contemporary descriptions in these narratives almost always write into existence the varying ways in which women and men participate and are excluded in sport, ultimately failing to recognize gender identities outside the two-and-only-two normative system.

Recently, a slowly increasing focus on the exclusion of various identities and bodies from mainstream, western sport is apparent. This includes recognition of the intolerance and exclusion of lesbian and queer women (Fusco, 1995; Lenskyj, 2003), masculine-presenting women (Downing, 2001; Lenskyj, 2003), and the lack of representation of Indigenous women in sport and sport literature (Forsyth, Giles, & Lodge-Gagné, 2014). In particular, scholarship on and with trans- people in sport only began in the mid-2000s decade (Cavanagh & Sykes, 2006; Symons et al., 2010; Teetzel, 2006; Travers, 2006; Travers & Deri, 2010).

2.4 The Exclusion of Trans- People in Sport

Transgender people, in general, have largely been excluded and discriminated against in sport because “their existence disrupts essentialist and binary ideas about sex that are reflected in the historical and contemporary organization of sport” (Buzuvis, 2011, p. 3). While trans- topics and concerns have largely increased in the wider Canadian context, research and considerations of inequities for trans- people in Canadian sport are minimal (The Trans Inclusion in Sport

Expert Working Group, 2016). Thaemlitz (2006) critically analyzes the binary gender system and the power attached to it, observing how “binary gender requirements limit the mobility of transgendered people, and the vagary of transgendered bodies places us [trans- people] unwittingly in conflict with nearly every social system” (p. 183) that trans- individuals frequent daily. This regulation has been scrutinized by many theorists within transgender scholarship, notably Viviane K. Namaste (2000, 2006), Riki Anne Wilchins (2006), Christopher A. Shelley (2008), and Betsy Lucal (1999) to name a few. The institution of sport is one significant example of systemic discrimination based on the intersections of gender and other identity factors.

The continual reinforcement of a sex-gender binary in sport forces individuals to align with one gendered and static category, which presents challenges for many trans- identities outside of this binary. Experiences of intolerance in sport have often been connected to gender non-conformity (Krane et al., 2012, p. 20). For example, multiple authors have acknowledged the suspicion attached to trans- athletes and their bodies (CCES, 2012; Kidd, 2011; Krane et al., 2012; Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2011), explaining that subsequent discrimination is “based solely on the athlete’s appearance” (Krane et al., 2012, p. 20). Krane et al. (2012) state this is a product of “uninformed coaches, parents, administrators, or teammates [who] may think trans athletes should be on a different team or that they have an unfair advantage,” (p. 20) an assumption discredited by researchers (CCES, 2012; Krane et al., 2012). The severe intolerance and ostracization upheld in sport toward those identities and bodies outside the norm illustrates the power attached to social institutions, such as sport, segregated by sex. This environment works to intimidate individuals into suppressing their felt and/or lived gender identities or completely erase these identities and bodies from sport altogether; both circumstances effectively invisibilize identities and bodies perceived as non-normative (Lucas, 2009, p. 10-11). Due to this ongoing

invisibilization, a sex-gender binary is continually reinforced because the only identities and bodies recognizable in sport are normative, hegemonic images of women and men. This cycle continues to normalize the gender binary in sport (Lucas, 2009).

Exploring sport experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in Australia, the first study in Australia that also considered transgender people in sport, Symons et al. (2010) document many transgender participants' indication of their "difficulty with the two sexed/gendered sports model in many of their responses" (p. 8). In this study, transgender participants shared their experiences of ignorance and prejudice, subsequent discrimination from this ignorance, lack of acceptance, change room facility concerns, and a general lack of policies that directly benefit their participation within Australian sport (Symons et al., 2010, p. 8). Similarly, Lucas (2009) draws attention to multiple limitations accompanying the current institution of sport as a social construction, explaining "sport is an unfriendly site for many people" where harassment, discrimination, and ridicule at all levels of competition and across all ages is often "triggered by gender incongruence [. . . .] Those individuals who fail to fulfill the norms in sport suffer very real consequences" (p. 7). These very real consequences are everyday lived experiences for many trans- people in sport.

The deep and profound violence experienced by trans- people in sport is highlighted in research, generally, by a number of scholars (Herman, 2013; Morris & Van Raalte, 2016). However, these experiences require greater exploration in research studies to illuminate negative, and potentially life threatening, lived experiences that trans- people endure when attempting to engage in sport. Further, incorporating details into research studies shared directly by trans- people has largely been disregarded, indicating a significant need for further research that centralizes this component. Drawing on the work of Lucas-Carr and Krane (2011), Morris and

Van Raalte (2016) note “it is no surprise that in the sex-segregated and competitive world of sport, discrimination of TGNC [transgender and gender nonconforming] people exists, perhaps with more strength or potency than in other parts of society” (p. 129). Discrimination of trans-people in sport is recognizable at different moments in sport her/histories.

Negative experiences for trans- people in sport are apparent from decades ago, such as Renee Richards who “attempted to play on the Women’s Tennis Association tour in the 1970s” and who was “strongly opposed by many of the women on the tour” due to their insistence of “Richards’s fundamental male identity and [. . .] unfair advantage on the tennis court” (Travers, 2006, p. 432-433). Experiences of verbal, emotional, and/or physical violence and harassment, as experienced by Richards, remain ongoing. More recent examples include the public degradation of Canadian mountain biker Michelle Dumaresq by her competitors (Wilson & Duthie, 2004; Travers, 2006; Anderson & Loland, 2015), the public defamation and hate speech towards mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter Fallon Fox by sports news commentators such as Joe Rogan (Noble, 2013), and the public humiliation towards athletes who are perceived to be trans- yet who may not identify that way, for example Caster Semenya (Hurst, 2009). Citing earlier work, Love (2014) quotes transgender golfer Mianne Bagger on the unrestricted access to medical and psychiatric records required of trans- athletes who states ““we are treated as a complete freak, and we are treated so differently to any other competitor with complete disregard to the real facts and medical conditions involved in our treatment and the person who we are”” (Love, Lim, & DeSensi, 2009, as cited in Love, 2014, p. 379). These accounts highlight the range of deep and profound violence that trans- people experience in sport. This violent reality is acknowledged by The 519, a “city agency” that aims to “create space for change, contributing to the advancement of LGBTQ equality and inclusion in Toronto and beyond” (“The 519,” n.d.), in their Creating

Authentic Spaces document which states “major barriers faced by trans people are based on a lack of acknowledgement and respect, often resulting in hostility and violence” (Hixson-Vulpe, 2015, p. 6), highlighting the overt and covert forms of violence that trans- people experience.

As many researchers and theorists posit, “trans athletes [. . .] represent just some of the persons or groups facing negative treatment and limited opportunities” (Cunningham, 2012, p. 70; Buzuvis, 2012; CCES, 2012; Krane et al., 2012; Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2011). Although the scholarship on trans- people in sport is slowly increasing, there remains room for further inquiry into this topic. More specifically, there is ample room in feminist and trans- theory and research to extend the current scholarship on trans- adults to consider the experiences of trans- youth in sport. In order to begin expanding the knowledge of trans- youth in sport it is necessary to provide consideration of the experiences of trans- youth in high schools, a central institution in which binary sport is encouraged.

2.5 School Climate

Trans- youth in western contexts are often recognized as invisible due to systemic institutionalization of binary classifications of gender (Grossman & D’Augelli, 2006, p. 112), including within the social institution of high school. Taylor et al.’s (2011) *Every Class in Every School: Final Report on the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools* presents distressing statistics of school climates for sexual and gender minority youth in Canadian high schools, illustrating some of the ongoing challenges in high school. Gender minority youth may also identify as sexual minority youth; the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, religion, class, and ability as oppressing factors are significant in shaping experiences of discrimination within high school. This is particularly apparent for trans- (gender minority) youth.

Taylor et al. (2011) state, “while youth who actually identify as trans are comparatively small in number, they are highly visible targets of harassment” (p. 23). Their research found that 74% of trans students in Canada have been verbally harassed about their gender expression compared to 26% of non-LGBTQ students (p. 15), 37% of trans students report being physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression compared to 10% of non-LGBTQ students (p. 16), and 49% of trans students report sexual harassment in school (p. 17). Within the Canadian Prairie Provinces (Manitoba and Saskatchewan) specifically, topics of safety, violence, and discrimination for trans youth are of concern as, out of a total of sixty-seven respondents, researchers found that nearly “three-quarters of both younger (76%) and older (70%) trans youth had been treated unfairly due to their gender identity, and over half of both younger (59%) and older (74%) trans youth had been treated unfairly due to their physical appearance” (Edkins, Peter, Veale, Malone, Saewyc, 2016, p. 2). A staggering almost one in two younger youth (ages 14 to 18) in the Prairie Provinces, a larger average than national findings, had experienced physical threats and/or injury in the year prior and four out of five youth (81%) experienced taunts and ridicule (Edkins et al., 2016, p. 44). Transphobic comments made by other students are heard daily or weekly by 90% of trans students, while such comments made by teachers are heard by 23% of trans students (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 23). These findings are similar to Whittle, Turner, and Al-Alami’s (2007) findings from their United Kingdom study examining transgender adults’ (averaging 36-40 years old) retrospective accounts of experiences during school.

Expanding on the work of McManus (2003) and Pilkington and D’Augelli (1995), Taylor (2008) discusses the limitations implicit in researchers’ reliance on retrospective accounts involving adolescent experiences as “memory effects, changes in social conditions and limited sampling” (p. 42) can present problems of accuracy and clarity. A conflation of experiences of

harassment for current trans- youth to the retrospective accounts of high school harassment experienced by trans- adults is unnecessary; however, it is noteworthy that harassment of trans- people in general appears to remain consistent even when taking into consideration the potential for positive shifts over time. This is evident in Whittle et al.'s (2007) statement based on retrospective accounts, that for young trans students forming identities in school "some 64% of young trans men and 44% of young trans women will experience harassment or bullying at school, not just from their fellow pupils but also from school staff including teachers" (p. 17), highlighting the likelihood that trans youth will experience different forms of harassment and from multiple perpetrators.

After listening to the testimonials of one young transgender participant, Caudwell (2014) writes about the complacency of bystanders and discusses how trans- people in general, and youth in particular, are often on their own during experiences of transphobia and exclusion. The unspoken complacency among oppressors and bystanders to abjectify non-normative genders into solitude and isolation, Caudwell (2014) argues, is a "political issue" (p. 405) that deserves much greater attention from all people involved, including teachers, coaches, other sport administrators and officials, and researchers. This political issue is apparent within high schools across Canada and contributes to unsafe environments.

Not only are trans- youth more likely to experience various forms of harassment, including hearing transphobic comments from both students *and* teachers, when incorporating all identity-related factors such as ethnicity and religion 78% of trans students report feeling unsafe at school in various ways (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 23). This account of safety differs slightly from a Canada-wide study considering the health of trans identified youth conducted by Veale et al. (2015). In *Being Safe, Being Me: Results of the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey*, the

researchers report “on average, trans students felt safe overall at school: on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means a student never feels safe, and 10 means a student feels safe always, the average score was 6.5” (2015, p. 57). It is problematic (and easily questionable) to accept an average rating of 6.5 out of 10 on measures of safety for youth as “trans students [feel] safe overall” (Veale et al., 2015, p. 57). With any measurement of safety, especially involving minority youth, unless the reported number from the survey is an average of 10/10, this should be cause for concern as it reveals that students feel unsafe in a potential multitude of ways.

Examining Veale et al.’s (2015) Canada-wide study, Edkins et al. (2016) analyzed 67 accounts (out of a total of 923 Canada-wide) from the Prairie Provinces (Manitoba and Saskatchewan) to represent regional results and specifically highlight any potential differences between Canadian provinces. As Edkins et al. (2016) report, “similar to national findings, unsafe schools for trans youth is still a problem in the Prairies” (p. 4). The authors conclude the report advocating for the need to prioritize safety for trans students by “implementing more policies and programs to create trans-affirming and trans-aware communities and schools,” recognizing the large amounts of time youth spend in schools (Edkins et al., 2016, p. 55). Concrete actions to establish these policies while simultaneously ensuring a shift within school cultures is lacking from these conclusions, however.

Researching LGBTQ-inclusive, safe school, and equity policies more broadly in Ontario high schools, Short (2013) learns from sexual minority students as “the best experts on their own experiences and lives” (p. 5) and exposes the reality that what is “missing in the law and policy governing schools is a proactive approach to changing the day-to-day experiences of queers in schools” (p. 28). The implementation of safe school and equity policies, anti-homophobia, and anti-transphobia legislation, as indicated by Short (2013), “is dependent not only upon the extent

to which and the ways that policies are implemented in schools but also upon how they are affected by other cultural factors and social structures at play in schools (p. 124). This is a particularly interesting consideration in relation to sport policies intended to be trans- inclusive.

The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, in consultation with The Trans Inclusion in Sport Expert Working Group (2016), indicates that “the vast majority of Canadian sport participation is at the recreational or developmental level, [and] adopting welcoming and inclusive policies and practices at this level will have the greatest impact” (p. 14). This includes thinking critically about the organization of high school sport where reliance on a binary organization is recognizable in many contexts, including Manitoba. Whether or not transgender athletes are able to accessibly and inclusively take part in all aspects of school sports as their authentic selves, as Buzuvis (2016) cautions, is dependent on athletic associations’ policies (p. 342). As the binary language of his/her is written into the MHSAA policy, this organization of sport “ignores people who do not fit into a binary gender scheme, particularly transgender and gender non-conforming people” (Herman, 2013, p. 65) in sport and spaces associated with sport. Policies intended to be trans- inclusive may instead reinforce exclusion of students with transgressive gender identities through a promotion of gender segregation. This works to effectively place the onus on students to navigate binary sport spaces or avoid these spaces altogether (Herman, 2013), rather than the responsibility of the school and its governing bodies to intentionally work toward safer schools, and cultures within their schools for queer and trans-students. The Trans Inclusion in Sport Expert Working Group (2016) advocates for a shift in where this obligation resides stating:

We need to be careful not to place the impetus on trans individuals to adapt to a system that was not designed with them in mind. Instead, we, as the people who make and shape

the sport system in Canada, have an interest and a responsibility to look at our policies and structures and find ways to reflect the lived experience of all Canadians. (p. 13)

Policies alone “may be insufficient to effect a transformation of school culture without also taking into account other normative orders operating within youth culture” (Short, 2013, p. 166). Sexual minority youth in Short’s (2013) research have already argued that radical changes to the “entire cultural experience ‘of going to school’” are needed in Canadian schools, no matter the time these changes could take, in order to increase awareness of the daily experiences of queer students in high schools (p. 14), many of which involve a lack of safety.

Due to the recent high response of feeling unsafe, 44% of trans youth admit to missing school and 15% are likely to miss more than 10 days per school year (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 23). Reflecting on Two-Spirit youth specifically, Genovese, Rousell, and The Two Spirit Circle of Edmonton Society (2014) share findings similar to Taylor et al. (2011). The *Safe and Caring Schools for Two-Spirit Youth* report explains, “it is not uncommon for Two-Spirit students to feel unsafe while attending school. This can lead to students missing classes to avoid bullying” (Genovese et al., 2014, p. 11). Among other concerns, absences from school can contribute to lower school connectivity for youth.

Of the 923 participants from 10 provinces and one territory in Canada, Veale et al. (2015) found that trans youth report significantly low connection to school (p. 18). Comparatively, trans youth reporting greater connection to their school also report more responses of “good” mental health (Veale et al., 2015, p. 18). The Prairie Provinces in Canada have the second lowest ranking of school connectedness (Veale et al., 2015, p. 18) despite significantly fewer participant survey responders from these areas. Specifically, “on a scale of 0 to 10” trans youth “scored 4.1 in school connectedness,” almost an entire point below the national average (4.9) (p. 16), and

“only around a quarter of the sample reported that their overall mental health was good or excellent” (Edkins et al., 2016, p. 29). Similar to Veale et al. (2015) and Edkins et al. (2016), Taylor et al. (2011), Greytak, Kosciw, and Boesen (2013), and Greytak, Kosciw, and Diaz (2009) identify trans- youth reporting low school connectedness and attachment. Low school connectedness becomes even more apparent when considering identity factors that intersect with trans- identity, such as race.

Taylor et al. (2011) acknowledge that the responses and personal narratives shared in their study demonstrate “the more marginalized our participants were, the worse their experience of school climate was” (p. 28). This recognition is clearly evident considering trans youth experience nearly double the likelihood of being verbally harassed regarding ethnicity (31%) and religion (32.9%) compared to other LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ youth, which demonstrates the consequences of intersections of race, gender, and for some, sexuality as oppressing factors. For example, Dr. James Makokis, a Two-Spirit person from Saddle Lake Cree First Nation shares personal reflections of the multi-levels of discrimination experienced growing up as a Two-Spirit, First Nation person in the *Safe and Caring Schools for Two-Spirit Youth* (2014) report. Makokis demonstrates awareness of intersecting factors of oppression stating, “on top of being different because I was Two-Spirited, being First Nation added another layer to which my rural Albertan classmates could discriminate against” (Genovese et al., 2014, p. 9). Although the terms trans- and Two-Spirit are not always interchangeable, this personal narrative exposes the finding that “Caucasian youth, both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, were far less likely to report having been physically harassed or assaulted because of their ethnicity: 8% compared to 13% of Aboriginal youth and 15% of youth of colour” (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 20). As Taylor et al. (2011) explain, some youth are affected by “double whammy” (p. 20) effects in unique ways, as not only are

they targets for physical harassment and/or assault due to their gender minority status “but they are also much more likely to be physically harassed or assaulted because of their ethnicity” (p. 65), highlighting how identity factors intersect to create particular lived experiences of discrimination. In all experiences of harassment, physical or not, it is important to acknowledge and understand the double whammy effects for Aboriginal youth and youth of colour.

The double whammy effect is particularly important to highlight when considering specific areas and spaces in schools where the presence of an unsafe and discriminatory climate are felt even more intensely, such as spaces associated with physical activity and sport.

2.6 Sport and Safe Spaces

Within dominant discourse, physical activity and sport in high school settings is recognized as “integral parts of the high school and college experience” that includes benefits to “physical, social, and emotional well-being” (Griffin & Carroll, 2010, p. 6). Speaking about high schools in the United States, Buzuvis (2012) asserts “the fact that schools across America include sports as part of their (extra)curricula demonstrates that educators regard the potential for sport to enrich the educational experience in valuable ways” (p. 25). Similarly, Griffin and Carroll’s (2010) report, *On the Team: Equal Opportunity for Transgender Student Athletes*, reaffirms the understanding of sport participation as integral to learning and educational opportunities for youth, as physical activity and sport is regarded as a “valuable part of the education experience for all students” (p. 21). More relevant to the Manitoba context, the Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association (MHSAA) coins high school sport as “the ‘other half of education’ which very much provides young student athletes with positive experiences that will better prepare them for future endeavors in society” (MHSAA, 2016a, p. 5). The discourse that physical activity and sport has multiple positive aspects, both in and outside of

high school, is apparent in many western contexts.

Drawing on historical and current studies that support the positive relationship between physical activity and sport with education, Buzuvis (2011) highlights findings that physical activity and sport in schools can provide students with “socioemotional benefits” such as greater self-knowledge and emotion management; social skills such as collaboration, trust, responsibility; cognitive and social development that provide a sense of community and protection from “social isolation”; lower feelings of hopelessness and suicide; and the possibility that participation promotes a sense of community, leading to greater attendance and academic success in school (p. 46-47). In drawing attention to these findings, Buzuvis (2011) also clarifies the importance of critically challenging the assumption that such benefits of sport are accessible to all people and identities.

Literature on physical activity and sport can perpetuate healthist assumptions and medicalized value judgements attached to the suggested benefits of sport participation. In particular, these benefits are too often uncritically incorporated into literature providing little to no consideration of which identities and bodies are excluded from accessing these benefits. Furthermore, the continual privileging of the experiences of normative identities and bodies and their reflections of positive benefits inherently reproduces this beneficial ideology. Through a reproduction of this discourse, there is a failure to acknowledge that exclusionary aspects of sport provide no benefit to those excluded and may actually work to counter the so-called benefits listed above.

Trans- people, and trans- youth in particular, experience ongoing discrimination in physical activity and sport contexts contributing to an intense sense of fear associated with spaces that accompany sport. The fear accompanying these settings is arguably related to the

strict enforcement of gender normative appearances and behaviours in these spaces (Taylor et al., 2011). As Symons et al. (2010) suggest, “transgression from norms about the ways we do our gender and sexuality is punished and nowhere more so than in sporting arenas” (p. 40). This is particularly relevant in the consideration of trans- youth participation in high school sport. With consideration of the supposed benefits correlated with physical activity and sport, it is important to note the consistent responses of a general lack of feeling safe in spaces often associated with physical activity and sport in high schools across Canada.

Sexual and gender minority LGBTQ youth and non-LGBTQ youth consistently identify physical education change rooms and washroom spaces as unsafe for LGBTQ students. Taylor et al. (2011) explain, “LGBTQ participants were most likely to identify their Phys. Ed. change rooms as being unsafe (48.8%), followed by washrooms (43.1%) [. . .] Slightly over half as many non-LGBTQ participants identified these spaces as unsafe for LGBTQ students” (p. 78). In consideration of these statistics for gender minority and trans youth specifically, over half of gender minority youth (52%) report feeling unsafe in both change rooms and washrooms (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 18). More specifically, 51.6% of trans youth (on similar levels to female sexual minority youth) feel unsafe in washrooms, 36.3% feel unsafe in gymnasiums, and 51.6% regard change rooms as unsafe (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 18). Trans youth report similar responses in Veale et al.’s (2015) study explaining they feel least safe in washroom and change room spaces (p. 57), findings that are consistent across the Canadian Prairie Provinces for younger trans youth (Edkins et al., 2016). These strong feelings associated with change rooms and washrooms are shared by youth who identify as Two-Spirit as well (Genovese et al., 2014). Unsafe sentiments emerge, Caudwell (2014) suggests, when trans- and other gender minority youth come in contact with and participate in physical activity spaces which involve “constant clashes with normative

gendered PE [physical education] culture” (p. 404), highlighting the reliance on the gender binary and the assumption that all individuals perform gender uncomplicatedly. Sykes (2011) critically analyses this idea beyond simply critiquing the binary by deconstructing the ways in which the built environment reproduces dominant discourses about gender as “showers and even gymnasia exhibit how transphobia has been designed and imagined in the very architecture of schooling” (p. 95), calling into question the institutional power within education settings.

In their research on the experiences of three transgender athletes who participated in high school sport and continued after graduation to navigate the binary system of sport at varying competitive levels, Lucas (2009) highlights the importance of understanding each trans experience as unique, including experiences in athletic spaces such as change rooms and washrooms. Two of the three participants in Lucas’ (2009) study shared feelings of discomfort in locker rooms but did not emphasize any extreme discomfort with this space, leading Lucas (2009) to advise readers and scholars against presuming the experiences of all trans people follow one static “mythical trans narrative” (p. 50). Rather, it is essential to share each story and narrative as that trans- individuals’ experience. However, while acknowledging the experiences of multiple realities for trans- people is necessary to avoid presuming one single experience, Sykes (2011) shows the realities of dominant discourses of surveillance that induce very real feelings of regulation among many different bodies and identities, not only trans- people. In her work on queer bodies in physical activity and sport related spaces, Sykes (2011) demands recognition of the brutal regulation of gender within sex-segregated spaces, such as locker rooms, and echoes the profound unsafe feelings related to these spaces, explaining:

Changing rooms are one of the most traumatic spaces within the built environment of schools for queer and trans students. [. . .] The built environments of physical education

spaces relentlessly maim all sorts of queer bodies—whether they be fat bodies, trans bodies, intersexed [*sic*] bodies, disabled bodies. This is particularly true of sex-segregated locker rooms which, by their very design, set the scene for multiple forms of gender fascism, ranging from microscopic scrutiny of the body’s surface, shape and substance to brutal public acts of transphobic violence. (p. 45)

Both Sykes (2011) and Lucas’ (2009) arguments point to the same logic: that simplistic binary understandings of gender, whether they are ingrained into dominant discourse or physically built into athletic spaces and environments, do not allow for and forcefully attempt to erase the existence of a multiplicity of gender identities. For example, the gendered subjectivities of two transgender men and the impact binary organization has on their experiences of sport as discussed by Caudwell (2014), illustrates the ongoing challenges associated with physical activity and sport for trans- youth in and outside of high school sport settings. Caudwell (2014) highlights the “brutality of gender normativity in school (and University) settings. They reflect the close links between sport (PE), built environment, embodiment and exclusion that are significant for young people” (p. 405) and recognizes a familiarity among these types of experiences for those who do not “fit” western ideals of gender normativity.

Similar to Sykes (2011) and Caudwell (2014), Taylor et al. (2011) identify spaces that are most often recognized as unsafe for trans youth as gender-segregated spaces (p. 18). The authors perceive a “correlation between the policing of gender and youth not feeling safe” (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 18) suggesting that higher responses of fear in these gender-segregated areas is likely attributed to strict gender-normative governance presenting gender minority and trans youth as visible targets, a point which Herman (2013) recognizes as minority stressors (p. 67). This awareness is echoed by Greytak et al. (2013) in their consideration of school resources that either

benefit or hinder transgender youth, as they argue that “school policies, practices, and spaces that enforce gender segregation, such as school bathrooms, locker rooms, security procedures, and dress codes, can also pose challenges for transgender youth” (p. 46). Recognizing these challenges are apparent within the Canadian Prairie Provinces, Edkins et al. (2016) calls for the implementation of “more gender-inclusive washrooms and change rooms [. . .] or giving trans youth the choice of using the girls/boys washroom or change rooms” (p. 55), a central school space in which abjection of specific bodily functions, bodies, and identities takes place.

Engaging in research on locker rooms and how subjectivities are produced and sustained through abjection in these spaces, Caroline Fusco (2006) focuses much of her work on abject conceptualizations of “propriety, sanitation, hygiene, and space” (p. 6) and “the intersections between locker rooms, bodily hygiene and discourses of civilization, respectability, cleanliness, and bourgeois bodies in sport and physical culture” (p. 8), ultimately observing the production of social relationships in locker rooms (p. 6). Most relevant to this thesis, however, is Fusco’s (2006) mention of social abjections.

Fusco (2006) indicates that social abjections “occur in, and are enabled by, sport spaces such as locker rooms” (p. 23) and explains “how individuals are abjected on the basis of their sexuality, race, athleticism, age, and (dis)ability by White, middle-class, (hetero)normative groups” (p. 23-24). Extending Fusco’s (2006) theory of social abjection to include gender identity as the basis through which individuals are abjected in sport related spaces, those who transgress gender are direct examples of abjected individuals in locker room spaces. Cavanagh (2010) explains theorists such as Butler (1990, 1993) and McClintock’s (1995) conceptualization of social abjection understands “how people devalued in modern, Western industrial and capitalist nations are metonymically associated with abject body fluids, or, to be precise, treated

‘like shit’” (p. 78). It is not only substances that are abjected, as Cavanagh (2010) insists, “people are symbolically coded as abject [. . .] and abjected sometimes literally from public space” (p. 141). Drawing on the work of critical sports studies and scholars, Fusco (2006) extends her work on abjections in locker rooms and “locker room culture and barriers to participation in sport and recreation for LGBTQ students” to *The Change Room Project* (2013).

Calling for the necessary analysis of those who are “Othered” in locker rooms in Fusco’s (2006) early work, her recent research took action to address this concern at the University of Toronto. *The Change Room Project* exhibition “amplifies the voices of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students in locker rooms and change rooms—some of the very spaces where they often go unheard” (“*The Change Room Project*,” 2013) and whose identities and bodies, those identities often socially determined as “agents” of abjection (Cavanagh, 2010, p. 141), are continuously abjected in these spaces. By exhibiting texts and quotes from interviews with LGBTQ participants on locker room walls and in physical activity facilities within three University of Toronto campuses, *The Change Room Project* aims to draw awareness to the “higher rates of violence and harassment in locker room spaces” (“*The Change Room Project*,” 2013) experienced by LGBTQ individuals. Narratives outlined in *The Change Room Project*, an exhibit that places “LGBTQ voices at the centre of the conversation [to] build awareness and foster dialogue around equity, encouraging behaviours and attitudes in locker rooms that are more inclusive, compassionate, and aware” (“*The Change Room Project*,” 2013), are recognizable in the experiences identified by sexual and gender minority youth throughout the literature summarized above. This connection indicates a trend where negative experiences in change rooms and washrooms are present in high school and continue throughout adulthood. However, research indicates that advocacy work at the university level, such as *The Change*

Room Project (2013), is not taking place on behalf of trans- youth in high school settings.

One such challenge is the general absence of authority figures, such as teachers and coaches, to combat these unsafe experiences felt among trans- youth and, as discussed earlier, youth often find that teachers can contribute to unsafe environments by using transphobic language and phrases (Taylor et al., 2011). In a pedagogical sense, Sykes (2011) suggests that for students in physical education spaces,

the key is to recognize the harm caused by organizing students' gender in binary terms; to encourage students to self-select which gender group they feel comfortable with, and to respect their privacy by not requiring anyone to self-identify or explain their choices. The key pedagogy here is to confront the arbitrariness of the gender binary. (p. 45)

This is an important consideration for all members within educational institutions, including teachers, coaches, and sport governing bodies to attend to the fear surrounding athletic spaces.

2.7 Trans- Youths' Participation and Experiences in School-based Extra-Curricular Activities and High School Sport

In a follow up article discussing aspects of the *Every Class in Every School* survey, Taylor and Peter (2011) summarize significant findings and demonstrate the overall disconnect between “Canadian public school discourse on diversity rights and the lived experience of LGBTQ youth in this country who suffer a litany of forms of discrimination in their school lives” (p. 277). One observation of this disconnect is an institutional claim for diversity that is overpowered by the high responses of a general lack of school attachment, low feelings of personal safety, and lack of social connectedness for gender minority youth (Taylor & Peter, 2011). This disconnect is apparent in multiple studies on trans- youths' experiences in extra-curricular activities in high school (Edkins et al. 2016; Taylor et al., 2011; Veale et al., 2015).

Veale et al.'s (2015) survey asked trans youth across Canada about their participation in extra-curricular activities in school including before and after school activities, and lunchtime activities. Of the participants in this survey, “more than half (55%) said they never participated” in such school-based activities in the previous month while “24% said they participated one or more times per week, and 11% said they participated less than once per week” (Veale et al., 2015, p. 24). Similar to these national findings, Edkins et al.'s (2016) regional report indicates that “the majority of younger trans youth [ages 14 to 18] (59%) reported that they had not participated in before school, lunchtime, or after school activities in the past month” (p. 20). In relation to physical activity and sport as extra-curricular activity, results from this topic in the trans health survey are not unforeseen taking into consideration both Taylor and Peter (2011) and Veale et al.'s (2015) findings of the extreme senses of fear felt by many trans youth surrounding spaces associated with athletics, yet these statistics remain alarming.

In the month prior to youth responding to Veale et al.'s (2015) survey, the “great majority” of trans youth Canada-wide said they never participated in physical activities and sports with coaches, while only one in ten youth reported participating one or more times per week (p. 24). In the Prairie Provinces, “8 in 10 of all youth (82%) reported that they had not participated in physical activities with a coach in the past month” (Edkins et al., 2016, p. 20). This low participation in sports is reflective of a trend that can also extend into adulthood for various reasons, such as disinterest or lack of access, as discussed by Caudwell (2014). In general, “experiences of physical education and sport in the formative years are likely to have an impact on the willingness and confidence adults have to engage in sport” (Symons et al., 2010, p. 28) signifying how crucial inclusive and welcoming sport (and spaces associated with sport) are for future participation and self-confidence. Although not specifically focusing on youth in their

study, Symons et al. (2010) asked participants whether there is any sport they would like to participate in but choose not to because of their gender identity. The authors found that 58.3% of trans participants want to play specific sports but choose not to (Symons et al., 2010, p. 64).

The lack of participation in school sports and the potential trend of wanting to participate but choosing not to is also argued by Krane et al. (2012) who suggests that gender minority people attempting to participate in sport risk experiencing bias, bullying, and being denied access or altogether cut from teams and other sport opportunities (p. 20), identifying further potential aspects that cause trans- people to opt out of participating in sports. Equally detrimental is the awareness that this intimidation can force trans- people to intensely navigate and/or conceal their identity in order to prevent experiences of discrimination (Krane et al., 2012, p. 20). These experiences of intimidation and discrimination are exacerbated by the ongoing challenge generally identified by trans- youth of identifying teachers, coaches, and authority figures as unhelpful and unapproachable in situations of discrimination and harassment. In particular, youth do not feel comfortable talking to coaches about LGBTQ topics and concerns (Taylor et al., 2011) nor asking for help in general (Veale et al., 2015).

Trans youth were asked whom they sought out for help, in general, in the 12 months prior to responding to Veale et al.'s (2015) survey, and how helpful youth felt the people they asked for help had been. In response, trans youth reported they most often asked friends, family members, mental health counsellors, and school counsellors for help (Veale et al., 2015, p. 63). However, sports coaches were only asked 9% of the time by youth across Canada (Veale et al., 2015, p. 63) and 29% of the time by younger trans youth in the Prairie Provinces (Edkins et al., 2016, p. 48), suggesting an overall lack of confidence from trans- youth in coaches and their abilities to address concerns and/or offer guidance and support. In relation to this uncertainty,

77% of trans youth in Taylor et al.'s (2011) study report they were “likely to feel uncomfortable talking about LGBTQ matters with school coaches” (p. 103). Furthermore, for youth of colour, both sexual and gender minority LGBTQ youth (and non-LGBTQ youth of colour as well) report “the lowest rates of being comfortable discussing LGBTQ matters with anyone at all, including their coaches” (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 21). This awareness is recognized generally by Genovese et al. (2014) who similarly report that Two-Spirit youth “typically do not feel safe to approach school staff for assistance [. . .] Many Two-Spirit students feel that school staff are unlikely to intervene or say anything to address the situation” (p. 11). Altogether, in consideration of trans-youths’ feelings attributed to a lack of safety within change rooms, washrooms, and gymnasiums, these findings suggest a potential overall lack of concern from adult authorities, such as coaches in athletic spaces, to effectively establish a space in which trans- youth can seek coaches for help. Demonstrating this point further, younger trans youth in the Prairie Provinces indicated on a scale their perceptions of how caring adults outside of their family were, including teachers, when youth sought them out. Adults averaged 3.8 out of 10 on this scale (Edkins et al., 2016, p. 49), an incredibly disturbing and unacceptable rating. These experiences are more significant for students “who live at the intersections of multiple systems of power” (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 28), which illustrates the intersections between forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, and genderism that many students experience daily.

Experiencing inadequate support and perceived rejection from adults can cause trans youth to live in feelings of shame and unworthiness (Grossman & D’Augelli, 2006, p. 124). Veale et al. (2015) suggest that for trans youth “supportive relationships, whether at home, at school or in the community, are important for overall health and wellbeing” (p. 63). The lack of confidence in supportive coach figures is recognizable in Sartore-Baldwin’s (2012) discussion of

coach influence in an interview conducted with Pat Griffin regarding Griffin's ongoing study of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender athletes in sport. While it is implied that transgender people are included in Sartore-Baldwin's (2012) use of the acronym "LGBT," the vast majority of Sartore-Baldwin (2012) and Griffin's discussion revolves around sexual orientation. Even so, Sartore-Baldwin (2012) maintains that coaches are the main influence of establishing (or not) an inclusive environment that sets the entire team's tone regarding LGBTQ members (p.143-144). This point considers the power coaches hold over entire teams and each individual participant, as "even if the team members are comfortable, the coaches might not be and that is a potential problem on the team" (Sartore-Baldwin, 2012, p. 144), which can create a dilemma for all athletes to attempt to navigate an exclusive environment for many.

In analyzing the literature on the intense fear of specific athletic spaces that many trans-youth face, and a general lack of comfort in discussing concerns, it is clear that systems of power prevail within the social institution of sport. The acceptance and continued prevalence of these feelings and experiences of discrimination contribute to what Lucal (1999) suggests as helping "patriarchy maintain and perpetuate a system of oppression and privilege" (p. 795) where many people including trans-, Two-Spirit, and gender minority youth experience discrimination daily. In order for the climate in Manitoba high schools to become more inclusive to gender minority youth, the research literature demonstrates that physical activity and sport spaces within schools is one area that must be considered and improved. This includes consideration of the most gender-segregated and gender-controlled spaces in high schools: change rooms, washrooms, and gymnasiums, as well as the general lack of connectedness to authority figures such as teachers and coaches involved with school sport.

2.8 Summary

After summarizing the research literature on the exclusionary aspects of sport, the unsafe climate of spaces accompanying sport, and the significant challenges trans- youth face when attempting to access sport, it is clear that a number of areas regarding trans- youth in sport remain unaddressed. While the body of literature on trans- athletes and sport is slowly growing, this scholarship remains underdeveloped. More specifically, there is ample room within sport scholarship to extend consideration to trans- youth and school sport. The important scholarship centered on trans- people in sport to date largely focuses on transgender adults and sport policy (Cavanagh & Sykes, 2006; Symons et al., 2010; Teetzel, 2006; Travers, 2006; Travers & Deri, 2010) with little to no consideration of youth or school contexts. Further exploration of the experiences of trans- youth in high school sport will add to this growing scholarship.

While the MHSAA enacted the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) in February 2015, the effectiveness in providing safe and accepting athletic spaces for trans- youth has not been studied. Therefore, my thesis contributes to filling this research gap by examining the creation of this policy, and compiling firsthand experiences of trans- students to begin to understand the effectiveness and impact of this policy in engaging trans- youth in sport. This research adds to the literature base specifically involving the Manitoba context.

The next chapter describes the processes in which I investigated whether the existence of the newly enacted MHSAA policy in Manitoba high schools contributes to a more encouraging, more accepting environment for trans- high school students to participate in sport, and whether or not this policy is making an impact in the lives of trans- youth.

Chapter III: Methods and Methodology

3.1 Research Question

The goal of this thesis is to better understand the daily experiences of trans- youth in sports settings in Manitoba high schools by, first, listening to and learning from trans- youth directly and, second, analyzing the impact of the newly enacted Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association's *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a). As Travers (2006) argues, "transgender inclusive policies tell us little about the inclusiveness of the environment for transgender participants. Still policy changes pave the way for greater inclusion and challenges to the gender binary-based sex segregation of sport" (p. 443). Due to the recent enactment of the MHSAA's intended trans- inclusive policy, it is necessary to begin understanding the inclusiveness of this environment for trans- youth. Specifically, this thesis questions: with the newly enacted MHSAA policy, how do trans- youth in Manitoba navigate and experience high school sports? What, if any, are the impacts of the new policy for trans- youth?

3.2 Methodology

To examine these questions, I adopt a de/constructionist epistemology and queer-feminist critical interpretivist theoretical perspective, structuring this project in a qualitative research design and methodology. In particular, I work from the standpoint that understandings and phenomena in the social world "are socially constructed in particular contexts" (Silverman, 2012, p. 35) and their meanings are created in human social interaction (Arolker & Seale, 2012, p. 595). Incorporating a queer-feminist critical interpretivist theoretical perspective, this thesis uses critical inquiry and reflection of social injustices through an analysis and deconstruction of gender (Ackerly & True, 2010, p. 2) and the ways in which institutions such as sport are organized based on, and reproduce, dichotomous constructs. This perspective is grounded in the

recognition of my values, social context, and personal experiences that I bring to the research (Ackerly & True, 2010, p. 63), with awareness that my reality(ies) may be very different than the multiple realities of trans- youth and stakeholder participants. Further, this perspective centers the position that lived experiences structure one's understanding of their social environment (Hesse-Biber, 2014a, p. 6), which inevitably cannot be dismissed from the research process. This process is inherently relational.

Working within a queer-feminist framework, one moves beyond challenging sexism, homophobia, and transphobia to challenging the perceived “naturalness” of sex-gender categories altogether (Travers, 2006, p. 433). Within this thesis, queer-feminism is drawn on to “challenge existing meanings and to open new spaces for construction of meaning” (Lucas, 2009, p. 17) including the deconstruction of gender and gender binaries and, subsequently, reimagining high school sport in Manitoba.

This thesis is grounded in a relationship-based approach, situated in relational research: research grounded in the

recognition and valuing of connectedness between researcher and researched, between knowledge elites and the societies and communities in which they live and labor.

Relationality [. . .] is rooted in emerging conceptions of community, shared governance and decision making, and equity. (Lincoln, 2002, p. 331)

A relationship-based approach minimizes power imbalances between the participants and myself as the researcher, as we come into “communal contact” (Lincoln, 2002, p. 331) through interaction and the sharing of experiences that highlight connections. A relational and interactive approach allows for representation of the voices and experiences of trans- youth and highlights shared experiences, including experiences shared between “researcher” and “researched.” As

described further in this chapter, this research aims to affirm and present often marginalized voices while remaining critical and conscious of social and cultural constructs that shape and reproduce hetero-cis normative contexts.

Relationships shape the entirety of this research project: my relationships with trans-youth, relationships with administrators, policy makers, teachers, coaches, and relationships with advisors and committee members. These relationships have influenced my perspectives throughout the research process, perspectives that may “shift over time and from one moment to the next based on the context at hand” (Ceglowski, 2002, p. 7). As a trans- person and athlete, my relationship to this research project inextricably shapes the epistemological perspective in which the project is situated within, or how I know what I know (Wilson, 2008, p. 33). Personally, the importance of meaningful relationships is central to all aspects of my life and therefore influences my knowledge and where it has come from.

This thesis aims to understand the lived experiences of trans- youth in relation to the newly enacted MHSAA policy, through the voices of trans- youth themselves. It is crucial to provide space for trans- youth to have a voice in “making changes in the environments they navigate, to support their being and their becoming, their growth and their transition to adulthood” (Veale et al., 2015, p. 71) rather than continuing within and outside of academia to speak on behalf of, and ultimately exclude, trans- youth. The review of literature in Chapter II demonstrates, albeit more generally, the deep and profound violence experienced by trans- people in sport, and simultaneously draws attention to an overall lack of research focused on trans- experiences, from trans- people directly, or “on-the-ground actors” (Short, 2013, p. 4), that are endured when attempting to engage in sport. This Master’s thesis is imperative at this point in time in order to begin understanding trans- experiences at the high school sport level, from

trans- youth directly, and begin challenging an “unthinkable” gender binary in which high school sport has long been organized. While it is recognized within the review of literature that there is no single trans- experience, recommendations surface from youth narratives targeting common trends which may have the potential to contribute to the legitimacy of trans- athlete policies in Manitoba high schools and in other contexts.

Feminist researchers are “particularly concerned with reducing the hierarchy between the researcher and the researched,” and interactive sharing of identities and stories from all members has been drawn on to break down notions of power and to increase relationality (Hesse-Biber, 2014b, p. 199). In the next sections, I discuss the methods used to collect data, participants of this study and recruitment strategies, data analysis and narration processes, and reflect on the limitations of this study.

3.3 Methods

3.3.1 Data collection process

In order to ensure the topic of this thesis is addressed and the voices and experiences of trans- youth are central, a hybrid of interactive and semi-structured interviews with youth were used. I draw on Brinkmann and Kvale’s (2015) conception of “inter-views” which understands inter-views as conversations amounting from everyday life “where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee. An interview is literally an inter-view, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (p. 4). The production of knowledge in inter-views is relational in that both the experiences of trans- youth as participants and myself as researcher, as well as the interactions we engage in, are important; the inter-view is a co-constructive, relational process involving all members (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 343). The use of inter-views throughout this thesis aids

in capturing participant responses in their own words and depictions of their experiences: qualitative inter-views have the potential to produce “descriptions and narratives of everyday experiences as well as the epistemic knowledge justified discursively in a conversation” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 64). A hybrid interactive semi-structured inter-view was used to hear firsthand accounts of the ways in which trans- youth navigate and experience high school sport and whether or not the newly enacted policy is making an impact within their everyday high school lives. An example template of interview⁵ questions that were discussed with trans-youth is included in Appendix A.

A combination of an interactive approach, primarily an unstructured interview style developed by interpretive scholars through their critiques of the “myth of value-free scientific inquiry” (Ellis, Kiesinger, & Tillmann-Healy, 1997, p. 123), and a semi-structured interview style is important in the context of establishing relationships with trans- youth. The methods used to engage in interactions with trans- youth are significant considerations, as Griffin (2012) insists that “we cannot claim to effectively advocate for the rights of people if we have not taken the time to understand their experience” (p. 11). I believe interactive semi-structured interviews allowed me to begin understanding the multiplicity of high school experiences for trans- youth.

One intent of interactive semi-structured interviews, recognizing the vulnerable information participants could share in this project, was that an interactive approach could work to minimize power imbalances between trans- youth and myself and further develop relationships with participants as I offered to share my personal, potentially similar, experiences. Ellis et al. (1997) speak to the usefulness of interactive interviewing as an interpretive method to

⁵ While I have chosen to use the nomenclature ‘interview’ rather than ‘inter-view’ for the remainder of this thesis, my usage of this term remains grounded in Brinkmann and Kvale’s (2015) conception of inter-view/interview as a relational, inter-change of views.

gain intimate understanding of experiences that have the potential to be “emotionally charged and sensitive topics” (p. 121), providing a relational component of support:

We view interviewing as a collaborative communication process occurring between researchers and respondents [. . .] For us, interactive interviewing involves the sharing of personal and social *experiences* of *both* respondents and researchers, who tell (and sometimes write) their stories in the context of a developing relationship. (p. 121)

The developing relationship in this process intends to allow for categories of “researcher” and “researched” to become blurred (Ellis et al., 1997, p. 121) and power to be minimized in the collaboration of narrative sharing.

As Ellis et al. (1997) suggest, the shared, relational understanding of the research process in interactive interviews “helps respondents feel more comfortable sharing information and closes the hierarchical gap between researchers and respondents [. . .] thus promoting dialogue rather than interrogation” (p. 123). This method attempts to distance the research process from “analyzing” participants to engaging in conversation, where youth are not simply expected to answer set questions but can also ask questions in order to gain a greater understanding of the study and/or shared experiences. These relations and personal interactions, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) explain, are central to the interview and directly shape the results of the research process (p. 343). The casualness of the interactive interview setting, a space in which a multitude of personal and social experiences are shared, is informed by relational aspects that allow for interpretation and sharing of cultural knowledge, such as cultural knowledge developed within Manitoba high schools. Interactive semi-structured interviews were particularly useful in relation to trans- youth, albeit in differing ways than originally envisioned, as detailed in section 3.3.3.

Throughout the interactive semi-structured interview process, I kept a research journal to

reflect on differing stages of the research. In this journal, a log was recorded by hand of the time and context of the conversations that I engaged in with trans- youth, as well as how the interactive process evolved during each individual interview. Notations in the research journal took place within the time frame of half an hour to one hour after each interview finished depending on the context and location of the interview setting, and reflective logs also occurred hours after the interview after having personal time to reflect more deeply about conversations that took place. In addition to specific details of the interview location, time, and setting, this journal was used to log my own thoughts, feelings, reactions, observations, and reflections. Developing a research journal is significant in order to reflexively document the process of the research, the interactions that take place, and to remain aware of the negotiations I make as a researcher. Keeping a researcher journal, in which I could reflect upon and compare entries, greatly contributed to the reflexive exploration of “the negotiations involved in the performance of our particular situated selves in the research process [as] one way of seeing how power operates in the production of knowledge” (Ristock, 2002, p. 42), and strengthened my abilities to hold myself accountable to the participants and myself “for what I am making of their stories as I produce my own” (Ristock, 2002, p. 43).

In addition to Manitoban trans- youth, key stakeholders involved in the creation and implementation of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) are also included in this study. In order to present a narrative of this particular MHSAA policy, while simultaneously remaining deconstructive and disruptive in my attempt to represent historical knowledges in a way that is “reconstructed from the sources available about the past” (Munslow, 2003, p. ix), open-ended semi-structured interviews were conducted with five key stakeholders involved in this policy’s development: Morris Glimcher, former MHSAA Executive Director of

forty years; Chad Falk, current MHSAA Executive Director of one year; Scott Kwasnitza, Superintendent at Lord Selkirk School Division and Past President of the MHSAA Board of Directors; Reece Malone, former Education Program Coordinator at Rainbow Resource Centre, and; Paul Paquin, Curriculum Consultant with Physical and Health Education at the Department of Education and an MHSAA Manitoba Education and Training Board of Director member. This interview process gathered historical knowledges of this policy by questioning the initial motivations to create such a policy, the trajectory of the policy development, and the overall reactions toward and responses to the new policy. An example template of interview questions that were discussed with stakeholder participants is included in Appendix B.

In a brief feminist media analysis, I compare interviews with key stakeholders alongside selected media texts ranging between 2014 and 2016 to endeavour the “opportunity to uncover numerous insights in a variety of texts” (McIntosh & Cuklanz, 2014, p. 269) such as print news and internet media. This media analysis aids in capturing the cultural moment in time when the MHSAA enacted its trans- inclusive policy; a policy that is inevitably represented differently through a variety of cultural texts.

From the narratives shared by trans- youth I offer insights into the effectiveness of the newly enacted *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) and represent their experiences in and perceptions of high school sport in Manitoba. From discussions with stakeholder participants, I critically examine and deconstruct the practices and actions that they conveyed in their attempt to create more inclusive sport contexts for trans- youth, while remaining implicated in the preservation of a binary structure of sport. The research and analytical process for this project is described in more detail in the following sections.

3.3.2 Methods toward the de/construction of sport policy histories and narratives

Including a narrative chapter on the development and enactment of the MHSAA's policy is important for a number of reasons. First, this narrative adds to the growing scholarship on histories of sport policy development, and attempts to present new ways forward to inclusion within sport history more broadly. The field of sport history is not static and new topics, narratives, ideologies, and methods are continually embraced (Phillips, 2006, p. 2). This narrative adds to this growing literature, recognizing that trans- sport policy development is a new and worthy topic that must be addressed. Second, representation of this policy's development process is unique. It is the first historical narrative that incorporates stakeholders' perspectives spanning the policy's creation and enactment, overviews of motions and Board of Directors' meetings that either did or did not discuss the policy and its status, and a consideration of the ways in which media either did or did not take up interest in a provincial education organization (MHSAA) introducing a foundational policy for trans- youth in Manitoba. Third, it will be useful, in general, to have an understanding of this policy's development process in the form of a narrative. Providing knowledge of this process contributes to necessary representations of "the experiences, both in and out of sport activities, that people who have not received adequate attention [. . .] have found meaningful" (Struna, 2001, p. 205).

Situating Chapter IV as a historical narrative, in which I work to deconstruct and queerly engage in this material, provides the opportunity to understand the MHSAA's initial conception, creation, development, and enactment of the policy as a "representation of pastness" rather than a discovery of definitive evidence or one story of 'truth' of the past (Munslow, 2003, p. 6). Throughout Chapter IV, it is evident that although the narratives and representations presented can be considered a "representation of pastness," the MHSAA's policy is still very much in the

present; this is central to understanding the ways in which conversations around, and interactions with, current high school youth are essential to any understanding of the effectiveness and impact of this particular MHSAA policy.

The use of the term ‘narrative’ does not signify one singular or definitive ‘story’ being told and/or represented. My usage of ‘narrative’ includes representations of experiences, actions, ideologies, perspectives, and histories of stakeholders interviewed about their roles in creating and implementing the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a). A distinction between ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ is necessary to clarify prior to undertaking a queer deconstructionist approach in Chapter IV. Leading deconstructionist historian Alun Munslow (2007) clarifies a “story is the recounting of a sequence of events [. . . .] Narration, on the other hand, refers to the manner in which a story is told [. . . .] But, because the process of ‘telling’ or narrating constitutes a complex system of representation, *how* a history is told is as important as *what* is being told” (p. 4 emphasis in original). This distinction between ‘narrative’ and ‘story’ is important to consider to better understand not only the ‘what’ of the development of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (2015a), but also ‘how’ this narrative is told.

Chapter IV moves beyond traditional discourses of narrative as definitive ‘story,’ to follow Munslow’s (2007) suggestion in *The New History* that historians writing historical texts “replace the epistemological contradiction that lies at the heart of modernist history thinking, that of the ‘truthful interpretation,’ with the much more helpful notion of history as a form of representation” (p. 4-5). History as a form of representation rather than a story that tells *the* definitive truth, replaces the idea that all positionalities, experiences, and rememberings can exist in this one truth. It acknowledges contrasting experiences, perspectives, and beliefs that may have existed, and currently remain in existence. A queer deconstructionist lens allows for a

consideration that “each group has its own unique history and faces its own struggles” (Booth, 2005, p. 12). Therefore, the views and perspectives of multiple stakeholders involved in the creation and enactment of this policy, all of who work within different organizations and who may experience differing social locations and positionalities, ultimately influenced and shaped the development of it. The representation of multiple, potentially conflicting, perspectives is visible and valued through a queer deconstructionist narrative.

While this narrative is a representation of the MHSAA’s processes of developing this policy, it is not a replication. This is an important distinction when understanding how history is and can be written about, and the inherent claims of ‘truth’ that follow. The narrative in Chapter IV cannot be a replication of the exact happenings of the development of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a), a claim supported by Munslow’s (2007) explanation of writing history, because replication is not possible or feasible. As Munslow (2007) explains: “history remains a fictively determined attempt at recovering (whether it is reconstructing, constructing or deconstructing) the past in the only possible way – through the creation of a narrative about it” (p. 29). The concept of ‘history’ throughout Chapter IV is similar to McLachlan’s (2012) understanding, which defines history “as a process of arranging fragments of the past together” (p. 438) to highlight that narratives that arrange fragments of the past, rather than attempt to replicate or claim the sole truth, can be used as a “means to make commentary on contemporary cultural conditions and the politics of knowledge, simultaneously” (p. 438). Chapter IV relies on the information, experiences, and narratives expressed by stakeholder participants in interviews, combined with fragments of meeting minutes and media coverage, and is arranged to represent the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a).

In the 2000s decade, several sport historians began to question and criticize written

accounts of sport history for privileging sole use of archival research that seemingly suggests ‘truth’ or ‘facts,’ rather than recognizing alternative historical methods and writing styles, such as narratives and representations, or simply even positioning oneself in historical production (Phillips, 2006, p. 8). Although the ways in which histories are written have evolved, Munslow (2007) remains insistent that “from the eighteenth through to the present century, histories were and still are often regarded as *the* story about a particular past” (p. 4). Recognizing the essentialism apparent in this idea of representing *the* story about a specific topic or past, historians and those writing historical accounts have begun to incorporate the voices of people who are then able to tell their own stories. Yet, although this is an essentialist view in many works within and outside of historical accounts, Booth (2006) cautions that this reclamation of voices is not the “real problem” for historians. The problem arises when these voices are then contextualized by the same historians:

contextualization means making decisions about the relationships among multiple viewpoints. Ultimately, no matter how diverse the subjects’ voices in the represented world of the text, the historian’s narrative will consider one perspective best or right. In short, the linguistic paradigm has not changed the reality that historians are still narrators who subordinate subjects’ viewpoints to their own. (Booth, 2006, p. 47)

Recognizing this problem, narratives presented in Chapter IV go beyond essentialist constructions of the development and implementation of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) and embrace McLachlan’s (2012) work on queer engagement.

While McLachlan (2012) maintains the positive potential of representing history through a deconstructionist framework due to the deconstruction of a historian’s relationship between their ‘self’ and their work (p. 438-439), McLachlan (2012) promotes and embodies a move

beyond deconstructionism in favour of a queer engagement. Both a theory and a process, queer engagement practices attempt to “move beyond deconstruction and at the same time honor particular ways of thinking about subjectivity and its role in making sport history” (McLachlan, 2012, p. 432). The use of queer engagement empowers scholars like McLachlan (2012) to “embrace deconstruction and subjective approaches to history making, without falling into the trap of writing a coherent ‘self’ into the text” (p. 431), which includes a poststructural awareness of the non-static, non-easily defined or categorized ‘self.’ While deconstructionist history reflects on the implication of the historian writing a narrative while making choices as to what parts of history are represented and what those parts signify (Munslow, 2003; 2007), McLachlan (2012) challenges the lack of awareness that categorizing oneself is never straightforward, linear, or permanent and instead embraces this disruption when engaging with the past (p. 435). My engagement in Chapter IV’s narrative, as an outsider not present in the MHSAA’s past discussions, is “shaped by the disruptive aspects of queer theory” (McLachlan, 2012, p. 440), which may include disrupting “normalized notions [. . .] [that] reinforce particular ways of understanding identity, social relationships (arrangements), and a hierarchy of acceptable experiences” (p. 440). This type of process allows McLachlan (2012), and potentially myself, to “be at once deconstructive and disruptive, but it also allows me to bring my various sensibilities to the inquiry” (p. 440-441). By embracing a queer engagement and deconstructionist lens, I aim to represent historical knowledges presented in a way that is “reconstructed from the sources available about the past” (Munslow, 2003, p. ix) while recognizing my implication in it.

3.3.3 Participant details and recruitment strategy

Interactive semi-structured interviews with youth and open-ended semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders were utilized as research methods in order to, first, provide

space for the voices of trans- youth and, second, to begin formulating an understanding of the origins and social decisions of the MHSAA trans- inclusion policy. Overall, I conducted four interviews with trans- youth and five interviews with stakeholders; specific details of all participants are described in more detail in Chapters IV (stakeholders) and V (trans- youth). The rationale for a set number of participants in order to reach “saturation” within positivist research was not a significant consideration for this thesis. Instead, this project is grounded in valuing the existence of multiple lived experiences and realities that are specific to different people and locations, acknowledging that trans- youth in different contexts, from varying cultures, experiencing varying intersecting oppressions, may have differing experiences to share.

This research was designed to hear from youth who self-identified their gender as transgressive, on the spectrums of trans-, gender variant, gender non-conforming, gender diverse, gender independent, gender creative, non-binary identities, and/or any gender identity label outside of Eurocentric conceptions such as Two Spirit, Hijra, and Mak Nyah. Terminology is important in relation to participants in this thesis as, “language is a central site—for the negotiation of meanings” (Valentine, 2007, p. 25) and therefore has the ability to exclude certain identities while simultaneously privileging others. It has been shown that providing space for trans- youth to self-identify in unique ways resonates positively for those youth (Veale et al., 2015, p. 11). Allowing for self-identification and gender self-declaration is necessary to recognize the existence of multiple realities for trans- experiences and an important initial step to building relationships with students.

In attempt to recognize the power intrinsic to language and unequivocally challenge the contexts in which normative language is constructed from and reproduced within, when referring to youth participants throughout this thesis I use the identity labels they use to describe

themselves. Differences relating to power, age, gender, class, and race are present in this research. Having participants self-identify their gender, an often taken for granted and overlooked consideration in relation to gender and trans- identities, reinforces the relational accountability within this thesis. In the recruitment poster that was attached to letters of invitation to superintendents and principals, discussed in more detail later in this section, it was necessary to make clear that trans- youth who were interested in participating did not specifically have to identify as “trans-” or “transgender” to participate in this study. Rather, youth could identify anywhere along the trans-, gender variant, and transgressive spectrums. Whether youth had to specifically identify as “transgender” in order to participate resulted in one of the main questions and inquiries from GSA advisors and students. In terms of eligibility criteria, trans-youth could choose to participate in sport or not, be from rural or urban Manitoba contexts, aged 16 or older (as required by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)), and be enrolled in a Manitoba high school.

After obtaining research ethics approval from ENREB at the University of Manitoba on August 11, 2017, recruitment of stakeholder participants began. In order to begin piecing together historical knowledges of the creation and enactment of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a), MHSAA stakeholders were first contacted. Morris Glimcher, former Executive Director for the MHSAA, Reece Malone, former Education Program Coordinator at Rainbow Resource Centre, and one employee at The 519⁶ were contacted by email with a letter of invitation (Appendix C) outlining the project in detail and to inquire about their participation in interviews to discuss the MHSAA’s trans- inclusion policy.

⁶ The 519 employee indicated they were unable to participate as they were not involved in this policy’s creation.

They were also provided with an informed consent document (Appendix D) and an interview guide that listed potential interview questions.

During each individual interview, stakeholder participants had the opportunity to suggest names of additional stakeholders involved in the development of the MHSAA's trans- inclusion policy who could then be contacted. The intent of this process was to ensure I spoke with as many key stakeholders as possible involved in the policy's development to represent a range of perspectives regarding this policy. Both Paul and Scott, two influential members of the MHSAA Board of Directors at the time of the policy's creation, were suggested by Morris. Four additional stakeholder names were suggested, three of which did not respond to my inquiry and one declined to participate after indicating they were not involved in the creation and/or implementation of this policy.

All stakeholder interviews were conducted in person, two of which took place in a public coffee shop and three took place in each respective stakeholders' office. The shortest stakeholder interview lasted thirty-two minutes and the longest lasted one hour and forty-four minutes. I recorded each interview with an electronic voice recorder and transcribed each one verbatim. Utilizing a semi-structured method, interviews with stakeholder participants were not "an open everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire" but rather a balance between these two styles and "conducted according to an interview guide that focuses on certain themes and that may include suggested questions" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 31-32). All stakeholders were able to describe their "interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 31), where both stakeholders and myself co-construct knowledge through our interview and inter-action (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Representing the interviews that took place with stakeholder participants, Chapter IV presents a narrative of the Manitoba High Schools Athletic

Association's (MHSAA) creation and enactment of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a).

During Morris' interview, I asked for his assistance to share the study information and recruitment poster through his email connections to high school coaches and athletic directors, who could then share this information with student athletes. Upon Morris' suggestion, an official request for assistance was sent to the current MHSAA Executive Director, Chad Falk, on September 2, 2016. In order to share the study information among MHSAA's networks, this request asked for my study information to be discussed at the MHSAA's upcoming September start-of-school zone meetings and through MHSAA's ongoing updates sent to all member schools via email. The intent of this circulation process and recruitment strategy was to begin spreading awareness of the study to trans- students potentially already participating on sports teams and who may be interested in this study. This process also had the potential to begin illustrating the in/effectiveness of the policy in helping trans- youth access high school sports, individual schools' and administrators' commitment (or lack thereof) to the policy, school divisions and geographical contexts in need of exploration regarding their support (or lack thereof) of the policy and, subsequently, trans- youth in need of support in those same areas.

This method developed from the recognition that if no responses or interest from participants came from this recruitment strategy, this silence is as noteworthy as if participants *did* respond and raises further questions: Are coaches sharing this study information with student athletes? Are coaches uncomfortable with having conversations about transgressive genders with student athletes? Did coaches share the study information with student athletes but none identify as trans-? If so, are trans- youth really welcomed in high school sport spaces? However, this email request was not acknowledged by Chad at the time the email was sent. In December 2016,

after receiving no response from Chad, I sent a follow up email to inquire about whether he was able to share the study information as requested. At this time, I also invited Chad to take part in an interview to discuss the creation, enactment, and ongoing facilitation of the MHSAA's trans-inclusion policy. I received a response from Chad on March 19, 2017 in support of my study in which he expressed his willingness to participate in an interview. However, whether he passed on the provided study information through zone meetings and MHSAA updates at the beginning of the school year remains unknown.

After obtaining research ethics approval from ENREB, I also began sending letters of invitation to superintendents (Appendix E) in Winnipeg and rural divisions. Letters of invitation included: a description of the thesis project; an explanation of the project aims to directly benefit trans- students by providing the space to share experiences and perceptions of sport in Manitoba high schools; an indication that a report would be created and provided to all superintendents and school divisions involved in the thesis at the end of the intended project in order to share themes and recommendations that arise from interactions with trans- youth; a request for superintendents to participate by granting approval to conduct this study in schools within their division and to assist in the recruitment plan by sharing the provided information to faculty advisors in their school-based Gay Straight Alliances (GSA).

Taylor et al. (2011) describe GSAs as student clubs with a variety of students involved, including both LGBTQ and heterosexual students and at least one or two faculty supervisors (p. 19). These clubs are referred to by different names depending on the context, however the general purpose is to “provide a much-needed safe space in which LGBTQ students and allies can work together on making their schools more welcoming for sexual and gender minority students” (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 19). For this study, GSAs were considered an important space to

begin interacting with trans- youth, and a space in which many youth have previously established as a safe space. The intent to advertise this study within high school GSAs was to begin building relationships with trans- youth in a space in which many consider to be safe and where the casual environment may allow for time to get to know students. With this intent in mind, however, it is imperative to summarize the varying levels of support toward this project expressed from all levels of the public education system across Manitoba.

Within Manitoba, there are a total of 38 school divisions. Out of 38 divisions, I contacted 10 regarding this study, four of which are urban and six are rural. Of the 10 divisions contacted, four divisional superintendents and research officers responded with approval⁷ although one of the four divisions provided access to only a select number of schools within their division. Three divisions responded to my request but declined participation based on (1) current participation in other research studies, (2) principals not in favor of their school participating after the superintendent shared the study with them, and, (3) no additional information regarding their firm decline to participate even when prompted for further clarification. The final three divisions contacted did not respond to the research request.

At the time of requesting approval from divisions, there were a number of labour intensive steps requested by the four divisions that approved the research that took considerable lengths of time, albeit for important safety and ethical precautions. These steps included applications outlining the project and research intents, proof of university-based ethics board approval, thesis advisor verification and authorization, a child abuse registry check, a criminal record check with a vulnerable sector search, and individual school board reviews of research.

As required by ENREB, after gaining approval from superintendents for division-wide

⁷ Of the divisions that approved this research, three divisions were urban and one was rural.

access, I then sent letters of invitation to each individual principal (Appendix F) within the division which requested for them to share their letter of invitation and a recruitment poster (Appendix G) to GSA advisors at their school who could then share the study information with students. Of the four divisions in which superintendents provided approval, 17 principals were contacted to request their assistance in sharing study information with their schools' GSA advisors. Of the 17, seven principals did not reply to either the original email request or the one follow up email that was sent. Of the ten principals who responded, six agreed to send the study information to their schools' GSA advisors and one agreed to put up a poster in their school. Three principals responded but declined their schools' participation for reasons such as (1) a school's GSA advisor being on leave and not able to coordinate the research with students, (2) a firm lack of interest on behalf of the principal, and (3) a principal's perceived lack of information directly from the superintendent regarding the study. In consideration of the principals that did not respond to their school's invitation, principals may have passed the study information onto staff within their schools but did not respond to the email or indicate this communication took place. Additionally, GSA advisors within these schools could have passed the study information onto GSA student members who simply may not have expressed interest.

Due to the restrictions ENREB set on this study, in particular, my ability to contact GSA advisors directly as the onus was set on *GSA advisors* to contact *me* to express interest from their GSA or individual students, how far reaching the study information was shared is unknown. Keeping in mind the statistics presented above, only two school GSAs invited me to come speak to their groups about the study, one in Winnipeg and one in rural Manitoba. As a recruitment strategy, engaging with GSAs in order to build relationships with students before potential interviews was not as effective as originally envisioned; in part, I believe the levels of

gatekeeping that deter circulation of information to marginalized and underrepresented populations within schools prevented more students from becoming aware of the study. Rather than engaging with multiple students at multiple GSAs across Manitoba in accordance with the intended research design, primarily, GSA advisors shared the information with students and students then contacted me directly or through their GSA advisor. As a result, four interviews were conducted with youth; two from rural contexts and two from urban.

Prior to engaging in interviews with youth, I met each youth individually to: allow for introductions and a chance to provide direct information about the study, as youth originally heard the study information second hand from GSA advisors; answer any questions youth may have about participation; thoroughly explain consent options to youth, and; inform youth of the research design to use interactive semi-structured interviews. While explaining this method, I suggested interactive components such as playing cards or going for a walk as options while engaging in our interview. However, during this discussion, all four youth expressed they would be comfortable simply participating in the interview rather than also engaging in a specific interactive activity at the same time. Although we were not engaging in a specific activity during the interview, we were still able to collaboratively create a casual, informal atmosphere simply through our conversations, jokes, and discussions of everyday life. The interview conversation itself was interactive; as identified above, interviews are conversations amounting from everyday life “where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee” (p. 4) and is a co-constructive, relational process involving all members (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 343). Furthermore, similar to Short’s (2013) research with sexual minority youth, I feel “I would have missed the knowledge reproduced” in this thesis “if I had chosen any other method of investigation” (p. 4).

After the first brief introductory meetings, I scheduled interview times with youth. Youth participants were asked where they would prefer to engage in our interview to ensure participants felt safe and comfortable in the interview setting. All interviews took place in-person; three of the four interviews with youth took place in an empty board room or office space at their respective schools after school ended, while one interview took place during a student's spare class outside of the school context in a food court. For each interview, I brought different types of snacks such as homemade cookies or Timbits, and used this as an icebreaker to begin our interactions in a casual environment.

At the beginning of each interview, I provided youth participants with a resource package that included information on trans-inclusive, trans-friendly, and low-to-no-cost counselling within Winnipeg and rural communities, reflective of the city or town the participant lives, as well as resources available in surrounding areas. Prior to engaging in interactive semi-structured interviews with trans- youth, I read over an informed consent form with each participant to provide space to answer any further questions and provide any clarifications that were not discussed at our introductory meeting. Trans- youth self-consented in situations where parental consent was not possible, such as trans- youth who do not have parental support regarding their transition and/or gender identity. This lack of familial support is a common occurrence for trans-youth; Veale et al. (2015) describe that 70% of trans youth feel their family do not understand them and this contributes to many serious concerns within family settings such as fear of rejection, discrimination, and violence (p. 69). In my ENREB application, I argued that in certain situations parental consent is not necessary, rather it can be detrimental, for trans- youth to participate in this thesis as it may force youth to "out" themselves to legal guardians. By forcing marginalized and minority groups, such as LGBTTIQ youth, to gain parental consent in order to

participate in research studies or “asking them to put themselves in harm’s way in order to participate,” this effectively “create[s] *greater* risk to these participants” (Taylor, 2008, p. 36).

That trans- youth could participate in my study without gaining parental consent was a significant requirement to ensure the interests of trans- youth were supported, a main component of research ethics boards (Taylor, 2008).

The concept of “mature minors” was used to defend that “youth who live with their parents (or legal guardians or in state care) but do not have a caregiver who supports their transgender identity and who are de facto responsible for their own wellbeing in this regard” (Taylor, 2008, p. 45), are therefore able to provide self-consent. I requested that ENREB consider “the differential effects of diverse social locations” (Taylor, 2008, p. 51) for youth. Further, after receiving consent from trans- youth and/or their parent(s), when accessible, consent remained ongoing throughout the research process and was included in the consent form. Importantly, Miller and Bell (2012) insist that consent and “satisfactorily completing an ethics form at the beginning of a study and/or obtaining ethics approval does not mean that ethical issues can be forgotten, rather ethical considerations should form an ongoing part of the research” (p. 61). Accordingly, two of the four youth who participated indicated they were comfortable and able to obtain parental consent (a copy of a legal guardian consent form is included in Appendix H) and also provided their assent (Appendix I), while two did not feel comfortable obtaining parental consent and therefore consented as a mature minor (Appendix J).

Interviews with youth participants lasted between fifty-seven minutes and one hour and twenty-three minutes. I recorded each interview with an electronic voice recorder and then transcribed the recording verbatim. Due to the interactive process of our interviews, regardless of the way “interactive” may be defined, as well as acknowledging the potential for youth to share

very personal knowledge and experiences, participating in more than one interactive semi-structured interview was presented to youth as an option. Ellis et al. (1997) highlight that interactive interviews can “require considerable time, multiple interview sessions, and attention to communication and emotions. It also may involve participating in shared activities outside the formal interview situation” (p. 121). At the end of each interview, youth participants and I discussed whether a second interview was necessary to discuss these topics further. At the end of each interview, all questions on the interview guide had been asked as well as many non-scripted prompting questions in between. Due to this, each participant decided they did not need a second interview. However, we agreed that this decision was flexible and that we could meet for a second interview if youth participants thought of more responses and/or stories, or wanted to discuss their responses further after reading through their transcript of our conversation. None of the youth participants chose to engage in a second interview.

At the end of each interview, after the recorder was turned off, I was able to debrief, albeit sometimes quite briefly, with youth participants by asking how they felt the interview went, if they had any further questions, and reminding them that they could add information at any time, and that I would send them a transcript to review within two weeks. I endeavoured to continue contributing to a casual atmosphere after the interview and ensured students had a safe way of getting home from school and/or back to school. The final interview questions asked of youth were about the research project itself; asking for participant input and hearing their feedback on the research, interview process, and the questions asked, is “consistent with developing a reciprocal relationship in feminist participatory research” (Ristock, 2002, p. 32).

3.3.4 Data analysis and narration

After I transcribed the interviews, I sent the transcription to all stakeholder and trans-

youth participants, providing the opportunity to make any changes, clarify comments, and add and/or delete any information. This process is referred to as “member reflections,” a practice that differs from member checks, validation, and verification that often presume a single reality, such as the researcher’s interpretation of participants’ responses (Tracy, 2010, p. 842). Instead, the use of member reflections “does not aim toward accuracy of a single truth, but rather provides space for additional data, reflection, and complexity” (Tracy, 2010, p. 842). Member reflections allowed for participants, and myself as the researcher, to identify and understand concerns shared during the interview, in an attempt to further minimize power and increase relationality.

The most important aspect of the analysis taking place in this research is that “the voices of the participants and their constructions of their experiences [are] placed at the center of the analysis” (Ristock, 2002, p. 37). Acknowledging that Short’s (2013) research “intended to take up the challenge of responding to this silence [of Canadian socio-legal scholars on bullying and safe-school policies] by drawing on the voices of sexual-minority students themselves” (p. 4), in similar fashion to my research, “the starting and ending point of my research—and what carries the research throughout—is the governing philosophy that we must value the knowledge of on-the-ground actors” (p. 4). My research takes up this type of governing philosophy.

For this thesis, I both draw on, and learn from, distinguished scholar Janice Ristock’s (2002) research and analysis process developed in her foundational work centering the experiences of abuse in lesbian relationships. Ristock’s (2002) research process includes three strategic components; a methodological approach motivated by “feminist links and postmodern interruptions” (p. 28). Ristock (2002) states:

the focus on feminist links keeps the research firmly aligned with participants and with efforts to overcome intersecting forms of oppression, while attention to postmodern

interruptions keeps the research open and responsive to cultural context, dismantling as need be, both what we are studying and how we are studying it. (p. 28)

This thesis, drawing similarities to Ristock's (2002), aims to listen to and learn from trans- youth and their experiences in high school sports in Manitoba "while at the same time providing solid information that can be acted upon to change conditions for the better and respond to" (p. 28) trans- youth and their experiences. This research is not under the assumption that all trans- youth share similar (and only negative) sporting experiences or that the participants interviewed for this research project "represent the full range" (p. 30) of trans- youths' experiences across Manitoba. Instead, this research strives to recognize the importance of "listening to the voices of participants and treating them as authoritative" (p. 35) regarding their personal and everyday lived experiences.

Aiming for a process that affirms and disrupts, the three strategic components of this research process, as outlined by Ristock (2002), include: (1) researching the "material conditions" of participants by "bringing forward the voices and subjective experiences;" (2) researching the "discursive conditions" in order to "disrupt rigidified thinking and break down false dichotomies by examining language," and; (3) raising questions through reflexive engagement "for critical analysis and accountability by critically examining what is being produced and who is producing it" (p. 28). Focusing on material contents within the interview conversations, Ristock (2002) explains a first reading of transcripts identifies themes from the stories participants tell to focus on participants' experiences and center "normally subjugated voices" (p. 38), such as lesbians experiencing violence in intimate relationships or trans- youth who are disproportionately underrepresented in sport settings. This focus is an attempt to identify "'new' stories based on the patterns that emerged from" participants to acknowledge these

experiences and respond to participants' needs (Ristock, 2002, p. 38). Material conditions of the everyday lives of trans- youth in relation to high school sports and athletic spaces are an important first consideration in which I can begin to acknowledge, and advocate for school administrators to better acknowledge, often overlooked or unheard sporting experiences and respond accordingly to participants' needs.

This first stage is intended to “be faithful to [participants’] stories so that they can recognize themselves when they see [researchers’] rendering of [participants’] contributions” (Ristock, 2002, p. 38). When analyzing interviews, this intent is essential as the narratives I write may be the first time trans- youth are able to identify their own experiences within written accounts; in mainstream accounts of sports, these stories and voices are still not often written or included. Recognizing the research process cannot be complete after this first phase for risk of suggesting experiences are “foundational, fixed, and final rather than providing a starting place for seeing how experiences are socially constructed and reflecting on the effects of those constructions” (p. 38), Ristock (2002) incorporates a second stage into the research design.

The second stage critically deconstructs discursive conditions apparent in the research by exposing language and questioning the ways in which “available discourses and [participants’] social positionings within those discourses” (p. 35) contribute to producing the language they use. This stage of analysis acknowledges that “language is seen as something that not only describes experience, but also as something that constructs it” by “analyzing the discursive content” (p. 39). Deconstructing this language includes challenging dichotomies that “are created and that relate to” (p. 39) sport spaces that are governed and organized by, and reproduce, binary constructions of gender regardless of their intent to be inclusive.

A third reading of interview transcripts is incorporated in this second deconstructive stage

to “make comparisons with themes found across the transcripts as a way of identifying patterns and counter-patterns” (Ristock, 2002, p. 39) with the intent of questioning what participants are *not* saying in order to “see evidence of how we are constituted partially within dominant discourses” that reproduce institutions and organizing structures within western contexts (p. 39). Ristock (2002) explains that “exposing the limitations of binaries that are at work in the discourses we have available to us is important for questioning the foundations of our knowledge,” not to “devalue” the stories and experiences of participants, but to “gain insights into how agency and positioning are wrapped up in these discourses in a complex way” (p. 39). For a study on trans- youth and high school sport, deconstruction of language, institutions, and ideology is central. As Ristock (2002) explains: “deconstructive thinking becomes almost a practical necessity when we are studying the lives of people who are marginalized within dominant discourses, and particularly when we are trying not to reproduce the systemic exclusion of heteronormative cultures” (p. 41). However, Ristock (2002) also makes aware that deconstructive thinking on its own will not avoid reproducing such heteronormative cultures. Rather, reflexivity, or acknowledging and identifying researchers’ “psychic and social location” (p. 42), is integral to engaging in research.

Engaging in reflexivity, the third stage of the research process, is “a way of being ‘answerable for what [I] learn how to see’” (Haraway, 1988, as cited in Ristock, 2002, p. 42) and is used to raise questions. This stage works to “bring forward my own subjectivity for my own self-awareness and to reveal my meaning-making process so I can remain accountable to participants for what I am making of their stories as I produce my own” (Ristock, 2002, p. 43). Ristock (2002) cautions that engaging in self-reflection and reflexivity is “not to stake claim on the problem at hand but to interrupt my own storytelling by reserving time to look behind the

veil at my own meaning-making processes” (p. 42). However, this stage remains mindful that by sharing one’s own positionality and experiences of engaging with the research, that it is “not claiming an authoritative voice” (Ristock, 2002, p. xii) on the lived experiences of participants. Rather, as outlined at the beginning of this section, the most important aspect of the analysis taking place in my research is that the voices of trans- youth participants and their interpretations of their experiences are “placed at the center of the analysis” (Ristock, 2002, p. 37).

Data analysis will continually consider intersecting factors of identity and oppression, such as race, class, and ability, and how trans- youths’ experiences and interpretations of these experiences may differ depending on these factors. Acknowledging these different experiences and providing space for varying voices, or “multivocality” that highlights the awareness of cultural differences between myself and the participants (Tracy, 2010, p. 844), is important to this project and enhances credibility by attending to and acknowledging this possibility as well as using methods that seek to hear participants’ experiences in their own words and through their own understanding, rather than through assumptive interpretations.

3.3.5 Methods summary

The importance of minimizing power imbalances and ensuring “the voices of the participants and their constructions of their experiences [are] placed at the center of the analysis” (Ristock, 2002, p. 37) is of utmost importance for this thesis, as it is one of the first written accounts that hears from and privileges the voices of trans- youth regarding their lived experiences in high school sport and sports spaces. The epistemological perspective in which this project is situated within, the methods, recruitment strategies, interactions with participants, terminology, and the ways in which data is collected and narrated, are all part of power relations and knowledge production. The relationship-based approach and relational accountability

embedded in this research project were designed to create an interactive, collaborative space where research is not based on my own consumption and academic merit. Rather, by acknowledging the material conditions of everyday lives of participants and affirming these voices and experiences, challenging discursive language and binary ways of organizing, and critically examining my own positionality and writing of participants' narratives through reflexivity (Ristock, 2002, p. 28) this thesis is committed to social change that positively benefits the lives of trans- youth.

Trans- youth represent a minority population, many of whom are not willing to participate in research where personal experiences are shared. It must be acknowledged that trans- youth who participated in this study offered a considerable amount of time and energy out of their daily lives to participate. The imposition research has on youth must be balanced with benefits to their daily lives by making the world a better place to live in (Ali & Kelly, 2012, p. 61). As I continue to draw on and learn from Ristock's (2002) research process and reflexive accountability, this thesis remains conscious of the limited accounts that take up the lives of trans- youth, in sports settings in particular, through their own voices and recognizes, similar to Ristock (2002), the challenge of this research "has been 'to risk the necessary invasions and misuses of other people's stories in order to bear witness with fierce but unsentimental conviction that such stories can transfix, overwhelm, linger and compel' us to action" (Lather & Smithies, 1997, as cited in Ristock, 2002, p. xii).

3.4 Limitations and Delimitations

As Janice Ristock (2002) stresses in the description of the third stage of her research process, engaging in reflexivity, "scrutiniz[ing] the process that I have engaged in and acknowledg[ing] the many limitations to this work" (p. 43) are fundamental components to any

self-aware and reflexive research project. There are a number of limitations and challenges apparent in this research. As outlined in the review of literature, many spaces associated with physical activity and sports are regarded as unsafe. Due to these apparent feelings, it may have presented challenges in finding trans- youth who are comfortable discussing experiences in these very spaces as the fear of retribution for speaking about these experiences is highly likely.

The scope of a Master's thesis prohibits a number of important considerations in this type of research. First, in order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of youth, school names and divisions are not identified. However, as Travers and Deri (2010) point out in their research, "this approach is methodologically problematic in that the specific geographic/demographic contexts" in which the negotiation of trans- and marginalized identities takes places (p. 493), such as high school sports in particular school divisions, are not identified and, thus, not held accountable. Further, Travers and Deri (2010) explain this obstacle is not possible to overcome "without risking the 'harm to human subjects' that our ethical requirements forbid" (p. 493). A larger sample size within this thesis could potentially draw awareness to the geographical regions and school divisions within Manitoba that are most in need of action and support. However, I also acknowledge that a larger sample size and study has the potential to lose the opportunity to meaningfully engage with youth in an interactive and relational manner.

Second, engaging in interactive semi-structured interviews with students who identified as trans-, even considering the range within this thesis of potential transgressive gender identities of youth, it was difficult to recruit youth who were willing or interested in discussing their perceptions of sports in their schools. Similar to Short's (2013) research, however:

there was an obvious trade-off between having a reliably representative sample (more likely with larger numbers of informants) and logistical limitations on the depth and

quantity of interviews I could undertake. Nonetheless, I was interested in the richness of detail made possible by a smaller sampling. (p. 7)

Trans- youth participants in this thesis “are not a sample and they represent only themselves” (Short, 2010, p. 344). However, their perceptions and experiences narrated in this research provide “truthful renditions of experience in several ways” (Short, 2013, p. 7), which can begin to build an understanding of the current cultures within high school sports in Manitoba.

Third, the research design of this study included recruitment through GSAs at different high schools and school divisions in Manitoba. However, in their school climate study Taylor et al. (2011) found that “students from schools with GSAs are much more likely to agree that their school communities are supportive of LGBTQ people” (p. 19) and youth find the administration in schools with anti-homophobia policies supportive of GSAs in general. With this understanding, recruiting trans- youth in high schools that have access to a GSA and are therefore perceived to have more supportive administration may have invisibilized the experiences of trans- youth and their perceptions of the MHSAA policy in schools that do not have a GSA and/or supportive staff. Further, this limitation may be perceived as a “convenience sample,” or recruiting participants from spaces in which they are “easily accessible” (Miner & Jayartne, 2014, p. 316), as schools that are more willing to be involved in this type of thesis are perhaps more generally supportive of trans- students and issues.

Finally, the scope of this research was unable to facilitate my interaction with multiple different schools, limiting the opportunity to begin detailing the vast array of experiences among trans- high school students and the potential similarities and differences between rural and urban contexts in relation to the MHSAA policy and its impacts. The four interviews with youth participants “cannot represent the full range” (Ristock, 2002, p. 33) of trans- youth and their

experiences in and perceptions of high school sports. Trans- youth who volunteered to participate may have greatly different experiences in and perceptions of sports than trans- youth who did not participate. Furthermore, while my focus in this research design was to challenge binary language and open up the possibilities of transgressive identity categories of youth interested in participating, use of the term trans- and comparing trans- youths' experiences to cisgender youth can inevitably "reinscribe" (Ristock, 2002, p. 43) a transgender/cisgender binary. However, I am also aware that within the current Canadian context, in this particular time and space, and with research that is just beginning to scratch the surface of trans- youth in sports and draw awareness to inequities among students in Manitoba high schools, there is a need to highlight these inequities while continuing to strive to broaden language and identity labels, and ultimately reimagine how the reproduction of this language organizes and structures everyday institutions such as sport.

My experiences as a trans- person actively involved in sport throughout my life informs the foundation for this research project. I am aware this may be perceived as a limitation due to a "bias" I present to the research study, especially in consideration of my personal connection with trans- communities in Manitoba. However, this bias is acknowledged and I view my positionality and social location as valuable to my research project as it aided in building relationships with trans- youth and helped to limit the perception of "researcher" and "researched."

A delimitation, or self-imposed limitation, of this study is that I intentionally explored only the Manitoba context due to the recent enactment of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a). As such, and as outlined above, the narratives resulting from this study are not generalizable; however, generalizing the experiences of trans- youth without considering intersecting factors and multiple realities would be cautioned against regardless. As

the MHSAA policy is so recent, this thesis presents initial narratives of the experiences of trans-youth in high school sport and the impacts of the newly enacted MHSAA policy, in which future studies and larger scale studies could compare.

A second delimitation is that this thesis intentionally excludes parents and legal guardians of trans- youth. Similar to discussions around parental consent and ethics boards, perspectives of parent(s) are not included in this study due to risks of forcing youth to “out” themselves to their parent(s) simply to participate. Ultimately, if included, this parental component had the possibility to result in trans- youth avoiding participation due to the attempt to recruit both trans-youth and their parent(s) or legal guardians.

Lastly, this study does not incorporate or speak with physical education teachers or coaches in Manitoba to hear their perspectives and awareness, or lack thereof, of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a). The inclusion of this population is an important consideration for future studies, as the review of literature highlights gender minority youths’ general lack of confidence in discussing LGBT matters with coaches, the recognition that coaches and physical education teachers have power to shape (in both positive and negative ways) physical activity and sport environments, and trans- youths’ association of unsafe feelings with athletic spaces.

3.5 Chapter Layout

In Chapter IV, I provide a narrative of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) based on the themes emerging from five interviews conducted with stakeholder participants involved in the creation and enactment of this policy. This narrative begins to piece together historical knowledges of the policy, detailing aspects such as initial motivations to create such a policy, the trajectory of the policy development, and the overall

reactions and responses toward the new policy. This information is supported through the incorporation of texts such as print news and internet media, to capture the cultural moment in time when the MHSAA enacted their policy.

Using the three stage research process developed by Ristock (2002), Chapter V discusses the themes apparent within four interactive semi-structured interviews conducted with trans-youth participants. This space presents the material conditions of the everyday lives of trans-youth, challenges binary understandings, language, and structuring, raises questions about the research through reflexive accountability, and ultimately strives to center the voices of trans-youth. In this chapter I also discuss and provide an overview of my researcher journal.

Chapter VI provides a final representation of major themes presented in this study and provides concluding recommendations as identified by trans- youth throughout the interviews. This chapter suggests future directions of study regarding trans- youth and their experiences navigating sport and sport policies in high school contexts.

Chapter IV: *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students:*

A Queer Deconstruction and Narrative

Research centered on the creation, implementation, procedural application, effectiveness, and impact of the Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association's *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) remains unexplored. Histories on topics of sport policy development, and sport policy in general, are expanding; however, there is still much to be written on sport policy within public and private spheres (Struna, 2001, p. 204). Due to the relatively recent enactment of this MHSAA policy (2015), a gap exists in public knowledge of the processes its development. This chapter presents a narrative of the Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association's (MHSAA) creation and enactment of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) using a queer deconstructionist lens outlined in Chapter III.

First, this narrative is informed by a representation of five open-ended, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders regarding their perspectives and involvement in the development of this policy. Second, this narrative is supported by an overview of selected MHSAA Annual General Meeting Notice of Motions (2014, 2015) and MHSAA Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes from the period between February 2014 to December 2016, all of which are publicly available on the MHSAA's website. Third, selected media texts including print news and internet media ranging between 2014 and 2016 are analyzed using a brief feminist media analysis in order to highlight the media coverage related to the enactment of this policy. Finally, a queer deconstruction is used to triangulate the above sources to chronicle and analyze the creation of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a). Throughout this process, I engaged in self-reflection of my positionality and implication in the narrative in order to recognize that my ontology inevitably filters and shapes the epistemology I

am working within and the resulting narratives I write (Munslow, 2003, p. 14).

4.1 Participants

To begin to understand the processes of, and thought behind, creating the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a), it was important for this research study to include the perspectives of those involved in the development of this policy and therefore necessary to interview key stakeholders who contributed to this evolution. These narratives aim to represent the historical knowledge of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) in a way that is “reconstructed from the sources available about the past” (Munslow, 2003, p. ix): interviews with stakeholders directly implicated in the creation and adoption of this policy. The representation of these historical knowledges and narratives will “be at once deconstructive and disruptive” (McLachlan, 2012, p. 440-441) and are significant in order to contextualize an understanding of the policy’s overall effectiveness and impact for trans- students in Manitoba high schools.

Each stakeholder participant engaged in an in-person, one-on-one, open-ended, semi-structured interview with myself. The participants were offered the option to use a pseudonym to mask their identity; however, all participants consented to using their everyday names in this study with the understanding that as public figures the information they share may be traced back to them. The key stakeholders interviewed for this research include: 1) Morris Glimcher, former MHSAA Executive Director of forty years; 2) Chad Falk, current MHSAA Executive Director of one year (who expressed his limited capacity to share insight on the creation, development, and implementation of the MHSAA’s trans- inclusion policy as he was not involved in these discussions); 3) Scott Kwasnitza, Superintendent at Lord Selkirk School Division and Past President of the MHSAA Board of Directors; 4) Reece Malone, former Education Program

Coordinator at Rainbow Resource Centre; and 5) Paul Paquin, Curriculum Consultant with Physical and Health Education at the Department of Education and an MHSAA Manitoba Education and Training Board of Director member. During each individual interview, participants had the opportunity to suggest names of other stakeholders that could be contacted to discuss this policy in order to represent a range of perspectives on the MHSAA's trans- inclusion policy; both Paul and Scott's names were put forward by Morris. Four additional stakeholder names were suggested, three of which did not respond to an invitation to take part in this study and one declined to participate after informing me that they were not involved in the creation and/or implementation of this policy.

A preliminary discussion of this study with the former MHSAA Executive Director, Morris, took place in December 2015. In this discussion I expressed my support for the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) and informed him of my intent to conduct a research study analyzing the policy, to which Morris expressed his support for the project. After receiving permission from the University of Manitoba's Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) to begin recruiting participants in August 2016, I contacted Morris via email with a letter of invitation to participate in an interview regarding the creation and development of the policy, and a request to share the study information and recruitment poster through his email connections to high school coaches to share with their athletes. Since Morris retired from his Executive Director position in June 2016, Morris suggested that an official request for assistance be sent to the current MHSAA Executive Director, Chad Falk, to share the study information with MHSAA's networks. This request for assistance was sent on September 2, 2016.⁸

⁸ The process of requesting the MHSAA to circulate my study information to their networks across Manitoba high schools is outlined in detail in Chapter III, section 3.3.3.

4.2 Representation and Narrative of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*

This section considers themes apparent in the interviews conducted with specific stakeholders involved in the creation of the Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association's (MHSAA) *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) in relation to MHSAA Board of Directors' meeting minutes and news media documents, in order to present a narrative of the developmental process of the policy. The themes emerging from the coding and thematic analysis processes described in Chapter III include: policy motivations, policy development processes, policy implementation, and post-policy implementation.

4.2.1 Policy motivations

Interviews conducted with stakeholders from the MHSAA, the Province of Manitoba's Department of Education and Training, and Rainbow Resource Centre demonstrate similar motivations toward the creation of a trans- inclusion policy for high school students across Manitoba. However, the interviews also present multiple intersecting motivations rather than a singular motivation. As all stakeholder participants work within different organizations and may have contrasting experiences, perspectives, recollections, and varying levels of investment in the policy and its development, a recognition of the multiple motivations begins representing the initial intentions that ultimately influenced and shaped the entire development of the policy.

During each individual interview, stakeholder participants were asked to share the motivations to create the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) from their understandings and involvement. From the MHSAA Executive Director's perspective at the time of the policy creation, there was an increase in discussions about trans- athletes involved in high school sports at various international athletic director conferences that Morris attended. Noting this increase, Morris shares his intent to begin conversations in the Manitoba context rather than

delay this discussion explaining, “I wanted to get ahead of the curve and I wanted to investigate and address it before it came to panic time where all of a sudden we were faced with a situation or request.” Morris explains the importance of having necessary information to be able to make decisions “with no pressure, with getting the facts, and saying ‘Okay, we feel comfortable with this’” by being proactive rather than reactive; a position that Chad explains is not the norm within the MHSAA as “so much of what we [the MHSAA] do here is reactionary and we’ll always have to be reactionary because we’re always dealing with something an athlete did or a coach did or whatever. It’s nice to kind of be you know proactive on things that we can be.”

The insistence of having a trans- inclusion policy in place is also apparent in the MHSAA Executive Director’s report included in the September 22, 2014 Board of Directors’ meeting minutes, in which section 5.2 briefly states “Transgender Athletes – we need to be proactive and develop a policy before it becomes an issue. We will work in partnership with all our stakeholders” (MHSAA, 2014b, p. 2); a noteworthy position considering Past President of the MHSAA Board of Directors Scott’s depiction of the group as a “pretty cautious” and “small c conservative” association in which implementing a trans- inclusion policy was “a departure” that “put the association out there.” Speaking passionately about inclusion within Manitoba high schools from the start of his interview throughout its entirety, Scott reiterates similar proactive motives stating, “I think at the end of the day it was about wanting to be proactive,” while also attempting to work alongside policies within other associations and provinces.

The MHSAA’s aim to be proactive in the initial discussions of creating a trans- inclusive policy aligns with Paul’s recollections as well. Paul explains that the intent to be proactive was also informed by a desire to create a policy that aligned with two pieces of Manitoba legislation enacted in a similar timeframe to the MHSAA trans- inclusion policy: *Bill 18, The Public*

Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools) (The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2012-2013) and *Bill 56: The Vital Statistics Amendment Act* (The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2013-2014). The motive driving this desire, as Paul explains, was to create a policy that aligned with legislation already in place in other jurisdictions. Policy alignment was not as apparent for Scott regarding initial policy discussions, yet Scott does recognize the ways in which the MHSAA trans- inclusion policy “meshes nicely” with other legislation in Manitoba schools. While Morris and Paul discuss a desire to be proactive in order to align an anticipated MHSAA trans- inclusion policy with existing legislation, it is clear that attempts to avoid accusations of discrimination function as an additional motivation.

In this sense, Paul details one of the MHSAA’s motivations to create this policy as “being proactive to be inclusive and to avoid um as an association um being seen as discriminatory,” and uses this moment to mention a human rights complaint the MHSAA lost in 2006 on the terms of gender discrimination. As Paul understands, the MHSAA may have had a goal of avoiding human rights complaints and accusations of discrimination at the forefront, commenting, “you know MHSAA may have been a little bit Human Rights gun-shy because of the hockey uh, well I guess complaint that they lost,” which may have sparked motivations in wanting to have an MHSAA trans- inclusion policy implemented sooner rather than later. Paul shares on this point further: “cause he [Morris], he didn’t want to um have to face, I think have the association face the situation where a trans athlete’s family would’ve brought a complaint of discrimination. And it, and I think in this particular case he was also in favour of supporting the trans athlete.” Similar to Paul, Morris also alludes to intentions to avoid discriminatory complaints as an association, suggesting that the overall goal of creating the policy was to ensure that we [MHSAA] don’t get trapped when the situation, when we get the question saying

‘Hey, we have a trans student. Can they play on the boy’s team or the girl’s team?’ I wanted to be prepared. And that was the main reason. I mean to be honest, upon thinking about this, it wasn’t safety, it wasn’t this. I just wanted to be ready. But as I got into it more I learned so much more. (Morris)

Scott also discusses the desire to be prepared for inevitable questions that surface in relation to gender and sport, and recalls receiving inquiries from “different places, schools, school divisions, you know, ‘what if?’ ‘What if we have this?’.” Yet Scott draws awareness to being prepared as an organization beyond the organization’s individualistic protection and more towards the safety of students who may want to access this policy stating, “we needed to act because we didn’t want, we didn’t wanna be in a situation where we didn’t have an answer and we didn’t want to be in a situation where a student athlete was mistreated or vilified or ostracized because of something that, you know, we needed to catch up with.” The focus on avoiding human rights complaints from trans- students, rather than concentrating on the safe inclusion of all students in high school sports, is implied in one of the two news media articles written about the MHSAA’s intent to create this policy.

Winnipeg Free Press reporter, Nick Martin (2014), wrote one article about the policy during the time of its development and quotes Morris discussing the goal of the policy, stating “the goal is ‘to give them [trans- students] an opportunity to participate in a minimally stigmatized way’” and is a topic that many organizations are attempting to be proactive on (para. 3). In this article, Martin (2014) uses much of the space to discuss the human rights complaint that the MHSAA lost in 2006⁹, and emphasizes “the human rights commission’s offer [to the]

⁹ The Pasternak twins, Amy and Jesse, sued the MHSAA, who was later found guilty, for gender discrimination when they were denied access to try out for their high school boys’ hockey team.

MHSAA of help in developing policies to deal with gender issues in high school sports” (para. 25). He further details that MHSAA consulted with the Manitoba Human Rights Commission during the creation of the trans- inclusive policy, grounding the presumption that a fear of human rights complaints may have influenced the MHSAA’s motivation (Martin, 2014). However, from an educational consultancy stakeholder perspective, such as Rainbow Resource Centre, motivations to create the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) directly center on realities of inclusion, vulnerability, and safety for trans- youth.

Reece, the Education Program Coordinator at Rainbow Resource Centre at the time of our interview, perceived the MHSAA’s motivations to create this policy as prompted by educational consultation workshops and professional development provided by Rainbow Resource Centre. Specifically, Reece identifies that workshop attendees took recommendations seriously “in terms of creating safer spaces for trans kids or gender non-conforming youth,” compelling the consideration of a trans- inclusive policy in high school sport:

Often times when we go into schools we’re asked to speak to teachers about inclusivity and equity and diversity and so umm part of our recommendations is to really think about policies that impact queer students and particularly trans students in terms of vulnerability. And in terms of the studies, when you look at gender non-conforming youth umm whether they identify as trans or straight or queer that umm we know that their vulnerability and risk for discrimination, isolation, marginalization, is much higher. [. . .] So uhh my recollection understanding was the discussion of um um including all students regardless of ability and identity. (Reece)

The motivations to include and engage all high school students, such as those mentioned by Reece, appears to have been a goal that Morris was not aware of until the policy development

was in progress.

While Morris explains the initial motivations behind wanting to develop this policy, he also reflects on secondary goals that became apparent; goals that highlight the intersecting components of this type of policy:

It's respectful, safe environments [. . .] So that was kinda, as I learned, kinda became my secondary goal. You know the first goal was just to be prepared for it [. . .] You know after I started it, it boiled down to the respect and safety. You know? At first it started at competition. That was all about you know competition and all that. But as we delved into it, competition wasn't the primary thing. It was the safety and that, that's what, ultimately that was the prime thing. You know not so much you know fair competition or whether they have a fair advantage. It was wayyy, wayyy deeper than that.

(Morris)

In comparison to Morris' reflection on secondary goals, Scott explains that inclusion and equity were at the forefront of the MHSAA's discussions of developing a trans- inclusive policy, ultimately indicating slightly varying objectives between stakeholder participants at different points of the policy's development. As Scott reflects:

So I think the motivation was a) to be proactive as an organization but probably more importantly to, I think inclusion and equity were right at the top of our list. You know we felt like if we believe in participation, if we believe as an organization in inclusion and equity then we needed to act on this. (Scott)

Similarly, upon his entry into the MHSAA Executive Director position, Chad recalls conversations about the MHSAA's aims for a trans- inclusion policy that intersect with Scott's sentiments, informing that inclusion is a fundamental aspect of this policy. Communicating key

MHSAA objectives, Chad explains that the MHSAA does not want to create “extra hurdles in terms of being involved in school sport” as its goal is to “have all high school students involved in school sports so however we have to achieve that, that’s what we aim to do.” Equity and inclusion as a top priority, as advocated for by Scott and Chad, are not readily acknowledged within responses to the two available articles written on MHSAA’s trans- inclusive policy.

In Martin’s (2014) *Winnipeg Free Press* article, online comments on the article take for granted safety within Manitoba high schools and instead focus on a fallacy acknowledged by Morris on the notion of ‘fairness’ in sport, illustrating unfavourable opinions toward a trans-inclusive policy in high school sport. For example, a commenter who voices support for the MHSAA policy receives a series of challenging responses from username ITGeek57 who confronts the supporter by stating:

But it does set a precedence for secondary education to comply, then what? Olympics or professional sports should too?

A transgender man [*sic*] claims he is a woman in high school then eventually gets to box at an Olympic level against women? Or rowing, weight lifting, javelin throwing shot put? Where does it end?

If you’re born a man, compete in men’s sports. Your decision to declare yourself a woman does not change the structure of your muscles and strength. You still have a physical edge over the average woman.

It creates an unfair playing field. (Martin, 2014, comment section, para. 25-28)

This uninformed response reveals the importance of considering the policy objectives from a broader cultural point of view, a consideration that Reece describes in detail.

When asked about further thoughts on the overall goals of creating the policy, Reece

discusses the importance of a broader consideration of “what that [inclusive high school sport] looks like from a cultural systemic point of view.” Reece explains this perspective further:

Part of the goal really was kind of a systemic approach of not just from a health and wellness or health perspective like the idea of just you know being involved, but we often talk about building community, camaraderie, um affirmation, uh we talk about how those fundamental parts in athletics um impact mental health and when we look at the mental health of trans folks in terms of depression and suicide ideation, that um, what are all the factors that lead not just the overt transphobias that happen but the systemic issues. The cissexism that happens, um all you know the, so that, there was, and when I mean by kind of intention is really addressing all those issues. And at first people thought it was just about access to like change rooms and washrooms but we need to think more broader than that because um a number of people have access to change rooms and washrooms, private change rooms and washrooms, but it doesn't necessarily mean that they're gonna be included. Or that's all the work that needs to be done, is change rooms and washrooms. And I think we need to kind of move away from that narrative of just change rooms and washrooms. (Reece)

The importance of a cultural systemic approach, as discussed by Reece, can be read within Sarah Teetzel's (2014) opinion column piece included in the December 17, 2014 edition of the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Similar to Reece's insistence on community, camaraderie, and affirmation, Teetzel (2014) writes in support of the MHSAA's “proposal to allow transgender high school students to compete with members of the gender they feel they are -- instead of the one assigned to them at birth” as a “step toward equality in sport” (para. 1). The column urges broader communities within Winnipeg to “choose to be open-minded, inclusive and welcoming to our

youth who do not identify with the sex they were assigned” (para. 15), implying that affirmation from larger social networks and communities will contribute to what Reece refers to as “fundamental parts of athletics,” ultimately working to improve all aspects of sport participation.

A common thread that became apparent throughout Morris’ discussion of secondary goals is the safe inclusion of trans- students in high school sport in the gender they choose. This overarching goal aligns with the MHSAA’s ‘mission,’ and ‘objectives’ as outlined in the 2016-2017 *Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association Handbook* (MHSAA, 2016a) more so than the initial goal of avoiding discriminatory complaints. The mission outlined in the MHSAA’s handbook encourages the participation of all students, committing to “promote the benefits of participation in high school sport by providing athletic and educational opportunities. All students enrolled in member schools, should have the opportunity to realize the physical, social and emotional values that can be derived from inter school competition” (MHSAA, 2016a, p. 3). Furthermore, the second objective listed in the handbook assures readers that the MHSAA will “consider the welfare of the participants as the primary criteria upon which all policies of the association are based” (MHSAA, 2016a, p. 3). The MHSAA’s attempt to ensure inclusion for all students and consider the welfare of all participants through the development of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) is recognized by Reece, mentioning that, perhaps surprisingly, the policy was first driven by those in the MHSAA system, such as those in administrative roles, who then led the policy’s development. Reece makes a point to acknowledge this as forms of leadership and allyship, recalling that the MHSAA “went above and beyond what [he] would have expected in terms of wanting to do it right” demonstrating a “leadership that [he] think[s] needs to be acknowledged” for contributing to a society of inclusion.

4.2.2 Policy development processes: Preparation and creation

There is limited information about the preparation and creation of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) within documents available in the public domain, such as the MHSAA Board of Directors' meeting minutes. The lack of information detailed in the meeting minutes gives an impression to readers that there is an absence of discussion around this policy, or that details of these discussions are missing. There is a general absence of the processes of creating the policy or status updates of its development. The MHSAA website lists the one sentence policy with an introduction of the MHSAA's stance on gender discrimination, an acknowledgments section that publicly recognizes the stakeholders involved in consultation and creation, and an example of one research report that contributed to the policy's development while noting there were that many documents were reviewed. Aside from this information, there is no concrete record or timeline publicly available of the policy development process. Interviews with stakeholder participants are helping in piecing together this trajectory.

When asked to describe the processes of how the MHSAA policy was created, Morris, Paul, Scott, and Reece all suggest that Morris undertook the majority of the initial work to research and develop the policy. Chad was unaware of specific roles undertaken by the stakeholders involved in its creation and suggested that Morris and Scott would be better able to provide an understanding. Rainbow Resource Centre provided Morris with some research sources to aid in drafting an initial policy, but as Reece explains, the MHSAA "really took the lead." Reece recalls that Rainbow Resource Centre was brought in for consultation, where the MHSAA "did the initial research and really wanted to hone in on trans youth-identifying and gender non-conforming youth-identifying as a population at risk," and were then able to develop an initial draft from this research. In their interviews, both Morris and Reece speak to the

circulation of ongoing drafts among stakeholders. For example, Rainbow Resource Centre was asked to review the first policy draft and specifically advised on areas such as “the wording and the nuances, um everything from the title of the policy to umm what was contained in the policy,” which Reece then commended the MHSAA for the work put into the policy stating “and uh really kind of in kudos to the athletic association cause they did lots of research.”

The in-depth work by Morris in the initial stages of creating and drafting the policy is also acknowledged by Morris who explains that although he was able to obtain policies from various associations in the United States and Canada, he found “there was nothing consistent in Canada or United States,” which stressed the importance of creating a unique policy for the Manitoba context. Although Morris had the initial interest in developing a policy, he explains that the MHSAA Board of Directors, a Board made up of 18 members including one President, one Past President, four Urban representatives, four Rural representatives, one Phys Ed representative, two Student representatives, one Council of School Leaders representative, one Metro and one Rural Manitoba Association of School Superintendents representatives, one Manitoba Education and Training representative, and one Manitoba School Boards Association representative, the last five of which representatives are appointed, was informed from the beginning to avoid an individual or biased construction:

Because it is a um very sensitive topic, I didn't wanna just do it on my own. I wanted the Board to be aware of it and um we did it and I spent probably six months uhh speaking to people and drafting policies and had quite a few drafts of it. And then the Board started going back and forth on it and I went to other people for more feedback and that's how the process began. (Morris)

As the MHSAA Board of Directors' President at the time, Scott also references conversations at

the Board level informing that in the initial stages of the policy creation his role was to “galvanize consensus [of the policy] amongst the Board,” a role he explains was not difficult considering the show of acceptance. Simultaneously, Scott provided leadership and advocacy to the MHSAA Board as well as addressed inquiries from the general public, such as parents, coaches, and the wider Manitoba high school sport community. Additional stakeholders, such as Rainbow Resource Centre and The 519, were able to assist in education and responses to inquiries. As discussed by Morris, the process of obtaining feedback and consultations with other stakeholders and organizations was intentional and in-depth. When discussing the consultancy processes between the MHSAA and Rainbow Resource Centre with Reece, the consultations took place at specific times in the development of the policy.

According to Reece, Rainbow Resource Centre’s involvement was mainly in the initial stages of policy development by sharing research, suggesting stakeholders, and consulting on drafts that were circulated. After this initial consultation stage, Rainbow Resource Centre was not heavily involved:

It was just more of a, you know we didn’t write any of it. It was you know um they did all that work and especially right from the beginning. If you were to you know read the first drafts um that they did all that work and so which we encouraged them to do. So yeah you know it almost seemed like we, we were a stakeholder and we were acknowledged as a stakeholder but the bulk of the work was done by the body. (Reece)

Throughout our interview, Reece noted a number of times the recognition the MHSAA and its administrators deserve for the work put into the creation and development of the trans- inclusion policy, acknowledging the association’s dedication. While Reece suggests that Rainbow Resource Centre’s consultation work with the MHSAA largely took place in the initial stages of

the policy's development, Morris notes the importance to the policy's success of engaging in consultations and receiving feedback from various stakeholders regardless of the scope.

During the policy development, Morris obtained and read through research, inquired and addressed feedback from stakeholders, and then began circulating drafts of the policy to the MHSAA's Board of Directors. According to Morris, the feedback obtained on the early drafts of the policy included feedback from: Manitoba Education and Training; Manitoba Health Consultant – Healthy Sexuality, Healthy Living and Healthy Populations; Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, Manitoba Human Rights Commission (Manager of Intake and Mediation); Transgender Health Coalition; Manitoba School Boards Association; and The 519 (Toronto). Morris noted the importance of having stakeholder input and consultations with various levels of provincial government and not-for-profit organizations because this assistance was necessary for policy development: “but that’s where I needed these guys [stakeholders] to help me because they see it from their perspective and so we had different perspectives and but at the end it was a safe, respectful environment for these kids,” implying that although differing perspectives on how to create, and what to include in, a trans- inclusive policy may have arose, the end goal was shared once the policy development began.

Morris explains that ongoing conversations with and feedback from stakeholders was essential to minimize the possibility of developing a disjointed policy or one that contradicts policies developed by other organizations closely connected to the MHSAA such as the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents; one important stakeholder to work alongside in developing a trans- inclusion policy as the MHSAA is made up of member schools, as indicated by Morris, and therefore the assurance of consistent policies is significant. Morris recounts the attempt for solidarity between organizations:

I was throwing it out to a lot of different people for feedback and uhh so that was very important for us. [. . .] And because the worst thing is I come up with a policy and then maybe somebody else comes up with a totally different policy. So that's why I had to get all these people, like make them aware. And we went to Manitoba School Trustees Association, Manitoba Superintendents Association, all these groups were aware of the policy. We kept them in the loop the whole time. (Morris)

Obtaining a variety of consultations from organizations that range in connection to the MHSAA and high school sport was confirmed by Scott who lists organizations, such as the Manitoba Human Rights Commission and Rainbow Resource Centre, whose input aided in education and awareness within the MHSAA. Scott believes the assistance of such organizations was needed by the MHSAA to educate themselves through these consultations in order to “get you know what is the position, what are these positions, what is the right thing to do? We don't wanna develop a policy that doesn't withstand the Human Rights commission test.” While it was clear throughout the interviews that multiple stakeholders were involved in developing this policy, one important question I posed during each interview was whether or not trans- youth, those directly impacted by the policy, were involved in the policy development and/or if their feedback was sought.

The responses to this question signified a preoccupation that only youth who identify along the trans- spectrum *and* who actively engage in high school sports could be asked for their input on what a policy on trans- students should encompass. This assumption suggests a missed opportunity to hear from *all* trans- youth, a population that participates in sport at drastically lower levels than cisgender students (Taylor et al., 2011; Veale et al., 2015), on how sport and sport policy could be more trans- inclusive. Although Reece highlights that the research sources Rainbow Resource Centre provided to MHSAA were informed by trans- youth directly, such as

Being safe, being me: Results of the Canadian trans youth health survey (Veale et al., 2015), he was not aware of trans- youth being included in the conversations with MHSAA during the development of the policy. In my interview with Reece on this topic, the focus on hearing from trans- youth actively involved in sport is apparent. In response to a question asking if trans- youth were invited to contribute and provide insight into what they would like to see a policy on sport participation include, Reece notes:

In terms of the process of developing this particular policy, I'm not aware of. But the research that we provided were informed by trans youths' voices. So from that perspective. Yeah I wouldn't even know how to, I think it'd be, I don't know too many trans athletes who are involved in high school athletics. So umm and I think that was part of the conversation also and you know even, I just recall, I'm just trying to think back like I wouldn't be surprised if I advised for them to talk to the folks at the trans youth clinic to see if there were any trans youth who were involved in high school athletics. But even at the time that I remember, there still weren't many trans youth even who were accessing the clinic that were involved, like heavily involved, in athletics. (Reece)

Similarly, Paul explains that any consultations with youth were indirect:

I think it was only done indirectly and it, and because like we were talking about at the Board level it didn't seem to be, there seemed to be a lot of support for it. There is a male and a female student rep that sit on the Board, which offers a limited voice from youth. I think um Morris' discussions with I think it was Reece that he spoke to mostly, uh I think that was, he saw Reece as being representative of the trans, of trans students. So and then I think um that's, and I'm not sure how we would have done the consultation. (Paul)

Reece and Paul's comments share similarities regarding a focus on youth who actively engage in

high school sports as well as being unsure how to access youth who identify along the trans-spectrum in order to hear these perspectives and opinions. In consideration of the research indicating trans- high school students' participation rates in sports, the absence of invitations for trans- youth to contribute to the creation and development of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) is noteworthy.

Research demonstrates that trans- youth participate in sport at disproportionate levels compared to cisgender youth (Taylor et al., 2011; Veale et al., 2015). Hearing from only those trans- youth who actively participate in sports or, relying on the perspectives of cisgender youth who sit on the MHSAA's Board of Directors as student representatives and who are considered the Boards' "ear into the high schools," (Chad) as referenced by both Paul and Chad, may further minimize the voices and experiences of trans- youth who remain fearful of participating in sport for various reasons. Morris shares that he was in brief contact with a trans- athlete who participated in sport at an elite level years prior but who was no longer in high school, and briefly explains his attempts to hear feedback about the policy from other trans- people:

I think I had some emails with [name of trans- athlete] and got some feedback there and umm uhh there's one from the States I got in contact with. There's maybe about three or four that I was able to get you know dialogue with and get feelings on and get feelings on the policy and 'what's it like?,' and 'how do you feel?,' and 'what are the hurdles?,' and 'what um are you scared of?' (Morris)

Hearing perspectives from trans- youth while developing the policy came up again later in the interview with Morris, where he expressed some regret having not talked more directly to youth:

I tried to find as many as I could but it was tough. I think I sent out a thing to schools inviting kids to contact, well I did you know, kids contact me if they wanna do it but I

had a tough time identifying and finding kids to talk to. [. . .] That would be my only little bit of a regret that it would have been nice to talk to a few more. [. . .] Like I'm happy with the policy but it would have been good to have gotten, like it turned out okay but you know during the process that's one thing I wanted more of that I just couldn't get. (Morris)

Scott explains that the lack of consultation and correspondence with youth noted by Morris was not intentional on the MHSAA's part, but rather transpired through an awareness that many other voices were being heard in order to develop an appropriate policy: "In my experience we didn't go to a lot of the students. We weren't trying to exclude them. I think we had a lot of voices." Even with the awareness of multiple stakeholder perspectives offered, Scott reflects on the absence of talking to trans- youth directly and that consultations with youth is "something that we [MHSAA] probably could have done more of" but recognizes that student voice is not always forthcoming. As the current MHSAA Executive Director, when asked about the input of trans-youth since the policy's implementation, Chad announces he has not had any conversations or inquiries with youth about the policy since he has been in this position. In consideration of the lack of correspondence and consultation with youth regarding the policy, the length of time to develop, create, and implement the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) is significant to note.

From initial conversations calling for the creation of a trans- inclusive policy, to the processes of developing the policy and gathering stakeholder feedback, to then officially adopting (February, 2015), implementing, and making the policy available to the public (April, 2015), the process took approximately one and a half to two years. Stakeholder participants express different rationales that made possible the enactment of a policy in this amount of time.

Morris identifies his lack of patience as a main reason why the policy was finalized in this amount of time, while Paul relates it to the variance of governance models of organizations and their approaches to ratifying rules and policies. Reece speaks to the urgency involved in putting a trans- inclusive policy into practice:

Because when we started delivering more trans specific training, capacity building, it was around 2012-2013 and uh even if you think about 2013 with a policy, 2015, that moved pretty quickly. So within a year, a year and a half, two years at the most. But it was within a year and a half I believe that from the start to the end. [. . .] Which um, if you think about it isn't, I mean that's a relatively short period of time. And there was an approach with a sense of urgency because of the statistics [regarding the mental health of trans folks in terms of depression and suicide ideation] that are out there. (Reece)

Morris' reference to his lack of patience may be a simpler way of understanding the amount of time it took to implement the MHSAA's trans- inclusive policy, and Paul's comment leaves room to speculate on the criticality extended to certain topics over others, for example trans- inclusion and gender equity policies, within organizations such as the MHSAA. Yet, Reece's response acknowledges an urgency that potentially fueled a lack of patience in this particular policy's context, supporting his statements further by explaining, "as I mentioned, it wasn't trans youth who were advocating for this policy. It was those who were in the system that advocated for it. [. . .] And I really truly believe they really wanna do the right thing."

The reciprocity between the MHSAA and Rainbow Resource Centre, evident in Reece's comment, is also apparent in responses from Morris, Paul, and Scott. The consultations with and support from Reece, in particular, were seen as an "invaluable resource" and fundamental to the creation of the MHSAA's trans- inclusive policy: "You know to have done this without those

voices would have been ill advised. And again I think uh taking the time to reach out and listen, I think we were smart enough to know that we didn't know enough about this on our own, that we needed help" (Scott). However, as discussed by both Reece and Chad in section 4.2.4, current communication about the policy between the organizations is minimal to nonexistent.

Reviewing the MHSAA's Board of Directors' meeting minutes between February 2014 and December 2016, the length of time it took to develop this policy and the processes that took place during this time remains unclear. According to the Board of Directors' meeting minutes, the first mention of a call to develop a trans- inclusive policy for high school students participating in sport is in the September 22, 2014 minutes. The Board of Directors' February 9, 2015 meeting includes a section titled "Transgender Policy." However, the only information shared in this section is that "the draft policy was reviewed and some changes made to the wording. Motion: to adopt the transgender policy as amended at the February 9 Board of Directors' meeting (Don Thomson/Christy Steeves, Carried)" (MHSAA, 2015c, p. 1). The final mention of the policy is in the April 17, 2015 minutes, which state, "policy on transgender students – finalized and posted. Have received a lot of good feedback and congratulations on taking the step" (MHSAA, 2015b, p. 1). According to the meeting minutes, the discussion of the policy and its creation spanned approximately eight months or, in contrast, the meeting minutes only include information regarding this policy during that period of time. The limited information within MHSAA's meeting minutes does not provide any account of the Board of Directors' discussions on this policy, the input or suggestions made by stakeholders regarding policy drafts, any reasoning for making necessary changes and edits to the policy, or even the final one sentence policy statement.

In his interview, Morris explains that the final length of the policy resulted from

consolidating feedback from stakeholders on early drafts of the policy which featured, for example, certain sections that contradicted others, unnecessary preambles, wordy explanations, and a visible preoccupation or concern with transwomen having advantages in sporting contexts. The creation of a policy of this length was not the goal in its initial stages; it was not something Morris thought would be possible in this particular case. As Morris explains:

It wasn't a goal to have a simple statement. I didn't think we could, to be honest. I didn't think we could get, you know and then when we looked at it and the more we did it I'm going 'This makes sense. It's clean. It's to the point. You don't need a lot of rambling and a lot of stuff. It's very simple. We're gonna do this and that's it.' Simple, safe, respectful, healthy, you know all those things. [. . .] I didn't know, I didn't have a goal for, I thought it might be a three-page document to be honest with you, cause a lot of our eligibility rules and stuff are. (Morris)

Despite the fact that many MHSAA eligibility rules and policies are at least three pages, according to Morris, the resulting policy was kept to one sentence.

Discussing how the policy became one sentence and whether or not stakeholders involved in this conversation were in favor of the final draft, Morris recalls members being onboard: "I think everybody accepted it in the end. You know like I don't think, like our Board came up with the final statement. I don't think we asked um, no I'm sure I said to Reece 'What do you think?' You know and stuff like that. No and I think they said 'Good'." Similarly, Scott insists that feedback from the Board was "overwhelmingly in support." However, when asked about the final length of the policy, Reece maintains that the final draft sent to Rainbow Resource Centre by MHSAA was indeed longer than one sentence to which he assumes reflected the final implemented policy. Our exchange of confusion when I clarified the final policy on the

MHSAA website is one sentence spoke volumes. His response was, “there’s more [. . .] there’s actually a full page.” Upon my clarification that an earlier draft of the policy was three pages but it ended up much shorter, Reece remarks:

Oh okay. They could have changed it. [. . .] I haven’t seen that. [. . .] Like I believe, I’ll try to pull it after this interview but I believe at the time, it could have started off as three. By the time it reached us it was one and umm I did caution when it came to our, the final drafts, that honing in on one particular population could also be, or siloing one particular population, can also be problematic. And so is the question about looking at this one population and calling it the ‘Trans Policy,’ which I think it was kinda worded around those lines, um and also consider inclusion from a broader perspective. So maybe it moved in that direction. Um there’s the policy but then there’s also the suggested practices in terms of access and accommodation which might be a separate, may be separate somewhere. (Reece)

Morris confirmed the one sentence policy listed on the MHSAA website was the entire policy.

To help recreate the policy’s evolution, Morris provided me with draft 1, dated September 2014 and an MHSAA administrative assistant sent me drafts 6 and 7, dated February 11, 2015 and February 24, 2015 respectively. Draft 1 and draft 7, the final implemented policy, are drastically different in content, scope, and length. Draft 1, a three-page document, divides students and their participation in sport based on the use of hormone therapy. In contrast, draft 7 comprises the final one sentence statement featured on the MHSAA’s website. At the end of our interview, Reece provided to me a paper copy of the last draft circulated to Rainbow Resource Centre by MHSAA, which reflected the first draft MHSAA constructed. It is possible that Reece may have mistook the final draft that was sent to Rainbow Resource Centre or, on the other

hand, it is possible that after initial consultations were provided on wording and nuances of draft 1, communication amongst all initial stakeholders on the subsequent drafts was not sought or received. Nevertheless, discussing the feedback suggested by Rainbow Resource Centre regarding draft 1, Reece mentions wording, nuances, and the policy title:

I mean there was just some nuances of language even though the um the intention was really positive, it's just the nuances. Like I recall one draft of the policy was called um 'Transgender Policy,' I think that's what it was called. And umm to really think through even the title of that, how that in and of itself can um not be in favor or um or there could be you know um issues of perception of what that means cause you know and we framed it around you know we wouldn't take a particular group of people and stick it, like use that name like 'Woman Policy' or 'Race Policy' like that doesn't, you know so there was some more thoughtfulness around that. (Reece)

These suggestions were taken into consideration by Morris and the MHSAA in later drafts, as the title was changed from *MHSAA Transgender Policy* (MHSAA, 2014a) in draft 1 to *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) in draft 7. An email consultation Morris provided where Paul engaged in dialogue with Shelly Smith, a Manitoba Health Consultant who was asked to provide feedback on an early draft of the MHSAA's trans- inclusion policy, presents additional perspectives on the necessary elements for a trans- inclusion policy, such as including a list of 'best practices.'

In Paul and Shelly Smith's correspondence dated November 5, 2014, Shelly references the *NCAA Inclusion of Transgender Student-Athletes* (NCAA, 2011) document's inclusion of a 'Best Practices and Guidelines for Inclusion of Transgender Student-Athlete' section, advising Morris that "it would be ideal if MHSAA also included a best practices section to help guide

schools in this area.” Similarly, in our interview the assumption that best practices are necessary within a trans- inclusive policy was also expressed by Reece when discussing the *MHSAA Transgender Policy* (MHSAA, 2014a), or draft 1 of the MHSAA’s trans- inclusion policy. In contrast, Paul raised concerns that the inclusion of ‘best practices’ creates extra barriers for participation.

For example, discussing the length of the policy, Morris, Scott, and Paul all recognize Paul’s influence, as a Curriculum Consultant with Physical and Health Education at the Department of Education, in constructing the policy to be “its most bare bone statement” that did not get “caught up” in added complications (Paul). By having a longer, more complex policy, Paul perceives potential complications for the MHSAA becoming overburdened by mitigating disputes and a subsequent diminishment of resources to cater to these disputes. Additionally, Paul mentions the potential barriers implicated within a more complex policy that may “create too many hoops” for trans- students wanting to participate in sport, such as the fear of advantages associated with testosterone and thus publicizing regulations on testosterone levels at the high school level. Paul’s interpretation of having a “bare bone,” straightforward policy is grounded in supporting students’ chosen identities rather than fostering an environment that pressures students to prove their identity or engage in unwanted measures, justifying “the idea is that someone identifies as being male or female and at that point you kind of support them and see school sport as being an opportunity to grow as a person and you know and it’s not just about an award at the end for winning a championship, you know? There’s a lot more to it.” Scott discusses Paul’s role in raising awareness to the MHSAA Board of Directors noting, “if the school says ‘Here are the varsity girls,’ there are the varsity girls. And if one or two of them are transgender, so be it, right? It’s not for us. So I think Paul was really key in getting us to get, to

drill down to that.” Paul elaborates on this point further:

I think it was recognizing that first of all it was difficulty in managing it with um appeals and everything else, the process, and I think in the end also it’s like you know feeling a lack of expertise to really be able to judge a certain situation or each given situation like who’s to say? And I think it was important to both for um moving to something much more simple in terms of a um a policy rule but also um recognizing that making it simple also in schools and not making it difficult for schools to decide if this is appropriate or not. And also for the safety, confidentiality of the athlete themselves is at some point do you, you know is that gonna, is that gonna put them at risk themselves in having them again jump through too many hoops? So and it was umm I think some of the documents that we were working on with the GSA document and Respect for Human Diversity Policies and that and Human Rights Code about um respecting someone’s personal determination of their gender identity versus um you know measuring things that could be um could be very complicated to do anyway. (Paul)

The aim to develop an uncomplicated policy for the MHSAA, schools, divisions, and the students themselves is evident in Paul’s explanation, complicating discussions of whether or not inclusion of best practices, for example, is necessary in this particular policy’s context. However, discussing further, Morris also draws attention to the processes of developing the policy in which best practices, unwritten or not, were central.

Morris provides his perspectives on the consideration of best practices in this policy, and speaks to the desire to create a policy within the MHSAA’s capacities to do so, which may include best practices in the process but not necessarily on the final document:

I try to be a professional but I mean I hear too often you know ‘Oh let’s work on

outcomes, let's work on best practices, let's,' you know to me it's like 'Let's do the best we can,' you know? And too many people focus too much on 'Let's identify all the outcomes, let's identify all, let's,' you know and you have nice fancy documents you know but what do they say? And I'm a little bit old school but to me it's like, I've been doing best practices all my life. I've been doing outcomes all my life but I just do it and I don't have the fancy terms. (Morris)

In Scott's opinion, best practices also come from the provincial level and the province's position on *Safe and Caring Schools: Respect for Human Diversity Policies* (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2015). However, Scott also recalls best practices were apparent during the policy development, many of which were learned and passed onto the MHSAA from other sport organizations and jurisdictions that created similar policies.

The final length of the policy and what should or should not be included in a trans-inclusion policy for high school sport remains a complicated topic in which more information from the stakeholders involved in the development of this policy can be gathered. What is paramount to this discussion of the development of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) however, is the clear omission of the voices of trans- students in these discussions; voices and experiences that are essential to a more comprehensive understanding of necessary components of a trans- inclusive policy at the high school sport level.

4.2.3 Policy implementation

As discussed above, Morris reached out to many stakeholders for feedback on the policy and claims to have kept these stakeholders updated on the policy's status during its development. This continued involvement includes providing awareness to stakeholders of the official implementation of the policy. Once the policy statement was finalized and ready to implement,

Morris and other Board of Directors' members, such as Paul, began sharing the policy province-wide. Discussing the ways in which the policy was shared to provincial networks and how school divisions in Manitoba were introduced to and informed of the policy, Reece explains his perspective on the intention behind the MHSAA's process of informing member schools, stakeholders, and the media, in particular:

Once the wording was um something that everyone could live with, that they just implemented it. And, and, and it was done um with intention and with strategy in terms of releasing the policy. Um and also I think uh because they didn't make a significant, I mean they made a, sort of a media, there was some media around it, but I think the way that the media was informed was um, from what I recall, really respectful. That this wasn't about um making this into like um, it wasn't exploitive in a sense let's just say. But certainly it was um under the like the auspice or the understanding that this is an important policy, we need to create space for all people who are vulnerable to take part and if people aren't feeling safe that hopefully this is the first step um to um building from there, whatever that might look like. (Reece)

Further, Reece recalls an announcement being made of the unveiling of the policy, a media release that was posted in strategic areas of government, such as the Department of Education, and through the MHSAA's website.

Morris shares a similar response regarding the circulation of the policy among schools and divisions across Manitoba, explaining that much of the information was shared via email. Once the policy was approved, the MHSAA sent it to all stakeholders, such as the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, and, Morris recounts, he also sent the policy through:

weekly updates that go to all coaches and Phys Ed people. So we had the link to it on our

website. We sent it to all the different stakeholders that we had, sent it, Rainbow, to Church Street [The 519 in Toronto], and all those places and the other um associations. Sent it to the National Federation of State High School Associations for their information. Umm, got it out there. (Morris)

The circulation and implementation strategies described by Morris are echoed by both Scott and Paul when asked how stakeholders, members, and school divisions were made aware of the policy once it became official.

According to Scott, the MHSAA's Annual General Meeting is often used as an avenue to share new information with the 15 MHSAA zones, and for this particular policy, a notice was sent to the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents and all high school principals and coaches. Paul discusses this process in greater detail explaining the policy was shared through the MHSAA Board of Directors' meeting minutes, publicly accessible through the MHSAA's website, and disbursed to the MHSAA zone Presidents who then shared the policy with the school divisions they represent in order to prompt discussions with zone members. The goal of having zone President representatives is to "reach around the province" and hear various opinions and perspectives (Chad). Paul explains further:

I think the other thing was the um, when it became an official policy under the MHSAA it became part of the Handbook and then just the fact that it was shared across a lot of jurisdictions and through a lot of stakeholders it became you know one of the more identifiable, clear, um, policies related to trans students in a very specific area. (Paul)

Although not completely aware of the actual processes used to inform schools and divisions of the newly implemented *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a), Chad offers similar thoughts to Paul when considering typical ways the MHSAA members are informed of

new information, suggesting the MHSAA AGM, zone meetings, and e-newsletters as probable methods used for distribution. In addition to the methods of sharing the official policy described above by the stakeholder participants, each participant notes the influence of media in creating public awareness of the MHSAA's newly enacted trans- inclusion policy.

Morris specifically mentions the *Winnipeg Free Press* as an important source that informed the general public of the policy and, as Morris recalls, *Winnipeg Free Press* journalists regularly checked the MHSAA Board of Directors' meeting minutes and then wrote articles about the policy. Similarly, as noted above, Reece mentions that the MHSAA informed media of the policy in a respectful way. In comparison, Scott explains that this MHSAA policy was shared with media strategically in order to draw awareness to an "important social issue" rather than any individualistic reasons on the part of the association. In consideration of these points, the sparse media coverage I found is thus puzzling: was the policy not given priority to be reported on? Did outlets not receive the release? Was it not of any interest to media journalists? Upon searching through *Winnipeg Free Press*, *CBC*, *CTV Winnipeg*, *Global Winnipeg*, *Metro Winnipeg*, and *Winnipeg Sun* websites, the only articles reported on or written about the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) during its development was Martin's (2014) news article and Teetzel's (2014) opinion piece mentioned above.

Once the policy was provided to the media, and specifically shared by Martin who Morris explains "took a lot of interest" in the policy, Morris recalls he did not encounter any negative comments about the policy. Of the two identified sources published during this time, Teetzel's (2014) opinion piece was not open to comments, but Martin's (2014) article yielded 37 comments from readers, one of which was removed by *Winnipeg Free Press* editors for violating the terms and conditions of the newspaper. While a handful of the comments on Martin's (2014)

article are in support of the MHSAA's policy, most are negative and indicate a lack of understanding of trans- identities, focusing on unfounded perceptions of 'fairness' in sport rather than the importance of inclusion.

For example, in the online comments following Martin's article, username 23647712 poses the question, "I respectfully ask the question: Is a 15 or 16 year old mentally capable of making such a monumental and life changing decision as to change their sexual identity? This goes beyond sports; it speaks [*sic*] to a far larger question" (Martin, 2014, comment section, para. 1-3). This question prompted responses in solidarity from other commenters, such as username JetsRus who wrote, "I agree with you 100%! Barely more than a child at this age....." and ITGeek57 who added, "completely agree, but this also brings to mind the 8 yr. old that seemingly made the decision that he was born with the wrong body. Decisions like this are influenced and the parents should be ashamed" (Martin, 2014, comment section, para. 4-6). When *Winnipeg Free Press* readers expressed their support for the MHSAA's policy, a clear minority, this support was challenged. For example, username ITGeek57 responds to two other commenters to challenge their affirming perspectives on gender identity and sport:

kachina and 222, When a male declares he's a female and competes against your daughter (born a girl) in strength type events and wins easily, I think you might change your tune.

And the point you're both missing is that this WILL [*sic*] compel higher education levels to do the same. This will change the face of all sports.

Soon, we'll just have the Olympics wherein there are no genders and the fittest wins. Is that what you want? Women boxing against men? Or do you think there actually is a line that shouldn't be crossed when it comes to gender at birth recognition?

It would be interesting to see if a woman at birth could topple the men's current world record 100m dash. The WR right now is a full second faster than the women's.

Should they all race together? (Martin, 2014, comment section, para. 45-48)

Morris may not have been aware of the negative, fallacy-filled internet comments on Martin's (2014) article; however, he does mention his awareness of uninformed questions he received regarding specifically male-to-female trans- students and potential advantages. He refers to these views as a 'misconception' explaining, "I did get questions about the male to female you know lots and the unfair advantage but I expect that, because that's a common conception, misconception. Umm that's common, that will come out" (Morris). Speaking about the competitiveness among high school coaches, specifically, Scott mentions that there was a great deal of conversations with coaches who exemplify these uninformed perspectives and which ultimately highlight a discomfort that exists on the topic of trans- athletes in sport.

Paraphrasing common topics of concern, Scott reminisces on questions that arose from high school coaches: "If you know coaches, they're very competitive, right? 'Well, we don't want somebody, we don't want a team having an advantage because some you know six foot four inch born biological male,' you know I think there was a lot of that." This misconception, outlined by both Morris and Scott, is unmistakable in the comment section of Martin's (2014) article, as username ITGeek57 continues to demonstrate a lack of understanding on this topic:

This is a line that can't be uncrossed. If male students participate in female sports at this age there will be an expectation to be able to compete in all sports at any age.

[. . .] Regardless of how a person feels about the skin they grow up in, men are traditionally stronger than women (absolutely no disrespect intended) and will be able to achieve better results in a variety of sports requiring strength.

I disagree with this decision. Choose how you want to dress or act, but the body you grow up in has abilities and those abilities should be measured within the gender you were born with, not what you believe you are now, even with surgery. (Martin, 2014, comment section, para. 39-41)

Although the online comments following Martin's (2014) article portray negative and positive perspectives, it is unclear how far-reaching this article's representation of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) was across Manitoba. However, sharing media sources among networks is one example of a rippling effect of spreading information, to which all stakeholder participants discussed.

As the MHSAA shared the final policy with stakeholders and organizations, it was understood that the policy would trickle down where organizations would then subsequently share it with their networks and colleagues, an exchange which all stakeholder participants acknowledged. In particular, Chad explains that "bigger" changes within the MHSAA, such as adoption of policies, "filter down" through zone Presidents to the schools within their zone, as one example. Paul discusses his involvement in sharing the policy, explaining that he shared it amongst colleagues within Manitoba's Department of Education and with education departments in other provinces and territories. In particular, Paul notes he shared the MHSAA's policy at the national Joint Consortium for School Health, which includes representation from Departments of Education and Health in all provinces and territories across Canada, excluding Quebec. The conversations around the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) that took place at this national table, according to Paul, were "very favorable" indicating that members of these meetings recognized the inclusion apparent within the policy. However, Paul was unsure if any other provinces had taken similar actions to support trans- students.

Paul details the rippling effect that takes place when sharing information such as policies at broader, national levels and organizations, explaining:

there tends to be a butterfly effect, a bit of a vibrational effect when things are shared at that table because they're brought back to their own provinces, jurisdictions, and you'll see that it allows everyone to kind of move in the same direction. (Paul)

Similarly, Reece explains that once the MHSAA shared and posted its policy, Rainbow Resource Centre shared the policy's existence through its networks as well:

As part of our work through Rainbow Resource Centre we expanded our um deliveries to include talking about the policy that it does exist. [. . .] So there's a bit of a domino effect. Also there are other agencies who do the LGBT education that are aware that the policy exists. So they do also talk about the policy when it comes up. (Reece)

Reece's comments, spoken through an education consultancy role, point to a discernable effect in which educational sessions delivered by organizations such as Rainbow Resource Centre are now able to include the MHSAA's trans- inclusion policy in their presentations and materials. However, it is unclear exactly how far-reaching these trickling down approaches influence.

When asked if there was an assumption that the methods used by the MHSAA to circulate the policy would allow for this information to trickle down to different members within the Manitoba education system, Scott suggests the added importance of sharing the policy with people in high school Phys Ed, athletic director, and coaching positions. Specifically, this circulation occurred by sharing the policy to MHSAA Board of Directors' members in 'Principal and Phys Ed Representative' roles and who act as liaisons between the MHSAA and wider groups of Principals and Phys Ed teachers. Agreeing that people in these particular roles were the focus of who the policy was shared with in school settings, Scott adds that Phys Ed teachers and

coaches “are generally more versed in the details of these kinds of things” referring to policies that effect high school sport. The concentration on Phys Ed teachers specifically is also briefly communicated by Chad, informing that the e-newsletter method that was used to distribute the MHSAA policy is sent to “almost all Phys Ed teachers in the province,” rather than all teachers and administrators within schools regardless of their level of affiliation with high school sports.

In our interview, Morris provided a list of organizations that received the MHSAA’s policy and hints toward a similar rippling effect among networks as mentioned by Paul, Reece, and Scott. However, when asked about the potential of the policy actually trickling down among different levels of organizations, divisions, and communities, Morris acknowledges that while the MHSAA made a great deal of effort to spread the policy widely across Manitoba, information “doesn’t always filter down, that’s always the thing.” With the realization that information does not easily filter down in all contexts, there are limitations of the implementation strategies of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) identified during the interviews with stakeholder participants.

In theory, the gradual circulation of a policy through various networks who then further share the policy among other colleagues has the potential to be a productive method for sharing a newly developed trans- inclusion policy. However, the actions of facilitating this circulation are less transparent and the pervasiveness of this approach is unclear; for example, does the reliance on a trickling down system from information shared to administrators actually reach trans-students in Manitoba high schools or teachers and staff indirectly involved in high school sport? Reece notes anecdotally a perceived increase in attendance by teachers and school administrators in LGBT and sport related workshops in education sessions which are now able to draw awareness to the MHSAA policy. However, at the same time, Reece remains uncertain of who

knows of the policy explaining, “we really do um push for um people to know about the policy. I don’t know how many really know about it, I don’t know how many youth know about it.” In order to better understand the extent to which the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) has been shared, the perspectives of trans- youth in Manitoba high schools currently is analyzed in Chapter V drawing on the perspectives of a sample of trans- youth currently attending high school in Manitoba. However, the implementation and circulation strategies of the MHSAA and associated stakeholders invested in the education systems across Manitoba, such as the Manitoba Teachers’ Society (MTS) and the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS), are important in piecing together the likelihood of whether these strategies were able to make the policy accessible to all avenues and members of education systems across Manitoba, and specifically, trans- high school students.

In terms of publicizing the policy, Paul questioned whether the MTS included the MHSAA trans- inclusion policy in any issues of their newsmagazine, *The Manitoba Teacher*, acknowledging the MTS as an important MHSAA stakeholder. With this question in mind, I reviewed all issues of *The Manitoba Teacher* ranging between January 2014 to December 2016 and publicly accessible through MTS’ website, excluding issues from October–December 2014 which had inoperative hyperlinks and therefore unavailable to access. The MTS did not include any information on the MHSAA’s policy in their newsmagazine, brochures, handbooks, or in their Annual Reports from 2013-2015.

The lack of inclusion of the policy in *The Manitoba Teacher* is surprising, as Morris notes the MHSAA received a letter of support and appreciation from the President of the MTS, Paul Olson, on November 28, 2014, commending the “truly progressive and responsive work they are doing with regard to a complex issue,” which MTS considers to have been done in “a

manner that is entirely respectful” and has “demonstrated true leadership in transmitting the very important message that all students have a right to participate in sports and remain safe.” Further, in the same letter, Olson declares, “we also give you our firm commitment that the final policy document will be distributed to all Manitoba teachers through our committees and associations.” Although I was unable to access all forms of the MTS’ internal communication and networks, the MTS’ publicly available newsmagazine issues do not include any information about the policy. A brief mention of the MTS’ letter of support was included in the MHSAA’s Board of Directors’ meeting minutes from February 9, 2015, under the section heading ‘Correspondence’ which states “Manitoba Teachers Society – Letter circulated from MTS commending the MHSAA on efforts with the Transgender Policy” (MHSAA, 2015c, p. 3).

Similar to the MTS, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) was mentioned as an important stakeholder that the MHSAA, according to Morris, updated on the progress of their trans- inclusive policy. However, much like the MTS’ *The Manitoba Teacher*, there is no direct information included about the MHSAA’s policy in the MASS’s semi-annual magazine, *MASS Journal*, between Spring 2013 and Fall 2016. While analyzing the issues of *MASS Journal*, the sole mention of the MHSAA policy is included in Catherine Taylor and Tracey Peter’s (2016) article titled “Growing support for LGBTQ-inclusive education in Canada” in the Fall 2016 *MASS Journal* titled “LGBTQ,” which briefly mentions the policy. Within the issues of *MASS Journal*, there are articles that discuss trans- issues, specifically in the “LGBTQ” issue, but none that directly explain or consider MHSAA’s policy in any detail, including the Spring 2015 or Fall 2015 issues titled “Equity” and “Equity Part II” respectively. While the policy itself was circulated to both the MTS and MASS, based on the sources available in the public domain, it remains unclear the extent to which either association

publicized the policy further.

With the MHSAA trans- inclusion policy now in place, stakeholder participants were asked in their interviews to consider whether the policy has been implemented fully or if there is room to engender new methods to ensure the policy's accessibility and effectiveness. Paul's response suggests that certain areas of sport may not be covered by this policy. He notes that specific conversations need to begin on these topics in order to better understand areas that have been overlooked:

I think now it's a question of how do you implement this fully? [. . .] Cause it's one thing to have someone on a team, then you go, you travel, you go to another school or another province or you could be going to another country, and we've started to have those conversations too. Like what do you tell the zone Presidents and Councils um like how do you guide them? [. . .] And um so with you know in terms of a washroom or a change room or sleeping arrangements, how do you set that up? (Paul)

In relation to Paul's concerns on the limits of the MHSAA's implementation strategies, I asked Morris during our interview if schools or divisions were given any additional resources along with the policy when it was implemented, or if only the policy was exclusively provided and schools could follow up as necessary. Morris responded: “[sigh] I think we just gave them the policy [. . .] Yeah. I don't think we had, we had umm I dunno the final draft if I had some resources at the bottom or not. At some point we did but I think, no. The final policy just umm has the just the wording and everything.” In a similar topic of conversation that questioned the methods of approaching implementation, Scott discusses the apparent desire for balance regarding implementation of the MHSAA policy and the safety of students. Scott speaks to his perception of this desire, rationalizing:

I think we wanted to be careful. I think we wanted to strike a balance. I mean the policy was there, we needed to make people aware of it but I think we also wanted to downplay it a little bit. Again, we didn't want to draw attention unnecessarily to an athlete, a transgender athlete, [sigh] because we, you know we didn't want there to be a backlash, right? So because maybe there's a transgender athlete in a school that's being bullied by other students that if this had been you know, not that we were hiding behind it or anything like that, but we wanted to strike a balance out of respect for transgender students and athletes, right? (Scott)

Scott's points begin to highlight a culture within sports in which trans-athletes continue to not be entirely welcome, where announcing and advocating too emphatically for a trans-inclusion policy may draw unnecessary attention to particular students. Whether or not the attempt to find a balance within this has instead led to a lack of awareness and acceptance of the MHSAA trans-inclusion policy remains to be seen, as does any underlying resistance towards the policy.

In response to my question of whether the ways that the MHSAA initially implemented the policy has been beneficial and useful, Paul responds:

I think it's been implemented in a limited fashion. So umm but I think it's probably similar to any other eligibility rule that the MHSAA has. It's, the members have been informed, the rule is fairly succinct so it doesn't allow for too much grey interpretation. So I think with, as with other rules, it's um, I don't think the MHSAA is necessarily recognizing a need to do more until something would prompt them to do so. (Paul)

Discussing what could be done further to improve the implementation and the policy's success, Paul elaborates:

I think it would probably be helpful to draw some information more directly. Cause I

think um just because someone isn't saying something, it doesn't mean they're not believing something that, cause there could be underlying resistance that needs to be explored. But I think that um uh I think it also has to be something that the Board of Directors needs to support and until that discussion actually happens around the table, we won't really know. (Paul)

As Paul indicates, underlying resistance could be present in policy makers, within school divisions, and/or among peers.

Reece also discusses the potential for underlying resistance and the ways this resistance could be explored more. However, Reece explains underlying resistance is often difficult to distinguish because those with opposing or non-affirming attitudes often do not speak out even if they do not agree with the terms. As Reece has come to learn in educational settings:

So there are people who are, who still come with those values that are not affirming that hold those positions. And so if anything you know the policy um, I think one of the implications of the policy is that it silences people um for expressing their views that are not affirming um which may or may not be a positive thing because we don't know now who needs the training because if they view such a policy as another form of political correctness that they would be more of an absence of acknowledgment than phobic reactions, but just this absence. Uh so what we do know from our trainings is that when someone disagrees with anything that is LGBT affirming, they just don't say anything. Period. Which to me is just as harmful as the overt homo-bi-lesbo-trans-phobia that you know, yeah it's just as harmful as that. (Reece)

Recognizing the limits of implementation for this trans- inclusive policy at the high school level and beginning to understand whether or not the policy is effective for those directly affected is

yet to be seen. Reece's concerns about the potential for the policy to contribute to underlying transphobia will be addressed in Chapter V.

In a discussion of the policy's effectiveness, Reece touches on certain parts of the policy development and implementation processes that may have been successful, but also discusses certain areas where effectiveness is not yet known:

I think the policy in itself is a good policy. So in terms of getting it passed and um has been achieved. I think the um, the background, its thoughtfulness, thoroughness, um and who they approached as stakeholders was done successfully. So things that have led up to the policy I think, and including the media release, I felt it was done successfully and there's hope for the future. Um it's just now a wait and see game, how it's rolled out particularly with rural and remote communities um where sports communities are, like communities are built around like sports, what does that mean? I don't know. And are individuals still, like are they involved in sports but still not their authentic selves? They're still on the wrong teams, they're still you know, or they're self-isolating. Um so there's, there can be a significant research piece that, in terms of evaluating the policy itself. I don't know if there's an evaluation strategy or plan [. . .] And I think because there are aspects of Manitoba that are highly conservative that um that the choice to just be um mute about it wouldn't surprise me, even though it exists. (Reece)

Reece's comments simultaneously point to successes of developing the policy while also signifying the intensity of what remains unknown in relation to the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) including, for example, the potential that youth continue to not be able to access sports teams of their choice and/or remain isolated. These points speak volumes when questioning if the MHSAA's trans- inclusion policy requires a continued effort in

awareness strategies; without knowing this information it is unclear whether or not the policy is experienced as helpful for trans- youth, those most directly affected by the policy.

Mirroring Reece's concerns, Paul explains the depth of this topic, understanding the effectiveness of implementation strategies and the policy go far beyond participation in sport. When asked to elaborate on whether or not the initial goals of creating the policy have been achieved, Paul shares in the idea that much information is unknown:

Well I think it's still to be seen. I think it certainly opens the door and I think any change in practice is helped by policy or legislation and I think those, there has been legislation, there has been policy, both at Board levels or school division Board levels and at the MHSAA level so that helps to open the door and support it. Uh we've also seen um other studies, the study by Catherine Taylor with teachers and previously with students, are helping move the agenda forward and um we've had you know like I mentioned some Boards, school Boards, are being challenged on related issues. I think it has to be not just sport. It also has to be practices at the school level for not only extra-curricular but also classroom and everything else, so. There's more to it than just a person participating on a team and it's more general knowledge and acceptance based on knowledge that may be needed. So education is necessary and so we're still you know curriculum change and all those things can help support it. (Paul)

Stakeholder participants such as Reece and Paul recognize gaps in the understanding of the overall effectiveness of the MHSAA's trans- inclusion policy, a critical awareness at this recent stage of the policy. The next section discusses perspectives on conversations taking place post-policy implementation and recommendations of conversations and actions that are imperative at this time.

4.2.4 Post-policy implementation

In order to better understand the ongoing effectiveness of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a), participants expressed that since the policy is now implemented it is necessary to consider next steps. Reece refers to this as the “pragmatic stuff” that still needs to be understood and acknowledged, asking “now that we have the policy, how do we know that um, how do we know that students know and how do we know whether the policy is effective?” (Reece). Since the implementation of the MHSAA’s trans- inclusion policy, organizations such as Rainbow Resource Centre and other organizations that foster education are able to incorporate the policy into their workshops and begin in depth conversations on this topic. Reece explains it “has opened up a door to having more of those conversations” now that the policy is in place. For example, one important conversation that Reece notes now needs to be considered is the safety of schools and athletic spaces more broadly:

I think having the policy there is important but we still need to work on just the mere fact that school in and of itself is not necessarily safe and accommodating. So you know if it’s just not safe and accommodating period or at least the values and attitudes around like trans um gender non-conforming topics are virtually non-existent or nil in formal curricula, um where does this policy then sit, you know? And umm but I still strongly believe that um the policies are needed for a systemic change for attitudes to shift. So this is a fundamental important piece of the overall. We just need to do a lot more work.

(Reece)

Explaining further, Reece points out the benefits the MHSAA policy has for many students in finding safer accommodations, not only trans- students:

But what is interesting about the policy um is that there are, that it benefits not just trans

youth. And that there are um cis youth who have asked for accommodation in terms of privacy where um I believe the policy has had an influence around that. So privacy around um change rooms and showering and what not, which I found to be kind of an interesting kind of um, and males. Male-identified folks. Um I don't know if it's you know correlated with the policy but the timing of it is peculiar that which to me says, which we've encouraged gym teachers and coaches to talk about right at the very beginning of orientation, that they are at least speaking to their folks about feeling safe and that if they wanted to use another washroom to change or whatnot, it's an option. So there are youth now who are asking for it. (Reece)

When asked about whether having a policy in place is enough to create change in these contexts, especially if attitudes and cultural systemic changes are not taking place, Reece addresses the importance of policy facilitating as support for people and organizations, where change can then be rooted in policy, sharing "I believe that the policy, the values of an organization need to be rooted in policy and so otherwise you're right you know that um it'd be a bit tougher I think um especially when people wanna do the right things but they have no backup. So at least they have a backup at this point." The necessity of policy as support is also apparent in Morris' responses.

Morris shares that having policy allows for more conversations to begin as member organizations are able to draw on the policy for support, rather than being trapped in the same conversation, explaining: "I think it answers questions for schools because I think what we've been able to do for a lot of school divisions is take away that debate at the school trustee table. You know they're saying, 'That's the MHSAA rule,' so it's there." Morris continues this point expressing: "I think we've been able to provide 'Here it is,' you know and I think what's doubly good about that, it's taken away their having to debate it and create their own policy because

here's an organization that has the policy and so it doesn't come up for discussion. So I think that's good." Not only does the policy aid in ongoing conversations among school trustees and school Boards, stakeholder participants mention the policy reinforces different laws and acts throughout Manitoba.

In consideration of the policy's ability to potentially take away possibilities of schools creating less affirming or accommodating policies or practices, Morris explains that the MHSAA's policy supports legislation already in place in Manitoba, such as legislation enforced by Manitoba Education, Manitoba Human Rights Commission, and Manitoba Law. Paul shares similar responses to Morris on this topic, suggesting that the MHSAA's policy is "mentioned in terms of a um, a progressive way of supporting trans students specifically, more than the, more than Bill 18 itself," further explaining that this policy aligns well with other recent inclusive policy changes and where newer policies are now referencing MHSAA's policy. As Paul explains, Manitoba's Department of Education is creating a trans- support document with information compiled from legislation and policies across Canada that include "sports and field trips and other things like that and just even just a transitioning piece" in order to have common guidelines across schools and to align with divisions that already have guidelines and policies in support of trans- students. Paul references Winnipeg School Division (WSD) and River East Transcona School Division (RETSD) as having anti-transphobia guidelines that support trans-students. However, a review of River East Transcona School Division's guidelines yields a lack of visibility of the MHSAA's policy, raising important questions about cross-policy consistency and allyship.

River East Transcona School Division's 'Curriculum – Athletics' website explains, "six high schools are members of the Kilcona Peguis Athletic Conference (KPAC) and abide by rules

established by the Manitoba High School Athletics Association [*sic*] (MHSAA). Two important rules to note are the MHSAA’s transfer rule and policy on transgender students” (River East Transcona School Division, n.d.). This statement provides hyperlinks for the rule and the policy, enabling interested viewers to actively click on the link to read the policies, but does not include the policy statement on the page. While school divisions and inclusive policies may draw on and are informed by the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a), those that do mention it only do so in passing rather than providing context for implementing and supporting the policy in their division. The brevity of attention given to the policy is not optimal in promoting awareness.

Reece shares similar perspectives to Paul on the MHSAA’s policy aligning and supporting other inclusive policies across Manitoba. However, he also discusses the intersections between the public school system and laws within Manitoba to highlight a consideration of whether or not MHSAA’s policy, from a school perspective, is “moot” in comparison to other recent acts and legislation:

I think with um the Manitoba School’s Act changing that um the Manitoba High School Athletic Association, I know it’s a completely different body altogether but there is intersections with the public school systems, it could almost from a school perspective be mute. Moot, sorry. Because of the Manitoba Safe School’s you know kind of act in terms of um the responsibility of schools to provide a safe place for all students regardless of their identity. And that includes accommodation and includes everything that’s contained within the Manitoba High School Athletic Association. So people are um aware that the Safe Schools Act exists and would default to that knowledge before the Manitoba High School Athletic Association. But I think this certainly reinforces the Manitoba School

Act. (Reece)

This is one example of the need to continue conversations and education on next steps.

The stakeholder participants all point out, albeit to different extents, that although the policy is now in place there is still an emphasis on the importance and necessity of continued education and awareness, stressing “you never stop educating, you never stop making people aware. There’s still a lot of bias and discrimination out there in high school sports, in school divisions, in society around the issue of transgender or LGBTQ, right?” (Scott). For example, Reece emphasizes the need for continued training now that the policy is in effect; training that is currently not taking place. When asked about whether or not the MHSAA, as the organizing provincial body, has a role in ensuring that the trans- inclusive policy is upheld in Manitoba high schools, Reece discusses the need for training to accompany this policy implementation, an essential element for particular communities:

I think that so long as they um um share widely that the policy exists but also there is the piece that accompanies the policy is now is the training part, which um has not been done yet. Now the training of like why we were originally called in, which is now we need to train the coaches and the parent coaches particularly which was the other area group that was identified within our consultations is that there is the high school teachers but then there are the parents. In rural communities particularly umm who take on multiple roles from coach to parent council to school trustee who may not be supportive but have a strong influential role within their community and how to approach those folks we haven’t yet, really put in the time to think about that.

Speaking optimistically about next steps, Reece continues:

But I certainly hope in the future that we can do more consultations with the association

with the next steps because there's just so many teams. And then does that also mean, and we have done in the past um what was called at the time 'anti-homophobia workshops' within classrooms. How can we um evolve that within school teams? And so that's an area yet that's just untapped. [. . .] And umm because there are like hundreds of these teams and dozens and dozens and dozens of coaches, it's now thinking of a strategic plan what that might look like. Is it from a diversity point of view, um an equity point of view, or are we still talking about trans athletes? So that's another question like in terms of the approach. (Reece)

Now that the policy is in place, Reece stresses the need for ongoing training in order to facilitate the policy's success and effectiveness, the growing strength of which can only be understood within continued education and awareness. From a current MHSAA perspective, Chad highlights the importance for the MHSAA and its Board of Directors to be open to having conversations with their almost 200 member schools across Manitoba about the MHSAA policies that are in place as they do not want to "view any of them [MHSAA policies] set in stone." Paul and Morris both share insights about future next steps for implementation, evaluation of the effectiveness of the policy, and, similar to Chad, the need for open communication.

Addressing the MHSAA's role to ensure schools are following the policy, Morris emphasizes the need for the MHSAA to continue to educate and inform schools and divisions of the policy, explaining:

sometimes policies get there and then you forget about them and I think it's something that we got to keep on the forefront, especially considering Steinbach and Portage la Prairie and things like that are on the forefront. So we gotta keep our members aware you

know that we have this.¹⁰ (Morris)

Cognizant of Morris' advice to keep the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) and discussions of this policy at the forefront, I asked Chad, as the current MHSAA Executive Director, whether the circulation of the policy is ongoing to facilitate continued awareness. Chad explains that the policy is included in the *MHSAA Handbook* (MHSAA, 2016a) which is updated and sent to member schools annually, a method used to inform member schools of new changes and adoptions. However, providing the annual handbook does not necessarily open the possibilities of ongoing discussions nor does it allow for conversations between educational organizations to take place regarding expected responsibilities.

Echoing Morris' advice above, Paul shares a response that held the MHSAA accountable to identifying exactly what the organization's roles include:

Well I think they [MHSAA] do [have a role to ensure high schools are following the policy] and I think they're still trying to get their head around what, they're not sure, probably not sure how, what it's looking at at the individual school level. I think once more questions are coming from the zones it'll maybe shed light on some issues but it's still early to tell I think. But they could be more proactive possibly in finding out. (Paul)

The awareness that the workload for ongoing education and training must be shared between organizations including the MHSAA, divisions, and individual schools is noted by Scott, although the suggestion for the MHSAA to be proactive in developing a strategic plan regarding the roles and responsibilities of the MHSAA versus the roles and responsibilities of individual schools is not as apparent: "you know this is a nice step [implementation of the MHSAA trans-

¹⁰ Amidst intense hostilities and resentment from Conservative-evangelical portions of Steinbach, Manitoba, organizers held Steinbach's first Pride march on Saturday, July 9th, 2016. Portage la Prairie held their first Pride march on August 27th, 2016.

inclusion policy] but there's still a ton of work to do. Some of it is our work, some of it is other people's work [school divisions, schools], right?" (Scott). In our interview, Chad provides examples of whose responsibility it is, either the MHSAA or school divisions, regarding certain aspects of sport including facilities, hotel rooms, and travelling for provincials; examples that Chad believes will be the responsibility of school divisions and which the MHSAA will support, as administrators within school divisions are "the ones who look after these students and their wellbeing." Explaining this division of responsibilities further, Chad notes that these types of discussions are where he believes the conversation will continue with the MHSAA Board of Directors, yet this conversation that has not yet occurred at the MHSAA Board of Directors' level. In terms of the MHSAA's position to provide continued education to schools, coaches, staff, and teachers specifically, Paul elaborates further:

Um, I think they do to a point. But it is a, you know it's responsible for putting on provincial championships. That's its main role. So you know it always coined itself as being 'the other half of education' so it does in some way but I think it's um, it's more responding to situations with information and so it could play a role to better educate but I don't think it's, it's not there yet. Not on this issue, anyway. (Paul)

In relation to the discussion in section 4.2.2 regarding the debate to include 'best practices' in the final policy, a debate in which Shelly Smith, a Manitoba Health Consultant asked to provide feedback on an early draft of the MHSAA trans- inclusion policy, an email consultation of which was provided to me by Morris, indicates having best practices would "help guide schools," the responsibilities of divisions, individual schools, and the MHSAA become blurred with this lack of guidance. The recommendations to identify the MHSAA's ongoing role to continue consultations on training and education is broadly related to communication, or lack thereof, and

it functions as another subtheme emerging from discussions with stakeholder participants.

As has become apparent from the Board of Directors' meeting minutes that were reviewed and the interviews conducted with participants involved in the policy creation, there has been a general lack of conversation about the policy since its enactment. This lack of communication post-policy implementation, as Reece explains, allows for a disregard of the need for continued education and training, which is a vital component for cultural systemic change. As Reece explains:

There literally has not been any conversation since the release of the policy. It almost seems like things have, it feels like our relationship with um the association um has um really just stopped. I mean we're still, uh we still are allies to one another and we would still consult with one another upon whenever it was needed and we'll always be a resource to them. Umm but we haven't really done much work past the policy piece with them. (Reece)

Lack of communication since the policy's enactment is also distinguishable within the MHSAA's public Board of Directors' meeting minutes. Since the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) was adopted in February 2015, and finalized and posted in April 2015, there has been no mention of the policy in any subsequent MHSAA meeting minutes. The minutes from the April 17, 2015 meeting announce the "policy on transgender students [was] finalized and posted. Have received a lot of good feedback and congratulations on taking the step" under the heading "business arising from February 2015 meeting" (MHSAA, 2015b, p. 1). There is extremely limited information in the Board of Directors' meeting minutes to represent any discussions that took place during these meetings, including a lack of understanding of whether or not conversations took place at the MHSAA's 2015 Annual General

Meeting (AGM) as there is no information included in the AGM notices of motion, although Morris and Chad both mention that it likely would have been discussed at the MHSAA AGM. Additionally, the ongoing lack of description within the minutes also suggests the policy is not discussed in any Executive Director's report between September 2015–December 2016. The scarceness of details within meeting summaries does not entirely give an indication of the amount of discussions that take place around each topic. However, Chad notes in response to my question of whether the MHSAA's trans- inclusion policy, or a conversation of the need to further circulate and/or review it, was ever discussed at MHSAA Board of Directors' meetings, that there have been no discussions regarding the policy at Board of Directors' meetings: "Not since I've been here. We haven't talked about the policy at all. I've fielded very few questions and again, most aren't from the high school or our member schools. They're from other external bodies" (Chad).

Inquiring about associations who express interest in the policy prompted an interesting conversation where Chad indicates who is and is not seeking information about this policy:

Chad: That's honestly, the only exposure I've had to this policy is actually other people reaching out to me than dealing with anything with our member schools.

Rae: Right. And so it's not like parents are reaching out for more information or anything?

Chad: No I haven't had any parents or athletes or even, I don't think I've had any school administrators or coaches or anything really. It's just all been completely external bodies that have been reaching out, yeah. (Chad)

Questioning whether or not the lack of information sought by parents, administrators, coaches, and member schools in general regarding the MHSAA's trans- inclusion policy is indicative of

an acceptance of the policy among Manitoba education communities, Chad shares that he assumes this is the case. As the Executive Director who engages with all MHSAA policy and procedures, Chad receives “literally dozens of questions a week” from:

students, parents, coaches, school administrators, especially on our [the MHSAA] Eligibility ones and on our Transfer Policy. [. . .] and again, I haven’t received any so far on our Transgender Policy so I think maybe that means it’s a good thing. I’d like to think of it that way, that it’s a positive, that it’s working, it’s there and people understand it and get it. (Chad)

Despite the assumption that the policy has been generally accepted, when the topic of how widely the policy is known resurfaces during our discussion Chad explains, “the more I talk about it and hear about it, it seems that there’s quite a like, a lot of people know about it” but then rethinks and adds to this statement “at least outside of the education system I can see that it’s widely known because of the amount of calls I receive,” citing inquiries from Rugby Manitoba, Rugby Canada, and the Manitoba Students Against Tobacco as examples. However, this absence of requests for policy information throughout the education system may in fact point to a larger silencing of those needing access to the policy, rather than a complete acceptance of the policy. This is especially significant in consideration of the comparative communication around policies such as the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) and the *MHSAA Transfer Policy* (MHSAA, 2016b), policies that were created and implemented along the same timelines.

Analysis of the MHSAA’s Board of Directors’ meeting minutes indicates that the *MHSAA Transfer Policy* (MHSAA, 2016b) is discussed and followed up on drastically more often than the trans- inclusion policy. In comparison, the transfer rule is discussed in the

September 21, 2015 meeting minutes, including an announcement that the rule is in “full effect for the 2015–2016 school season” (MHSAA, 2015d, p. 1); an announcement that is not similarly offered for the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a). The *MHSAA Transfer Policy* (MHSAA, 2016b) is subsequently included in the minutes of every following Board of Directors’ meeting between November 13, 2015 to December 16, 2016, aside from the meeting on September 23, 2016 which does not directly discuss it yet does indirectly mention it through a discussion of remaining busy with “appeals for both athlete transfers and eligibility” and “transfer inquiries” (MHSAA, 2016e, p. 2). The apparent lack of discussion and follow up of the trans- inclusion policy by the MHSAA is further noticeable in the ‘correspondence’ sections of their meeting minutes.

Upon analysis of the MHSAA Board of Directors’ meeting minutes, there are two mentions of a research study that MHSAA was invited and agreed to take part in that briefly summarize the research study and detail MHSAA’s participation and involvement. In the February 25, 2016 meeting minutes, section 7.5 states:

Rugby Research Study – Dr. Kyle Martin – Dr. Martin is conducting research on concussions in sport and as part of that would like to work in partnership with MHSAA focusing on Rugby. Looking at having injuries reported through MHSAA and in return would provide technology support, access to Pan-Am concussion specialist for high school athletes. (MHSAA, 2016d, p. 2)

At the next meeting, April 15, 2016, section 6.10 in the meeting minutes state:

Rugby Concussion Study – Meetings with Dr. Kyle Martin at the Pan-AM Clinic are still ongoing. Will be tracking concussion with the support of the high school rugby league as part of a research study being done by Dr. Martin. Looking at possible expansion of the

program to other high school sports. (MHSAA, 2016c, p. 3)

The descriptions of Dr. Martin's research study in two separate meeting minutes is notable, especially considering the lack of information that is generally included in the minutes.

Furthermore, the recognition of the MHSAA's participation in Dr. Martin's research study included in the titled "Executive Director's Report" section is even more remarkable, as I sought communication with the current MHSAA Executive Director regarding this study on the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) in the Fall 2016 and Winter 2017 and received minimal response, as outlined in Chapter III.

In consideration of research studies mentioned in past Board of Directors' meeting minutes, it is necessary to note that no mention of this study or my attempt to communicate with the MHSAA is included in any of the meeting minutes analyzed between September 2015 to December 2016. This study's information and request for assistance was not included under the sections titled 'Correspondence' or 'Executive Director – Reports' like other studies have been. Interestingly enough, the MHSAA's 'Correspondence' section provides space for similar concerns, such as letters received from the Manitoba Teachers' Society and the former Minister of Education, James Allum, congratulating MHSAA on their introduction of the trans- inclusion policy. Although it was requested that MHSAA share this study's information at zone meetings, this correspondence was not included in the September 23, 2016 or December 16, 2016 meetings' minutes, which discuss zone meetings directly, stating "travelled to a number of zone meetings and meet [*sic*] many of our member schools" (MHSAA, 2016e, p. 2). The ongoing lack of information included in the minutes allows for little interpretation of whether or not any information about this study was shared or presented to school zones (zones 1–15) across Manitoba. In order to ensure inclusion and allyship, equitable inclusion is a necessary

consideration in pre- and post- policy development, including continued education. Specifically, this includes prioritizing policies and their effectiveness equitably, in conjunction with equitable adoption and allocation of training and education. The MHSAA's *Gender Equity Policy* (MHSAA, n.d.) is useful to draw on to delineate this point.

Within the *Gender Equity Policy* (MHSAA, n.d) there is a "Research, Evaluations, and Monitoring" section that includes a statement and an action:

Statement: MHSAA will continue to monitor and evaluate all policies, programs and initiatives to ensure their adherence to gender equity.

Actions: MHSAA will continue to gather research material and relevant data to use in this monitoring and evaluating process. (MHSAA, n.d.)

However, in analyzing Board of Directors' meeting minutes, the MHSAA does not appear to be "monitor[ing] and evaluat[ing] all policies" equitably, nor do they appear to be "continu[ing] to gather research material and relevant data to use in this monitoring and evaluating process" (MHSAA, n.d.). The actual ongoing, equitable monitoring and evaluation of policies, including the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a), and learning from and gathering research material that works toward this equitable monitoring, contributes to actions of allyship that are necessary for policies affecting the daily lives of youth. Reece affirms necessary and ongoing allyship when asked whether policy itself can create cultural change, noting:

As long as we continue to chip away at the gaps, that the cumulative effect will have a positive impact on trans youth and gender non-conforming youth, which takes time.

[. . .] So um at least something is in place. But you're right, I mean it's, policy doesn't necessarily mean change. So now the next steps that we encourage and to think about is the allyship of what does it mean now to have and to put into practice inclusive policy

even if there aren't trans athletes that they are aware of within their group. So umm so having those more thoughtful conversations and not just around sports but including those group conversations about inclusion and camaraderie and citizenship around athletics um also needs to be part of this ongoing piece to include trans youth. (Reece)

Part of the actions of allyship is to listen to more trans- youth about their daily experiences with and around the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) and its effectiveness to learn from these experiences in the consideration and development of policy.

Reece explains that a considerably higher number of teachers are aware of the MHSAA's trans- inclusive policy now that the policy is included in educational workshops, and shares that more teachers have started to participate during in-services and professional development days on topics related to LGBT sports and athletics. From previous low workshop attendance, Reece explained "the room is being now full. You know 40 to 60 um teachers who would attend, who wanna know what all the issues are regarding sports and athletics and its relation to mental health and learning capacity." However, as Reece explains, youth in general are not made aware of policy, even when it directly affects their daily life:

But even in terms of policy in general, youth don't typically know about the policies in general. So umm nor is there really lots of opportunity for, I mean, for youth to understand, you know, where do they access it? Why would they need to access it? You know so there's that component as well. (Reece)

According to Chad, knowing if youth are aware of the MHSAA's trans- inclusion policy and that it is a "safe policy for them [students] to encourage inclusion" is the "hardest part." However, if the MHSAA's only actions to promote the policy was to share the policy with networks and to assume this information was then passed along accordingly, it remains unclear at what point

students were given, or are being given, the opportunity to be made aware of the policy. Future educational pieces may prioritize that youth know of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a), rather than relying on the gradual disbursement of the policy among divisions, principals, teachers, coaches, and lastly, students. The need to prioritize further research to hear from trans- youth is also discussed by the stakeholder participants.

Scott identifies the reality that even with a trans- inclusion policy in place, there may be students who continue to feel isolated based on, for example, the culture within their schools, speculating,

the practice and actions to support the policy are never gonna end quite frankly, right?

Until every transgender student athlete feels comfortable to play for their school. I mean I'm, I don't have any evidence of this but I'm guessing that there are transgender students who wanna play who don't right now um for a whole bunch of reasons. One of them might be the level of acceptance or perceived acceptance that they have within their school community or within their community. (Scott)

Most importantly, the practice and actions to support the policy will never be fully actualized without hearing from trans- students specifically regarding their perceptions of high school and high school sport contexts; this includes better understanding whether or not the lack of questions and inquiries into the policy from students correlates with an acceptance of the policy and its understood effectiveness and success, as presumed by Chad.

Discussing the lack of data and research findings available on trans- youth' indicators of safety within different spaces, Reece explains that other than the *Results of the Canadian trans youth health survey* (Veale et al., 2015) indicators from trans- youth directly are unknown. However, Reece expresses, "I'm hoping that your work will um, will be an impetus to see if

there could be other research or whether it be included in your research on the practice of the, putting the policy into practice.” Similarly, the need to hear from trans- youth about their perceptions and experiences with MHSAA’s policy is recognized in interviews with Morris, Paul, and Scott.

When asked whether he has, or has been provided with, any recommendations for how the policy could be changed, Morris responds, “I think the policy as it’s stated is good. I think it would be neat if we could get feedback from students affected. That would be nice and maybe we’d have to make an effort to reach out to students again. Umm and maybe that can happen through your research.” Similarly, Paul highlights the seriousness of hearing from more trans-youth as he acknowledges and affirms the differences and distance between current high school students and the stakeholders developing policy about and/or for those students:

I think now it’s just, now is the time to start keeping our ears open and eyes open to see how it’s going. And I think it’s, you know the work you’re doing to actually go out and ask those questions allows us to find out. [. . .] The other thing that will test the policy is when, is how well um the host schools and the schools themselves are supporting these athletes and how they respond and how you know at the student level, how are they responding to them and how is that affecting their feeling of being included. [. . .] And that’s where the students really um, that’s where they live at that level. They don’t live at the Board policy levels. They’re face to face with their peers and you know their coaches, so. [. . .] We’re quite distant from it. (Paul)

In Paul’s response, he questions the level of support for trans- youth within schools in relation to sport and the MHSAA’s trans- inclusion policy, drawing attention to the reality that the only way to better understand the levels of support, or lack thereof, for trans- students is to hear directly

from trans- students in Manitoba high schools; students whose daily experiences may be impacted by these policies and who are “face to face” with support and inclusion, isolation, or potentially inhabiting a space in-between.

Even with this awareness, Paul also discusses the difficulties of navigating this type of consultation with youth, reflecting on the logistics of engaging in research with youth and reasoning that youth consultation was not explicitly necessary at the time of policy development:

And trying to get access to those student voices. Cause I think with a consultation it's not just saying 'Oh we'll just ask the trans athletes,' well now you're asking youth and students and that type of consultation requires a lot of planning and a lot of effort and I don't think it was seen as being necessary to go down that road. I think, I think now we see a necessity to bring those voices forward. (Paul)

Scott also takes time to mention the difficulties of consulting with youth, but also expresses that as the policy, and awareness of the policy, evolves “if there is a mechanism to include that student voice, that would be something I would recommend to the Board to do.” While Morris notes the MHSAA attempted to speak with trans- people about their daily experiences and opinions of a trans- inclusive policy, and Reece explains that the research advising the construction of the policy was informed by trans- youth, consultations during the policy's development and after its implementation have been limited. Due to this, the benefits and effectiveness of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) for trans- youth in Manitoba high schools remains unclear. This includes uncertainties around the distribution of roles and responsibilities of associations and divisions to ensure the policy, in all aspects, is fully supported, as acknowledged by Paul; the reality that policies can be enacted and then forgotten about, as noted by Morris, and; a recognition that more work is needed in terms of creating safer,

more inclusive and accommodating schools for all students, as discussed by Reece. Through the representation of trans- students' perspectives, Chapter V draws attention to these unknowns.

4.3 Summary

This chapter provides a narrative of the creation of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a). The perspectives of stakeholder participants detail the motivations for creating a trans- inclusion policy, drawing attention to an aim to be proactive rather than reactive in developing a policy regarding the safety of trans- youth while also working to align the policy with governmental legislation already in place. The intent to proactively create a policy in order to avoid being regarded as discriminatory is also described. Secondary motivations that arose over the course of the policy's development include the respectful and safe inclusion of all high school students regardless of ability and identity.

Consultant stakeholders from organizations such as the Rainbow Resource Centre and The 519 were involved in the MHSAA's initial discussions of developing a trans- inclusion policy, and they provided input on policy drafts to minimize the possibility of developing a disjointed policy or one that contradicts policies developed by other organizations. The *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) was provided to provincial networks and school divisions in Manitoba in order to inform member schools, stakeholders, and media of the policy. Morris, Paul, and Reece all discussed the importance of media for informing the public of the MHSAA's newly implemented trans- inclusion policy. However, a brief media analysis conducted in order to compare and contrast the information shared by stakeholders identifies only two articles that discuss MHSAA's trans- inclusive policy at the time of its implementation. In consideration of the conversations occurring post-policy implementation, there is recognition that having the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) in place allows for an

opening-up of conversations for member organizations that are able to draw on the policy for support, which ultimately has the potential to facilitate cultural systemic changes that begin by being rooted in policy. The recognized need for continued education and informing schools and divisions of the policy is part of the conversations made possible by the policy in place. This includes the formulation of a plan and concrete understanding of the MHSAA's roles and responsibilities versus member schools and divisions, such as prioritizing that youth are made aware of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) rather than relying on a gradual disbursement of policy information that may not trickle down to all levels and members within an educational system as desired.

Although the narrative and representations presented throughout Chapter IV can be considered a "representation of pastness" (Munslow, 2003, p. 6) as the policy's development and implementation transpired over 2014-2015, the MHSAA's policy remains very much in the present with little understanding of its effectiveness and impact. The representations of the processes of developing and implementing the policy presented here highlight the lack of trans-youths' voices in the discussions. Aside from drawing on research informed by trans-youth and their experiences while developing the policy, there was a general lack of consultations with trans-youth regarding their perspectives of what a trans-inclusion policy for high school sports should include. Understanding the MHSAA's trans-inclusion policy within the present context, while acknowledging this narrative's "representation of pastness," is central to understanding the ways in which conversations around, and interactions with, current high school youth are fundamental to any understanding of the effectiveness and impact of this particular MHSAA policy. Chapter V includes a process of listening to and learning from the experiences of trans-youth in high school and their experiences in and perceptions of high school sport.

Chapter V: Trans- Youth in Manitoba High Schools:

Narratives on Sport and the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*

This chapter presents narratives from the voices of trans-¹¹ youth regarding their perceptions of, and experiences in, high school sport. The narratives presented here are informed through a representation of four interactive semi-structured interviews with trans- youth participants. Utilizing Ristock's (2002) affirming and disruptive research process, Chapter V is organized through three strategic components: (1) presenting the "material conditions" of trans-youth participants by "bringing forward the[ir] voices and subjective experiences;" (2) analyzing "discursive conditions" in order to "disrupt rigidified thinking and break down false dichotomies by examining language," and; (3) raising questions through reflexive engagement "for critical analysis and accountability by critically examining what is being produced and who is producing it" (Ristock, 2002, p. 28).

By listening to and valuing the experiences and knowledges of trans- youth as "on-the-ground-actors" (Short, 2013, p. 4), this chapter presents: (1) a brief characterization of youth participants; (2) a representation of the material lives of trans- youth participants, including their experiences and participation in high school sport; (3) an analysis of language and deconstruction of rigid dichotomies present in youth narratives; (4) a consideration of questions raised through reflexive accounts, including personal recordings from the researcher journal I kept throughout the entirety of this thesis. Recognizing the large amounts of time students spend in their schools, this chapter is written with the understanding that this thesis is only able to "enlarg[e] a small slice of their lives" (Ristock, 2002, p. 43); the narratives shared here offer only

¹¹ It is necessary to restate the intent of this term, to move beyond and destabilize restrictions of language and space. 'Trans-' is representative of a multitude of transgressive gender identities.

a small glimpse into the versatile lives of trans- youth in Manitoba high schools. However, as the literature outlined in Chapter II on school climate and sport contexts for trans- youth in Canada illustrates, trans- youths' narratives, often unheard in research, are an incredibly important beginning point in order to “compel” readers to action (Lather & Smithies, 1997, as cited in Ristock, 2002, p. xii).

5.1 Participants

This thesis is grounded in the understanding that trans- youth are “the best experts on their own experiences and lives” (Short, 2013, p. 5) and that the knowledges they articulate are worthy, imperative, and fundamental to this research and future social change. Providing space for these voices and narratives advances research designs that continue to exclude the voices of trans- people about their own lived experiences. The governing philosophy of this thesis is that “the starting and ending point of my research—and what carries the research throughout—is [. . .] that we must value the knowledge of on-the-ground actors” (Short, 2013, p. 4). In order to begin understanding the material lives of trans- youth involved in this thesis research, it is necessary to first start by introducing each participant.

In total, four youth volunteered to participate in this study and took part in an interview. All youth participants were aged 16 or older. One out of the four participants identified their race as white, two students identified their race as Aboriginal (one of which used the terms Aboriginal and Native interchangeably), and one student chose not to identify their race. At the time of the interviews, one student was in grade 10, two students were in grade 11, and one student was in grade 12. Two of the students live and attend school in rural Manitoba settings, and two live and attend school in urban settings. No participant was involved in high school sport at the time of our interview for a variety of reasons, which will be discussed in this chapter. One of the four

participants tried out for their school's softball team the year prior, but did not continue. Aside from this one brief instance, none of the youth had engaged in high school sport. Additionally, although the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) was enacted over two years ago, for all of the youth who agreed to participate in this study, this research was the first time they had heard about the policy.

For confidentiality and anonymity purposes, each participant personally chose a pseudonym to be referred to as throughout the research. The first interactive semi-structured interview took place with Roy Hamilton, a transgender student who uses 'he/him' pronouns, enjoys Art and English class, and generally likes "creating." Roy Hamilton self-describes himself as quiet. The second participant, Kevin, uses the pronouns 'he/him,' identifies as transgender, female-to-male, and spends much of his time creating animations, playing on computers, and enjoys playing piano. The third participant, Jane, usually self-identifies their gender as non-binary and as "more feminine leaning," and in our interview Jane recognizes the complexities and 'non-static-ness' of gender. Jane uses the pronouns 'they' or 'he,' is interested in feminism, history, political science, and Folk Festival. The final participant, Charlie Hides, uses 'he/him' pronouns but is not offended when friends use 'they' to refer to him. Demonstrating the fluidity of gender, from our first conversation at our introductory meeting to our interactive semi-structured interview, Charlie Hides' description of his gender changed. At our introductory meeting Charlie Hides indicated he sometimes identifies with the label 'genderqueer,' and during our scheduled interview identifies his gender as 'cis' or 'cisgender' stating "I was born male and I'm happy with being male." During this part of our conversation, Charlie Hides also described his interest in drag: "I'm really into the drag stuff and so I'm kinda playing around with me using the she/her pronouns and stuff but like that's probably the closest I would get to being gender

non-conforming.” Charlie Hides is very much “into the Arts,” movies, film, and self-describes himself as an artist who enjoys sketching, painting, and collecting records.

Prior to representing the narratives of youth participants, it is necessary to briefly return to the processes through which I was un/able to hear directly from the experiences of trans-youth across Manitoba. Recall, Chapter III breakdowns the number of schools, divisions, principals, and GSAs that responded (or not) to invitations for their schools to participate in this research. Reflecting on the numbers presented in Chapter III (60% of school divisions and 59% of principals either denied or ignored my research requests), as well as the different levels through which I had to gain approval to move forward this project, the intense gatekeeping that takes place in educational institutions is one of the largest barriers to accessing student voices. As will be presented in this chapter, the experiences of attempting to gain access to Manitoba schools is also reflective, and indicative, of the experiences and stories shared in this chapter surrounding the lack of support some youth participants feel within their schools.

The recruitment numbers outlined in Chapter III demonstrate a striking lack of interest across Manitoba in the topic of trans-youth in high school sport. Moreover, the firm declines and absent responses I received from superintendents and principals in response to invitations for divisions and/or schools to participate were alarming and extremely disappointing. For example, one rural superintendent’s response to an invitation sent by email stated “Hello Jaxon,¹² I am sorry that [name of school division] will not be able to participate in your research study. [name of superintendent].” When prompted for additional information as to their decision to not participate or how this final decision was made, I received no response from this superintendent. As another example, after obtaining approval from one urban school division, I then sent letters

¹² All communication sent by me to superintendents and principals was signed off as “Rae.”

of invitation by email to individual principals to invite their school to participate. One hour and forty minutes after my initial request, I received a response from one principal who bluntly stated, with no greeting, “I am not interested in participating” followed by an automated signature. When prompted for additional information as to the decision to not participate or how this decision was made, I also received no response from this principal. As I was not seeking this principal’s individual participation but rather participation from students in their school, this response on behalf of the entire school indicates a lack of reading of the letter and consideration of the implications of that decision for particular underrepresented youth. However, it is also important to acknowledge here the many requests are received by school divisions and principals each year for their schools’ participation in research studies and that accommodation of all studies is not possible. While this point does not excuse the poor communication from administration, this is noteworthy. The processes through which decisions are made regarding which studies to allow to occur in their division/schools remain unclear.

In relation to this thesis, due to the decisions made by administrators on students’ behalf, all of the students from the division and individual school described above who may have wanted to have their experiences and perspectives heard, and from all other divisions and schools who declined to participate or failed to respond to their invitation, were not allowed to participate. The gatekeeping present at all levels of the Manitoba education system contributed to the limited reach of this project and the trans- students able to participate. However, the four interviews represented in this chapter are a fundamental starting point that provide rich details and “truthful renditions” of their own lived experiences that may very well foster action within the cultures of educational institutions in Manitoba (Short, 2013, p. 7).

5.2 Material: Telling Stories

The intent of this section is to center the voices and experiences of trans- youth participants as described in their narratives. This section will discuss the material conditions of the everyday lives of trans- youth in relation to high school sports and athletic spaces in order to begin acknowledging often overlooked or unheard sporting experiences and respond accordingly to participants' needs.

5.2.1 Experiences and participation in high school sport

The similarities are notable among the experiences shared throughout the four interactive semi-structured interviews with youth, as are the differences that are a result of the differing contexts, interactions, and perspectives of each participant. All four participants explained that they do not participate in high school sports, albeit for varying reasons. For example, when asked if there was anything he would like me to know about himself before talking in greater detail about sports, for Roy Hamilton, it took no time before he stated, "I guess I'm not really into sports and it's probably with my uncomfortability with my body [. . .] Cause for the majority of my life I've been surrounded by sports and I was really interested when I was young but when the concept of like gender came in I was like, no thanks." I asked Roy Hamilton if that awareness deterred him from participating or further getting involved in sports, to which he responded "Mhm. Yeah." He explains his hesitancies to get involved when asked if he wants to be participating in sports currently: "For the majority yeah. But like growing up they already have the mindset like 'Ohh girls can do this and guys can do that. Here are girl toys, here are boy toys.' So I was like I guess since I'm wearing a dress I'm a girl so I can't do that." Roy Hamilton draws attention to his consciousness starting from a young age of constructed differences between binary categories of girl/boy that are socialized into everyday interactions, a system that

has shaped his participation in sports. However, for the upcoming school year Roy Hamilton intends to try out for volleyball for the first time: “I’m trying to go next year for volleyball. It’s what I really wanna do.”

Kevin explains he has not been on any high school sports teams. He shares distressing components related to gender that have deterred his participation, stating “I just kinda don’t like being in the change rooms that much cause it’s just kind of, I do my best to try to avoid going to use female washrooms or like female change rooms, so I kind of just like never go.” Outside of gender-related deterrence, Kevin also indicates “I kind of didn’t really have the time and I kind of like just drifted away from it [after middle school], like I kinda wanted to do it but then I didn’t wanna do it at the same time,” recognizing the need to prioritize time spent on various activities in high school. Kevin shares that he was involved in badminton in middle school, the one sport that he liked at that time, but never in high school. Similarly, Charlie Hides has never participated on high school sports teams at his school; he joined a volleyball team in middle school but did not continue. Charlie Hides explains his overall lack of interest as “I dunno, I just, I don’t really care for sports. I was just kinda doing it to see if I would enjoy it.” In contrast, the enjoyment of sport is apparent for Jane, who shares mixed feelings about high school sport.

When asked if there is anything that they enjoy about sports, Jane states “yeah that’s sort of the frustrating thing sometimes cause I really enjoy sports, like I really do, and I love gym but you know,” exchanging a knowing look with me that indicates a shared understanding of the limitations (and frustrations) present in high school sports. Jane takes a moment near the start of our interview to communicate “I guess that is kind of important to remember here: all of my opinions are coming from the perspective of a trans student who enjoys gym class in the first place. I’m sure someone who doesn’t enjoy gym class and then has to face all this stuff will like

have a completely different experience,” an extremely insightful recognition of the intersections of trans- students’ individual experiences, where Jane’s experiences and enjoyment of particular aspects of sport may not be shared by other trans- youth. Aside from gym¹³ class, however, similar to Kevin and Charlie Hides, although Jane participated in track in middle school, they have not participated on any high school sports teams throughout their high school career so far.

Discussing the aspects of sports that Jane enjoys, gym class specifically, they share “I sort of just enjoy sports in general and I like group participation stuff and it’s like fun, even if you’re not winning it’s fun to play as a team in something. It’s a good experience,” adding further “and I do like being in shape.” I asked Jane, from the perspective of a non-binary student who enjoys aspects of gym class and sports, if their enjoyment of gym class is greater than barriers they may experience. Jane responds “most of the time, most of the time at least.” Recollecting on middle school, Kevin describes his joy of traveling to other schools to engage in sports: “I mean when I used to play badminton in grade eight I loved being able to go out to like other schools and like being able to be active for playing the sports that I like, so I was like ‘Hey, why not?’” Kevin follows this statement by questioning if he participated currently whether he would still feel excited to travel for sports given his awareness of the more conservative areas of Manitoba that may not be as welcoming.

Roy Hamilton explains his perception of the structuring of high school sports in his school, where sports teams generally “accept everyone in the beginning and people just kinda taper off throughout training I guess. So basically the teams get smaller and smaller and then they pick groups and they have, they put them on different teams.” One of the teams “actually goes to the finals and goes out to like city events and then there’s the ones that just stay here [at

¹³ The use of “gym class” in this thesis refers to physical and health education (phys. ed.) class.

the school] and kind of like play if they want to” (Roy Hamilton). From his perspective, there are positive aspects of this structure for students who may not be as confident playing on competitive teams, realizing “there are some people who get like super pressured by going to tournaments and, or some people who just aren’t good and just wanna play the sport,” which he views as a form of acceptance toward varying sport abilities.

In relation to sports, Kevin likes “getting out and doing stuff.” Yet Kevin recognizes the decision to participate on high school sports teams is not straightforward for many trans-students, especially those who are not entirely “out” in their high school and/or family:

I just kind of don’t like having to like, cause like a part of me does want to go onto the guys team but the other part of me is like k I have to go to females cause I’m not out completely. But then it’s just kind of like, it’s kind of confusing to me because I don’t know where to go. So I kind of, it gets really annoying after a bit. [. . .] Like I want to [join sports teams] but the other part of me is like I’m not out and my family would be kind of like ‘What are you doing?’ (Kevin)

This response highlights Kevin’s awareness of the complicatedness of joining and participating on sports teams for multiple reasons, including the limits of binary structures and the added difficulties of navigating such a system while lacking support in school and family contexts.

Asking Kevin if he would like to participate in sports currently, he responds “I would totally do it if I like had like more time and just like kind of where the idea of which team I’d rather be on,” further acknowledging the taken-for-granted challenge of choosing between two-and-only-two sports teams.

Jane also speaks to the deterrents toward their participation in sport, identifying the difficulties of having to choose between not joining a team at all or joining a team that does not

align with their gender:

I think, I dunno. I feel like I'm probably missing some of the things that happen on sports teams. Like the reason I'm not actually on a team is because they do divide them up still. Like there's no co-ed teams except for badminton and like badminton's super hard to make the cut because everyone's super competitive with badminton. But like yeah every other team is divided by gender so like I don't feel like I could join either team and be comfortable. Like I could probably join certain teams and fly under the radar but like that's not what I want to do. (Jane)

Jane's comments illustrate the difficult decisions many trans- youth must make in high school sport contexts, potentially leaving them frustrated and not participating in all aspects of school life that they desire.

Our discussion continues with Jane sharing that a binary organization of high school sport has led to their lack of participation:

Rae: So is that [gender segregated teams] kind of the main reason you didn't join into sports teams in high school?

Jane: Yeah pretty much.

Rae: Just because it was like boys and girls.

Jane: Yeah and I feel like people could try to make an argument [in favour of gender segregation in sport] that like 'Oh girls are weaker, they're gonna get hurt if we mix the teams,' but that's not even true. So like at this point I don't see the point of separated teams cause it just excludes people who can't participate otherwise and like makes everyone just sort of feel bad about it.

When asked if they feel like they are "missing out" by not participating on high school sports

teams, Jane discusses an absence of opportunities to develop skills in sport:

Jane: Yeah. I don't know. Like I'm involved in a lot of activities but I feel like if I had been given the chance in like maybe grade nine or earlier to actually participate, it would have changed a lot of things and maybe for the better, you know?

Rae: Mhm. What kind of things do you feel like it could have changed?

Jane: I feel like I would've just been more comfortable like in sports overall, and I would be like trying out for stuff. So I don't think I'm having like a bad high school experience, I just think like maybe I'd have like a different one if there was more support there.

Other aspects of high school sports that youth participants do not enjoy include Roy Hamilton's dislike of the construction of "gender-specific sports" such as ringette, a sport exclusively "for girls," and hockey and football, recognized as "only for boys;" the intense competitiveness of high school sport (Kevin) in which athletes become the center of attention and where athlete mistakes are approached as individual failures because "when you're playing sports there's always people watching your every move and if you make a mistake they're just right on your back" (Charlie Hides); negative experiences and bullying of students' gender and sexuality in change rooms in which Kevin recollects "I felt really awkward. I didn't really wanna be there. Like whenever I had to go into the change room I was just very like quick, in and out." Many of the dislikes expressed here are present in youth participants' gym classes. However, the narratives also identify positive aspects of gym class, indicating gym to be a space that potentially does not take up as intensely the negative aspects associated with many high school sports teams.

While all four participants do not participate in their high school sports teams, aside from Roy Hamilton's brief undertaking of high school softball, all four are enrolled in mandatory gym

class. The differences between youths' narratives regarding gym class most often were a result of the structuring and organization of gym class taking place at each participant's school. For example, Roy Hamilton describes his new-found enjoyment and appreciation of gym class since enrolling in an alternative gym class available at his school. Gym class in middle school and at the beginning of high school for Roy Hamilton often involved organization based on "girls versus boys" which he did not approve of: "I was like 'No thanks. I'm gonna sit on the side.' I was even told by a teacher that I was gonna fail in high school cause I didn't choose gym." However, since joining an alternative gym class,¹⁴ he enjoys gym class considerably more. The alternative class, over the course of each year, is balanced between time evenly spent in the gym and in the classroom. Roy Hamilton highlights some positive aspects: "it's like a mixture [of genders] and there's like only 12 of us so there's no girls against boys." When asked about the change room structure of his class, he shares,

that's one of the things I absolutely love about this gym is that you don't have to change. [. . .] In grade seven and eight it was like mandatory that you change. That's why I was like failing in that class cause I was like 'Nope.' And then here they're like 'No you don't have to change. Just show up.' And I was like 'Cool. I can do that'."¹⁵ (Roy Hamilton)

Understandably, I could feel the enthusiasm and importance that he expressed when describing this aspect. Curious of the experiences of students who find this alternative gym class setting more accommodating, I asked Roy Hamilton if students who identify as non-binary, trans-, or who transgress gender norms, are more likely to join this class rather than a more mainstream

¹⁴ The name of the alternative gym class Roy Hamilton refers to is not disclosed here, as it may indicate which school Roy Hamilton attends.

¹⁵ More in-depth narratives of change room spaces from participants are represented in section 5.2.2 discussing school culture.

gym class. He responds “I wanna say yes cause I don’t really notice a whole bunch of other people in like regular gym class who seem bothered by it. Like they can just run into the change room like whatever. But everyone in [names alternative gym class] is like ‘No. No thanks’.”

The support of the teachers in this class setting, some of which were the first teachers he “came out” to in his school, is recognized by Roy Hamilton in our conversation:

Roy Hamilton: It’s like, gym was one of my favorites this year cause I was out and people didn’t bother me at all so I was like ‘Hi gym.’

Rae: Yeah, well that’s good! Is this the first year that you’ve kind of felt that way?

Roy Hamilton: Yeah it’s like the first year that I actually felt excited to go and I was like ‘This is awesome.’

Rae: Oh wow. That’s a good feeling.

Roy Hamilton: It reminded me of being a child when I was like ‘I love gym. They have scooters.’

Roy Hamilton’s rediscovered enjoyment of gym class has much to do with its structure and organization, with fewer restraints to normatively engage in mainstream sport and sport spaces.

During his interview, Charlie Hides also took time to mention his positive relations with teachers in his gym class:

I really liked the teachers. Like I think the teachers really liked me too and like it was just nice to connect and like they’re fine when I don’t participate too much because I’m scared of like those [more athletic] guys. They understand that and like I still get good grades because they know I’m trying my hardest. (Charlie Hides)

However, limits of team sports, gym class, and sport related spaces that maintain and reproduce the exclusion of particular bodies and identities, such as binary change rooms and washrooms,

are also discussed by trans- youth.

As all participants were enrolled in mandatory gym class, I asked them how they enjoy their class. Kevin responds “Yeah I guess it’s pretty fun. [. . .] I just like being active and kind of just playing around and doing all the different kind of sports.” Charlie Hides explains “I dunno. When you walk into your first gym class it’s always scary because there’s certain boys in there that are, they’re really competitive.” Jane expresses “I really like gym but like I know not everyone does. [. . .] And like I dunno, I try my best to participate even though I feel there’s like sometimes restrictions on what I can do.” When prompted as to what kinds of restrictions are present for Jane, they detail:

I can’t use either of the change rooms. It’s not that I can’t, I don’t want to. So like we do have neutral washrooms here but like they’re these little one stall rooms all the way across the school from the gym so I have to change and then like run all the way to the gym and then do it again if I have to like change again. (Jane)

After this information, Jane shares a story about the lack of gender inclusive change room accommodations and the associated challenges of this, pointing out the unrealistic expectation of all students to change in binary change rooms:

One day we had to change I think three times cause like we went up to the classroom for like half an hour for some reason and then came back down, so that was three times. And it’s like, it took awhile. [. . .] They were the teacher washrooms last year but now they’re for everyone and they’re like single stall rooms and it’s kinda gross to change in a washroom. Like it’s not meant for changing but you know. (Jane)

Mandatory outfit changes in gym class are also indicated by Kevin, who would prefer gym class if students did not have to change “but they force you to change and I’m just like ‘I don’t really

want to.’ [. . .] Yeah I hate them [binary change rooms] a lot.”

Further, Kevin’s gym class is often separated by binary gender and he explains the confusion he feels with this type of organization:

Kevin: So it’s kind of confusing for me cause I’m just like ‘Oh I wanna stay here [on the boy’s side] but I’m not out.’

Rae: Yeah. So do you just kind of resort to going to the girl’s side?

Kevin: Sadly yeah.

Segregating students by gender in gym class is also discussed by Jane, who noticed gender segregation in gym classes in grade nine and ten especially, however this does not take place as frequently in their current gym class. Jane perceptively acknowledges that although gender segregation may not take place in their gym class,

I don’t know if it’s just my teacher though, cause I have no way of knowing if other teachers still do that. They probably still do. [. . .] And that’s sort of like, I’ve never seen someone refuse to participate because of that but I’ve seen people uncomfortable because of that. [. . .] Yeah and it like makes me uncomfortable. I’m not gonna say like ‘Oh I’m gonna sit out,’ cause then like everyone knows. (Jane)

Both Kevin and Jane’s responses draw attention to the limiting ways gym classes are often organized, such as through a binary understanding of gender that forces youth to choose between binary options and potentially reinforces their identities as illegitimate; methods that can prompt profound concerns for many trans- youth and may contribute to lack of engagement in sport due to an inability to live authentically and/or express one’s gender in the ways they desire. Similar experiences are present when youth participants reflected on their early interactions with school sports and gym class, and the teachers that facilitate these spaces.

Some of the narratives of trans- youth that detailed their lack of participation in sports teams throughout high school are related to earlier sport and athletic space encounters that have affected their desire to participate currently. Expressing his feelings of Otherness, Roy Hamilton reflects on teachers from middle school who, instead of appreciating the challenges that many students have with change room spaces, told him he would fail gym classes once in high school due to his lack of participation. His level of participation was ultimately reinforced by teachers' efforts to silence him:

Roy Hamilton: For grade seven and eight, I always changed in grade six but I was like hella self-conscious cause I was like 'No thanks. I don't wanna be in here.' So I would always go run off into our handicap bathroom cause that didn't have a gender, it didn't have anybody else in there. It was just one stall. So I was like 'That's mine.'

[laughs]

Rae: Was that helpful though? Having that other space, the washroom?

Roy Hamilton: Mm, yes and no. It was good for the time being but it made me feel more like I did not belong cause I had to get my own bathroom.

Rae: Yeah. Kind of like an outsider almost.

Roy Hamilton: Yeah.

Rae: Did anybody ever bug you about using that space over the other change rooms?

Roy Hamilton: Mm not that I know. Maybe my teachers cause they were like 'Why are you late?' and I was like, 'Cause I was over there.'

Rae: Yeah. Did you ever explain that to them?

Roy Hamilton: No I did not. I kept quiet about most of my things cause I feel like that's what they were trying to teach me to do.

Rae: Yeah. Stay silent?

Roy Hamilton: Yeah. Kinda like be quiet. Listen.

Roy Hamilton's illustration illuminates a lack of understanding and awareness on the part of his teachers. Similarly, an ignorance on the part of some teachers is unmistakable in Kevin's rememberings of experiences he had in his gym in a Catholic elementary school.

Similar to Roy Hamilton, Kevin's voice was silenced by his teachers, as were aspects of his gender identity, memories of which have contributed to his lack of participation in sports in high school. Kevin explains:

I mean at my old school they used to always have like this open gym type thing where you would just kind of like, it was mostly during like all winter because it was really cold and nobody wanted to go outside. [. . .] So it would be like, I believe it was only open for grades sevens and eights back in my school and we would all like either pass like a volleyball around or we'd play badminton depending on the type of year. And like I don't know, I kind of felt really excluded because like I was never out back then but I kind of dressed more masculine. I didn't wear like very feminine clothing or any of that kind of stuff. So it was kind of like, I was more pushed off to the side and the teachers were just like 'Hey, what is this person doing?' (Kevin)

In response to prompts regarding what was communicated, Kevin recalls teachers saying directly, "'Hey. You gotta start wearing more feminine clothes, you're looking like a guy.' [. . .] and I was like 'Okay, whatever.' [. . .] they were very like 'This is what boys should wear, this is what girls should wear. This is what boys should like, this is what girls should like.'" When asked to recall how he responded, Kevin notes, "I don't know. I kind of just, I'd try to brush it off but sometimes it'd be like 'Well I don't really want to dress more feminine.' Cause I kind of

like guys clothes a lot better cause it just feels right and it's kind of like more comfortable and everything towards me." I asked Kevin if these experiences had any impact on his current non-participation in sports, to which he responded "I guess, kind of."

The narratives shared by youth regarding some of their experiences and participation in high school sport highlight the need for schools—administration, teachers, support staff, social workers, policy makers—to consider the strategies they utilize to organize and structure within the educational institution. This is ever present in the ongoing gender segregation of high school sports teams, which contribute to limited opportunities for many trans- students.

5.2.2 Climates in/outside of high school sport

Over the course of our interviews, I asked youth participants about the support they felt from teachers and students, and within their schools overall. Participants differed in their responses as to levels of support felt within their schools. For example, at Roy Hamilton's school, he has felt supported overall from teachers. Although he has not "come out to most of the teachers," the "majority" of teachers Roy Hamilton has come out to "have been okay with it" and use the correct pronouns and name, most of the time, to refer to Roy Hamilton. He sympathetically shares that teachers may slip on remembering, explaining "sometimes they mix up the name but that's probably because it's [his name] so similar." The type of support described by Roy Hamilton, however, is not experienced by Jane; even with the knowledge of literature outlined in Chapter II of school climates across Canada, Jane's responses indicate distressing and worrisome school environments for trans- youth.

Jane contemplates how their experiences in high school, including within high school sport, may have been different if they received greater support from all levels within their school. When attempting to ask if Jane feels supported, in general, by their teachers, I was unable to

finish the question before Jane answered, evidencing the passion behind this response:

Rae: Do you feel supported by...

Jane: No.

Rae: Teachers and, no hey?

Jane: No.

Rae: And like specifically related to gender and stuff like that?

Jane: Yeah. There's like zero support, I could name the teachers like actually by name who support people but like I'm not gonna do that right now. [. . .] it's not a great environment. I dunno, the way I often sum it up in my head sometimes is: I love my school, my school does not love me.

The lack of support offered to trans- students from teachers, as identified by Jane, can result in a significant unease in talking about identity with teachers, which other trans- youth participants discuss as well.

Jane, Kevin, and Charlie Hides all inform that a desire to have conversations about identities with teachers and staff in their schools is often overshadowed by a fear of not knowing how teachers may respond if students disclose their identities, ultimately preventing the conversations from taking place. Charlie Hides recalls the wariness of responses from some teachers during his middle school years:

I dunno I felt like it wasn't normal. I was the only one who was really different from everyone else so I wasn't sure like how teachers would respond to me because of the negative reaction that the kids were giving me. It's uncomfortable [having conversations with teachers regarding identity] cause you don't really know who's gonna be like homophobic and stuff like that. (Charlie Hides)

Although Charlie Hides expresses that he is friends with all of his current teachers, he does explain that he finds one math teacher to be phobic, reflecting on the possible covert homophobia and/or transphobia present: “I had my nails painted once and that day I had my nails painted I just felt like he was kind of not as nice.”

Thinking through desired conversations with gym teachers specifically, such as requests that teachers not separate students by gender during activities and the reasons this segregation may be challenging for students, Kevin shares his hesitations in approaching gym teachers:

Especially like for me, like I wanna tell a teacher but I just kind of don’t know how they would feel about it and I just don’t wanna make things awkward or anything like that.

[. . .] I don’t wanna be treated any differently, I just kinda want to be treated the same but just different pronouns and stuff. (Kevin)

Aware of his hesitations to approach teachers, I asked Kevin what he thought might help to make these conversations less difficult. Kevin suggested the need for teachers to be more open, welcoming, and receptive to students’ varying identities stressing that “some of the teachers here I know are not very well educated through like LGBT stuff cause I hear a lot of like teachers say a lot of stuff that isn’t really the best.” Similarly, Jane recognizes a need for teachers to be more open to listening to students and believing their lived experiences.

Jane draws on an example of attempting to question the information shared by teachers in classes, or challenge teachers on exclusive and/or inappropriate language, and not receiving favourable responses. As one example, Jane identifies unresponsive teachers as especially prominent in science courses in their school, as teachers resort to biologically determined understandings that ultimately lead to, whether consciously or not, transphobic comments, and then if people try to correct them they’re like ‘oh no, I know this.’ [. . .] I feel like

it's one thing to not know something and then if someone corrects you it's like 'Oh okay, I'll stop saying that' or like 'I'll start saying something else.' But like if someone corrects you and then like you don't listen. (Jane)

Even though this example is of teachers Jane is more comfortable with, Jane believes "they still shut people down" if they do not agree with students' objections and/or requests for clarification. At this point in our interview, Jane accurately distinguishes my use of the terms 'support' and 'getting along' interchangeably, clarifying,

I can get along with like tons of teachers and I know they would support me on like an academic level if I'd like talk to them about like a scholarship or like 'Hey, I'm having trouble with this class,' or whatever. But like if I said 'Hey you're directly hurting me, or this person in class is hurting me,' they would not do anything. (Jane)

This clarification is related to a larger conversation during our interview regarding covert versus overt forms of hate and violence within schools.

Discussing a wide range of transphobia that takes place in schools, Jane explains "I feel like no teacher would actively like hate on people for being trans but like, or say like 'I hate trans people' like straight out or say that they're not like trans or anything, but that doesn't mean that you don't hate them and that like you're not supporting them or anything." We acknowledged in our interview the extreme harmfulness of covert transphobia, such as side comments during class, and the reality that covert transphobia can be just as harmful, if not more, than overt acts.

Recognizing this, Jane identifies the dismissal of multiple forms of transphobia:

Jane: I feel like people miss the point on that a lot when you try to point it out to them and that like makes it worse because they're not willing to believe you.

Rae: Yeah. So that's kind of how it is with teachers at the school here?

Jane: Yeah. It's definitely worse with students cause no one's going to fire them but like, it's bad with teachers too.

Jane relates the covert transphobia to a broader, national problem, in which people living in Canada hide behind a mask of assumed 'politeness' and, due to this harmful image, covert forms of discrimination and oppression are invisibilized, which Jane considers to be similar to violent histories of racism and homophobia in Canada that often go unacknowledged. The outward discrimination expressed by students toward each other, as acknowledged by Jane, varies dependent on context.

In his alternative gym class, Roy Hamilton feels the majority of the class seem accepting and "mellow" about his transgender identity, actively using the appropriate name and pronouns. Roy Hamilton recalls being scared when students directly asked if he was transgender, but was met with favorable responses. When he responded "yep" to their inquiry, he recalls thinking about the types of follow-up questions students would ask next, such as "'What's in your pants?' [and] 'Do you like girls or boys?'" However, Roy Hamilton received calm reactions and brief responses such as "'That's cool.'" Even with these types of response, Roy Hamilton also implies the potential existence of covert discrimination, even within an alternative, non-mainstream gym class, stating "I feel like the majority of this generation has been taught if you have nothing nice to say, don't say it. So if I wasn't accepted, they wouldn't tell me." Negative experiences with other students, however, are more present for Roy Hamilton with students not enrolled in the alternative gym class.

Roy Hamilton acknowledges the necessity for schools to provide alternative gym classes, such as the one he is enrolled in, identifying "there's a reason that we're in that class—because we either don't show up or we don't wanna change or we're just not comfortable with the other

gym students. And so we're usually like picked on [by more athletic, mainstream students] I guess." After sharing this, he proudly recollects about one day when his alternative gym class ended up engaging with students from a more mainstream gym class in his school:

Roy Hamilton: I remember um near the last week of the semester we were put in the gym with them cause they were just having like fun, they were playing a whole bunch of like dodge ball and catching games. So we were put in there and we were all on one team, all of the [names alternative gym class] kids cause there were like nine of us that day. And I remember all the other kids were like on other teams and they'd come over to us and they'd be like 'Oh this is gonna be easy.'

Rae: Mhm. They just thought they could easily beat you hey?

Roy Hamilton: Mhm. [big smile]

Rae: Did you win?!

Roy Hamilton: [shakes head yes] Viciously.

Rae: That's amazing. [laughs] That's awesome. Did that feel pretty good?

Roy Hamilton: Yeah. [. . .] Like most of the kids in [names alternative gym class] aren't known for being like energetic and running around and then during that day we were all like jumping around and catching things.

Jane discusses similar sentiments towards students in their more mainstream gym class, providing the example of athletic students not passing to certain people, specifically women students; occasionally Jane experiences this as well. I asked Jane if the teachers seem aware of this inequity, and they respond: "I think most teachers are oblivious but some teachers are aware and just sort of don't care about it. [. . .] There's a few teachers that do point it out and say like 'Oh hey, pass to this person,' but like they can't make you do anything so it doesn't always

happen.” Regardless of the gender of the teacher, these experiences continue to occur as “just because someone’s a girl doesn’t mean they can’t be like sexist or transphobic” (Jane).

Jane feels that in their school overt transphobia and racism is more apparent with students while covert transphobia is expressed by teachers; students are more likely to be outright with their lack of support toward trans- students. Their perception of this distinction is that students’ fear of punishment for outwardly expressing transphobia is not as noticeable:

Like you’re [students] not going to get suspended if you say it. [. . .] But that goes for a lot of things though like I feel like the students at this school are super like racist as well and like nobody’s gonna call them out on it because like the teachers don’t like punish them, which is pretty bad. (Jane)

With a lack of observable recourse towards students, coupled with an awareness that teachers enact their own covert and/or overt transphobia, discrimination towards trans- students continues: as Jane questions, “like how do you punish someone who has the staff agreeing with them?” Recognizing the intersections of race and gender, Jane explains that as a white person,

I do not face racism in addition to the other pressures I have. White trans people do not face racism in addition to transphobia, and this isn’t something that should be overlooked. Because of this, my experiences with both school and everyday life are easier, where they would be more difficult for others without the privilege that I have. (Jane)

Kevin shares that he hears “a lot of like really transphobic things said or really homophobic things” in different spaces within the school, some of which are directed toward him. In response to my question of whether students say transphobic and/or homophobic comments directly, Kevin explains: “Oh I’ve heard it in the cafeteria, I’ve had like things thrown

at me, so I mean you just try your best to ignore it cause you're just like whatever." Additionally, Kevin brings up the interlocking oppressions of race and gender identity he sometimes experiences as a self-identified Aboriginal/Native person, where he feels racism can affect certain everyday activities such as attempting to engage in sport. Kevin expresses that he sometimes feels "that I might not be welcomed into some sport places just cause of who I am and I don't think all sport places are welcome [. . .] and are not really welcoming to Natives, and [. . .] sometimes they can be not so nice about native people joining." Kevin's account is indicative of Taylor et al.'s (2011) identification of "double whammy" effects in high schools across Canada, where not only are trans- youth targets of harassment and/or assault due to their gender minority status "but they are also much more likely to be physically harassed or assaulted because of their ethnicity" (p. 65). The experiences detailed by Kevin remain entrenched in the contexts they take place in, as Charlie Hides, who also identifies his race as Aboriginal, explains that students who participate in sports and sport-related spaces in his high school are "racially diverse" and that "as an Aboriginal I would say that race has been very much transparent in the issues I faced with Phys Ed." Kevin did indicate that in these situations, such as his example of the cafeteria encounter, it is often hard to determine if he is targeted due to his gender identity.

In relation to high school sport and gym class more specifically, teacher intervention is not always perceptible in consideration of youths' perceptions of gym teachers having "favourite" students. Both Roy Hamilton and Jane discuss gym teachers having favourite students and detail how this can impact grades in their classes, for example: "In gym your mark is pretty much based on what the teacher thinks of you" (Jane). Roy Hamilton describes his understanding of gym teachers picking favourite students:

I guess I could start that I'm a very quiet student who likes to sit on the side so I notice a

whole bunch of things. I notice in the beginning of the year they [gym teachers] usually pick their favorite students. [. . .] And they're usually the athletes, obviously. They're usually the students that they have on their teams or that have tried out in like city sports or have like won something and they're usually the people who like lead in games I guess. So like if they were to pick, a classic scenario would be like picking your dodge ball team. They would always pick those to be like the team captains and that's one of the things I did not like cause they would always pick a favorite and I was like 'Rude.

There's a whole bunch of other kids here.' [. . .] And then we get compared to those two as well, all the athletic students. (Roy Hamilton)

As Roy Hamilton experiences, favouritism towards student athletes can be dependent on the cultures of sport within students' individual schools.

In our interviews, I asked each participant to describe their perspectives of the sport culture at their school. Charlie Hides' response is straightforward: "Well they're obsessed with sport." He explains this obsession further, sharing that the brand of the school's sports team is visible in many spaces including the cafeteria and a merchandise centre, both of which are named after a variation of the school's sport team name. Further demonstrating his school's enthusiasm with sport, Charlie Hides explains there is more than one gymnasium in their school and that pep rallies surrounding sports events are mandatory for all students. Comparatively, other non-sport related events, such as pep rallies for school clubs, are not mandatory (nor often organized) in Charlie Hides' school. He appeared surprised when he could not think of any non-sport related mandatory event stating, "I don't really think so actually. [. . .] Our school is based around sports. Nothing else is really mandatory." He uses this time to discuss his desire to have non-sport focuses at his school: "I really wish the school focused on some other things instead of

just sports,” and contemplates this possibility, thinking “but I feel like a lot of times it’s not really, I dunno, it’s like sports groups always end up promoted [by his school]. I dunno how they get them [the school administration] to make it [a non-sport focused event] mandatory but it’s like all self-promoted and stuff like as a group.” Compared to sport events and teams at Charlie Hides’ school, his GSA has to self-promote events school-wide, including creating their own posters and vocalizing their own announcements. Similarly, Jane describes their school’s gymnasium as a central focus in their school, one which gets painted every few years to preserve its appeal.

Individual schools’ preoccupation with school sports is not necessarily, on its own, a negative aspect of individual schools. However, if the very design of school sport programs tolerates and promote exclusion of certain identities and bodies, the foundation of what that individual school, who centralizes all aspects of sport, is promoting, is exclusion. Continuing to disproportionately prioritize limitative sports programs and teams in schools rather than the social justice and equitable opportunities for trans- youth and all students, contributes to feelings of discouragement in sport spaces, as expressed by trans- youths.

This is present in Roy Hamilton’s narrative when discussing his attempts to navigate binary sports teams and the disadvantages present in both options. Trying out for volleyball next year, Roy Hamilton would like to try out for the boys’ volleyball team as he believes being “surrounded by more masculine, I guess, people would just be nice and more comfortable” and where the level of competition is where he would like to participate. However, Roy Hamilton articulates the shortcomings of joining either of the two options explaining, “I feel like if I were to join a men’s team they wouldn’t take me seriously. Or if I was to join a women’s team, they would take me too seriously. So I wouldn’t feel a part of the team.” With respect to joining a

girls' team, he believes he would likely be “made fun of like by the girls if I was on a team for girls” regarding his gender “cause I haven't like fully transitioned so they would just straight up assume or call me a dyke or something. [. . .] And they would think that I'm just on the volleyball team to get girls.”

To join a boys' high school sports team, Roy Hamilton scrutinizes the need to “pass” as male in order to be accepted onto the team, a further indication of a deeply entrenched reliance on a binary system of gender. The likelihood of Roy Hamilton being taken seriously on a boys' team, he explains, may significantly increase “if I looked the part. Cause I feel like with a lot of guys since they only see black and white it's like if I look like a guy, they're gonna treat me like a guy.” I prompted Roy Hamilton to consider whether the uncomfortableness toward his participation on a boys' high school team felt too great of a barrier to surpass, to which he responds, “I would definitely try out but if that feeling is still there I don't think I'd stay.” Some of the uncomfortable feelings associated with high school sport relates to spaces directly attached to sport, such as change room and locker room spaces, an example which all four youth participants discuss.

Two of the four youth participants attend schools that have no gender inclusive washroom available to them. Roy Hamilton's school does not have an inclusive washroom. He uses single stall staff washrooms, which are not intended for students, but notes: “I just kinda go in there. Nobody's yelled at me for it. So I was like, okay. I'll just keep going in this.” Similarly, Kevin's school does not have a gender-inclusive change room or washroom for students; one, or both, of which would be beneficial for Kevin to avoid changing in the girls' change room for gym class. Both Kevin and Roy Hamilton indicate that the GSAs at their respective schools are in the process of re-designating a washroom into a gender-inclusive washroom. Kevin indicates

that once their school has a gender-inclusive washroom, he will likely change there before and after gym class.

Recently, Jane's school converted individual-stall staff washrooms into gender-inclusive washrooms for students. As outlined in section 5.2.1, Jane uses this washroom, across the school from the gymnasium, to change for gym class. Prior to the renovation, Jane changed in a boys' washroom away from the gymnasium. Teachers appear unaware of Jane's exhaustive ritual for changing prior to and after gym class. However, Jane explains that teachers seem unaware because many students change in washrooms outside of the gymnasium, pointing to a larger concern than inaccessible change rooms for trans- students only. However, the limited spaces in which trans- youth feel comfortable changing, compared to cisgender youth, is of significance:

I'm never like late for class and I'm sure they're not gonna ask like 'Oh why aren't you changing in the change rooms?' They probably just think, cause like tons of people change in the washroom anyway cause they think that the change rooms are crowded but like they'll do it in like a big washroom and just sort of throw their clothes on the floor, so. (Jane)

As binaries are built into existence in sport-related spaces, including in high school sport contexts, trans- youth are spending much of their day finding isolated spaces to change for gym class or use the washroom.

Considering the narratives expressed above, it is unjust and unethical to expect trans-youth to spend a considerable amount of their time worrying about being removed from staff washrooms, with subsequent worries of finding another space if this eviction takes place, or have apprehensions about teachers finding out they do not change in the designated binary gymnasium change rooms before and after class. Furthermore, as both Kevin and Roy Hamilton confirm,

their individual GSAs are working toward introducing the first gender inclusive washroom into their schools. Besides his GSA group, Roy Hamilton is not aware of any other individuals in his school who are advocating for a gender-inclusive washroom. In order to make positive changes within his school's culture, he recognizes that conversations around gender-inclusive washrooms need to be much more expansive across his school rather than simply his GSA advocating for this change and the concern continuing to fall on, and remain with, "queers."

As highlighted in this section, the experiences of exclusion that trans- youth encounter in their high schools must be better acknowledged and addressed. A lack of awareness by school administration and teachers of these experiences, or an ignorance toward the reality of these experiences, is apparent in participants' discussions of school climate in/outside of high school sport as well as the MHSAA trans- inclusive policy.

5.2.3 Perceptions of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*

None of the four participants knew of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) prior to engaging in this research. Sharing his initial thoughts about the policy once he had heard it, Charlie Hides states, "I don't know too much about like policies or anything like that but it seems like having a one-sentence thing is kind of insignificant. Like it's not, they don't make a big deal about it. It's just like one sentence." Kevin explains he did not know of the policy, and believes his teachers also do not know about it. If teachers did know of the policy, Kevin believes they would have informed him.

After re-reading the policy, Jane reaffirms their lack of awareness of the policy and signifies a failure by their school and the MHSAA's part to effectively communicate the policy: "Okay like I was not actually aware of that. That was not mentioned at school at all. So like even if it's something that existed, nobody ever got told about it or nobody bothered to tell the

students here that.” I asked Jane to consider why teachers may not have known or if they did know, why they never shared the policy with students, and Jane speaks to a potential disinterest on the part of teachers: “I feel like it’s probably the case that a lot of the teachers didn’t know. Unless a law specifically affects you you’re not gonna just look it up.” On the part of the MHSAA, Jane stresses the importance of public announcements in order to spread the policy more widely, which Jane believes did not take place. If it did, it was not effective in its circulation to schools.

When asked if he had heard of the policy before we started talking about it together, Roy Hamilton responds:

Roy Hamilton: [deep breath in] No and it makes me so mad.

Rae: Yeah. So you hadn’t heard about it at all before?

Roy Hamilton: I hadn’t heard it at all, nobody mentioned anything to me. None of my friends have heard it.

Rae: Wow. So what were your initial thoughts when you heard it?

Roy Hamilton: Well when you said it I was like ‘What line?’ and then when you said the line I was like ‘Dang. That is only one sentence.’ I thought it would be a little longer than that. And I was, it does not explain much and kind of leaves out some people as well cause what if like non-conforming, what do they do?

Roy Hamilton’s frustration from not knowing of the policy is evident, as awareness of the policy’s existence may have inspired earlier participation in high school sports. Roy Hamilton indicates, however, that the MHSAA trans- inclusion policy is a positive starting point, one that shows trans- youth “we’re in like a good position and that we’re not completely neglected and that if a gym teacher or coach does take these [the policy] seriously then we can join whatever

team we feel more comfortable on.” Speaking further on this, he draws attention to a school-wide lack of awareness of the policy, potentially indicating carelessness of the topic, stating “it’s just that it’s one sentence and it’s new that not many of these teachers have reviewed or even bothered to look at it.” Recognizing his description of his schools’ intense enthusiasm and promotion of sport, Charlie Hides provides insight that accentuates a potentially hypocritical position of his school, as his school’s passion around sport was not extended to a policy intended to include trans- youth in sport: “especially in such a sports like centered school, it just seems odd not to be promoting something like that.”

On the topic of whether or not participants felt the policy was helpful for trans- youth in accessing sport, in general, Charlie Hides suggests “maybe it would if like it [the policy] was actually out there. The policy seems to be kind of under wraps.” Similarly, if more people knew about the policy, Kevin suggests, it may be more helpful for trans- students to access high school sports teams as a lack of school-wide awareness of the policy hinders students’ ability to access it fully. Thinking about the policy further, Roy Hamilton’s narrative deconstructs the policy statement, as he insightfully interprets: “I think it would [help trans- students play on sports teams], I think it helps protect them in a sense but I don’t know if it helps them play cause they can let you on the team, it’s just a matter of them putting you on the field. [. . .] Like, ‘welcome to the team, warm the bench’.” Roy Hamilton’s comment speaks to a much larger conversation about acceptance and inclusion of trans- people on sports teams, indicating that simply stating that trans- students are allowed on sport teams does not correlate to their complete inclusion amongst the team.

Roy Hamilton’s points are echoed by Jane who outlines this disassociation in our conversation:

Jane: We're at the point where I could like probably like I could legally try to get onto a team that I wanted, that doesn't mean like that anyone on the team would like accept it or like the teacher would, you know? [. . .] Just cause like, just because the school has legal backing or like you personally have legal backing doesn't mean you won't be like, like you won't face social consequences for it. Or even like maybe like pointing out the problems like I dunno, laws are important but they can only go so far. We need like an actual social change. [. . .] Yeah so we need both at the same time right now. But we're not gonna get that, and that sucks.

Rae: Yeah. So you could like theoretically join the team that you want or argue for you know...

Jane: Yeah if I wanted to get into like a huge fight with the school, yeah I could.

Rae: But then you're saying even if you got that, you still might not be welcomed or accepted or included.

Jane: Yeah or like I'd probably be like cut from the team super early or just like have nobody talk to me, so.

Rae: Right, yeah. That's like a hard realization hey?

Jane: Yeah, and like it would also be like sort of like outing, like you would literally just sort of get outed if you tried to join the team that you want.

Jane's comments confront 'on-the-ground' effects that are often overlooked by policy makers and administration, including the awareness that trans- youth potentially have to challenge their school in order to be on a sports team, the social consequences of which for students are much greater than simply joining a sports team or not. Jane calls attention to the need for social change in its entirety within and outside of educational institutions in order to address inequities among

student populations. School gym teachers and sports coaches in particular, Roy Hamilton argues, need to become aware of the policy and advocate on trans- students' behalf: "like that's one rule that applies to them and if they don't know it then they're not really doing their job to their full potential. They're rejecting students." Roy Hamilton's GSA advisors indicate they were not made aware of the policy, and no teacher in his school approached him when it was introduced.

For Jane, the MHSAA trans- inclusion policy may be helpful to only a select pocket of trans- youth attempting to access high school sport: "I feel like it could [help support trans- students to play on teams] but probably only for binary trans students who are already involved in sports to begin with and have the full support of their school, which is a very specific set of circumstances." When participating on sports teams, the safety of trans- youth is a component that remains unaddressed within the policy, as youth narratives reveal.

Considering whether or not the policy helps trans- youth feel safer to participate in sport, Kevin believes students would feel safer on a team if the team is accepting of the policy. In relation to his own safety, Kevin expresses that he mostly feels safe in gym class, the space in which he accesses sports, yet informs "but like I still have that feeling where I don't really, like I wanna come out but I really can't because I feel like a lot of the guys would be like 'K. What are you doing?' or like 'What are you thinking?' or something like that," highlighting that if he were out in his class, he may feel more unsafe. Kevin agrees that negative reactions post-coming out, or a fear of these reactions, reinforces unease associated with coming out.

Roy Hamilton uses the metaphor of a fight to think through whether or not the policy helps trans- youth feel safer in high school sports teams; a thought provoking metaphor in consideration of both safety, sport, and a longstanding resistance from trans- people for equitable access to sport and sport-related spaces:

Not necessarily safe, just included. Just like in a fight. You're included but you're still gettin' hit. I feel like it also opens you up for more attack cause it's obviously that you look different or that your size is different, your voice is different, something's different compared to everyone else on the team. So that leaves you like more open to teasing and being bullied. (Roy Hamilton)

Regarding his own safety in gym class and sport-related spaces, Roy Hamilton explains that he experiences more of the occasional sideways glance or uncomfortable comment rather than any physical forms of violence:

For the majority, nobody's harassed me over it [his identity]. Just like I said, like the looks, cause like when they say my name like all they see is my body and they're like 'Nope. Are you sure?' But not necessarily harassed or hit or picked on simply because that's what I identify as. (Roy Hamilton)

Roy Hamilton's response points to the importance of not presuming that all trans- people follow one "mythical trans narrative," as argued by Lucas (2009).

I asked Kevin in what ways the policy has helped him personally, or not, to access high school sport. He responds "I don't really think it has so far because I never knew about it till now so I was just pretty much really oblivious to it. If I knew about it sooner maybe I probably would have joined the boys team like a long time ago." Further, as the policy was first enacted when Kevin was in grade eight, having knowledge of the policy when he first entered high school would have encouraged him to try out for sports teams sooner knowing there was a policy in place to support him and his efforts: "Oh I totally would've. [. . .] I would've been like 'Okay you know what? Try this, see if I get in'."

Roy Hamilton goes into detail when asked if this policy would be helpful for him

personally when attempting to join a high school sports team, such as his plans to try out for volleyball in the upcoming school year. His response is uncertain: “Yes and no. [. . .] Because of this I thought about joining the men’s volleyball team but I also feel like it wouldn’t be helpful cause what if the teachers don’t know about this as well? So I’m like rejected flat out.” Since hearing of the policy, Roy Hamilton’s interest in trying out for the boys’ volleyball team at his school has increased. He outlines his strategy of determining the acceptance levels of teachers and coaches before trying out: “I’m gonna go ask the teachers and the coaches if they heard about this [policy] and like just see where it stands before I try out. But that definitely got me thinking that I could join a volleyball team that would suit me better,” indicating he expects the policy will allow him to join the team he more aligns with. In contrast, this perception differs for Jane, who explains the policy has not helped their feelings of safety when considering participation in high school sport and sport related spaces, stating “I can only speak for myself, but it doesn’t. [. . .] Like I’m sure maybe other people would disagree with me but like just from my own opinion, no.”

For Jane, when asked if this policy would be helpful to their participation, they respond, “no, not at all. [. . .] Ugh, I don’t know. I don’t wanna be like super harsh but like no, it hasn’t really helped.” Jane explains these feelings are related to a lack of knowing about the policy individually and a lack of school-wide support from administration, teachers, and students. Building on this conversation further, the policy’s effectiveness is further called into question when Jane states “it’s good to have legal backing but seeing that one phrase does not actually make me wanna join a sports team or feel like that I could.”

Charlie Hides’ response indicates similarities to Jane, as he indicates the policy has not helped him participate in school sports. Yet, since knowing about the policy’s existence, he

informs “now that I know about it I feel like I could kind of say something in GSA. Maybe we could like enforce it and try to promote it. Cause we do have trans students in our school and like who’s to say that they don’t wanna play sports but don’t feel safe to do so.”

Overall, Roy Hamilton indicates the policy has helped him in relation to high school sport. Acknowledging that the policy is not entirely ideal, he states,

but it gets me thinking and helps me understand that you are trying, like the school division’s trying to take a step in between like transgender students taking our, I don’t wanna say like feelings into consideration, and like making things so that they can work around us instead of us trying to work around them. (Roy Hamilton)

Similarly, although the policy has not helped Jane’s participation in high school sport or changed their perceptions of sport prior to knowing about the policy, and though Jane considers the policy statement not ideal, Jane clarifies that they do not want the policy removed, but improved: “I feel like I just wanna be like absolutely clear that like this isn’t a good step but it’s not one that should be taken away. Like definitely this should stay and improve, not get taken away just cause it’s bad.” The effectiveness of such a policy is difficult to measure, according to some of the responses from youth participants. They also question the language written into the policy.

Charlie Hides, for example, is interested in how the policy makers “decided to write his or her” into the policy, binary language that works to exclude certain students. On the other hand, Charlie Hides appreciates the language choices in the policy statement of students being able to “participate fully and safely,” ‘safe’ being a significant keyword in a policy declaring that the experiences of trans- students on high school sports teams are fully supported through this policy. Overall though, due to a lack of awareness surrounding the policy, Charlie Hides does not believe the goal of the policy to help trans- youth participate in sports is being achieved.

Also recognizing a lack of awareness surrounding the policy, Roy Hamilton maintains that this lack, in combination with the policy's recent enactment, indicates the difficulties of measuring the policy's successes thus far: "cause this is really new nobody's really used it yet, none that I know of. So I can't say for certain." Kevin pointedly explains that the policy would be beneficial to students if more people knew about it. In terms of his perceptions of the policy's effectiveness in helping trans- youth participate in high school sports, Kevin responds:

No, not really because I haven't really seen anybody like [names other trans student] or like anybody in GSA being like 'Do you know what? I'm gonna try out for this team.' Or just be like, or like anybody who's like trans here, I've never really seen anybody [who is trans] [. . .] on one of the teams that they really wanted to be on. [. . .] I wish more people really did know about it. I feel like there'd be a lot more people participating.

(Kevin)

Roy Hamilton discusses the absence of trans- youth in sports at his school, and presents similarities to Kevin's observations:

Mmm, I don't know too many trans people and the ones I do know don't play sports. [chuckles] And probably for like similar reasons. [. . .] But looking at [names high school], I don't really see many transgender students at all. So, seeing them in sports would probably be really good and if I could see that I would totally join a team. (Kevin)

Our conversation continued with Roy Hamilton identifying the difficulties of navigating school sports that do not have any out trans- athletes and has worries about being the first trans- student to be visible to pave the way:

Rae: Yeah. That would be, is that one thing do you think that is kind of nerve racking maybe about joining the men's team is like maybe not having somebody there that you

can quite relate to or?

Roy Hamilton: Yeah and like being the first or something, the first in our school. It's just really different and feeling alone would probably be like the scariest part.

Rae: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Were you meaning being the first trans person on the team?

Roy Hamilton: Yeah cause as far as I'm aware there hasn't been any.

These discussions with Roy Hamilton and Kevin make apparent a need for improvement of the MHSAA policy to allow trans- youth easier access to sports, where the visibility of trans- student athletes is recognizable by their team members and other athletes.

Correspondingly, Kevin expresses a desire for more teachers to know about the policy and assurance that teachers will then discuss the policy with students, explaining "I just wish more, like they decided to like put it more out and like they got more teachers like to tell everybody and just like 'Hey this is like a rule'" a perspective shared by Roy Hamilton as regarding gym teachers and sport coaches, specifically. When asked about his perceptions as to why more teachers and students are not aware of the policy, Kevin hypothesizes "Mmm probably just because like they [the MHSAA] never got the word out or they were just kind of like, they kind of just wanted to sweep it under the rug I guess." Kevin suggests the need for the policy to go into more depth, such as access to sports for non-binary students, a point which both Roy Hamilton and Jane echo.

For example, Roy Hamilton identifies that the MHSAA trans- inclusion policy ignores "some groups of people like non-binary and Two Spirit, cause if they don't conform to a gender, where do they belong?" As Jane indicates the current policy was not ideal, I asked them what this type of policy should include to be more inclusive and effective. Jane responds, "I think it should definitely um include non-binary students and like, like everyone even outside of the

binary,” and follows this statement by drafting a similar policy statement they believe may be more inclusive for these groups of students: “Instead of phrasing it like ‘in sex-separated sports’ they could say maybe like ‘Any transgender student athlete with any gender identity may participate in the sport that they feel best suits their gender identity under full protection of the court’.” When asked whether continuing with a one-sentence policy would be productive, Jane rationalizes that the current trans- inclusion policy

would definitely be good if it expanded it but like I’m almost nervous to say that’s a thing that could happen because if someone expands it who doesn’t know what they’re talking about at all, they could do more harm than good. So if they were to expand it into like a full Charter of something, they would have to get actual trans people to work on it. (Jane)

Jane follows this comment with another insightful realization that calls into question who is tasked with developing policies on the lives of others, stating “I guess the same thing can be said for like a lot of laws, like the people who are important to it don’t actually get included in the conversation, which is really awful.”

Allowing space for trans- youth, those directly impacted by the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) to provide recommendations for policy additions and deletions is an important aspect of this study—an aspect that was mostly overlooked during the policy’s creation, as identified in Chapter IV—is presented in the next section.

5.2.4 Recommendations from trans- youth: School climate and policy

During our conversations about safety and the necessary changes to the policy and within schools, for Jane to feel safer in high school sports and sport-related spaces, they state, “first would be like expanding the policy like we talked about,” such as holding accountable schools and teachers who do not support the policy, inclusion of more identities and people who live

outside of or beyond binary frameworks, and an outlined process for ensuring the policy, and trans- students accessing the policy, are supported, “but then also like, and then like the co-ed teams.” I asked Jane if they would be more likely to participate or try out for school sports teams if teams were a mix of all genders, to which Jane replies “Definitely. [. . .] Like participation sort of depends if you get like picked for the team or not but I would definitely try out for everything.” Jane further states, “I would definitely try out for sports teams if they were co-ed cause then like I think I would just feel more comfortable overall and like if I got singled out by a student that would be because of them and not because of the team situation.” I also posed this question to Roy Hamilton, asking if he would be more likely to participate on sports teams if sports were structured to include all genders. He answers, “Oh yeah,” considering this structure to be more accessible “cause all you’d have to do is like know how to play the sport and be good at it. [. . .] Instead of like ‘Oh, you can’t be on this team’.” However, in envisioning the organization of high school sport beyond gender, Jane explains students in their school would likely “react negatively to having the teams mixed [all genders or co-ed].”

When asked about their perceptions of whether students would be in favour of high school sports teams being based on skill rather than gender, teams that would include all genders, Jane responds: “I think a lot of people would but I think more people wouldn’t.” Similarly, students in Roy Hamilton’s school would likely not be in favour of this system of organizing sport, as he expresses “it could be a possibility but I don’t know how well students would take it.” In his opinion, however, in an all-gender structure there are endless possibilities:

like it would be a lot more open if that was the case cause like you’ll have some people who are like ‘Oh yeah, I totally wanna play with a whole bunch of dudes’ or like ‘Oh not enough guys are playing. I guess I’ll go play with the girls.’ And like not get made fun of

simply because of ‘Oh that’s the girls’ team.’ No, it’s everyone’s team. (Roy Hamilton)

Jane clarifies, however, that “even having a specifically non-binary team would not fix the problem, just literally nobody would join that team. [. . .] You’d have like either one person on the team or nobody because nobody wants to be singled out like that. So I think co-ed would work the best.” Charlie Hides shares similar perspectives in that separating trans- and non-binary students by organizing a “third” team, having “three teams overall: men, women, and like whatever” feels like it “separates them [trans- students].”

In our discussion, Kevin identifies a strategy that may facilitate and encourage more trans- youth, and youth in general, to join high school teams suggesting that schools “should have maybe like more teams or like they could like try and maybe like switch it up and just put it through skill or something,” rather than solely based on gender in an attempt to organize accessible teams for various identities and skill levels where “nobody’s going to question it [a student’s place on a team].” Questioning the possibilities of organizing high school sport based on an aspect such as skill rather than gender, Kevin exclaims “it would totally work [. . .] Yeah. Maybe more people would be wanting to play sports cause they’d know they’d get accepted somewhere.” I then asked Kevin if this type of organization of sport would make him more willing to join, and he responds, “oh yeah totally if that was kind of in place.” Beyond Kevin’s increased likelihood to participate in high school sport based on this type of structuring, he believes many other students would feel more comfortable as well suggesting, “there’s definitely a lot more like non-binary or trans students at this school, I’m sure of it, that would probably totally benefit from it too.” However, as Kevin perceives, tolerance of transgressive identities is not always apparent in sports and sport-related spaces at his high school.

At one point, Kevin indicated an interest in trying out and/or joining his high school

badminton team and I asked him if he were to join the badminton team tomorrow, would other students be welcoming? He recounts, “I don’t know. Some students, say like they’re kind of like the more like straight, masculine like really buff guys who are just like ‘We don’t want any transgenders on our team.’ [. . .] ‘Get them outta here.’” Thus, some trans- students seeking to participate in high school sports who do not entirely “pass,” like Kevin, may feel this contributes to difficulties of attempting to join a sports team.

Our interviews provided space for youth participants to discuss ways that their individual schools could contribute to a greater acceptance of the MHSAA policy and support of trans-students. Moving away from mandatory events that are strictly sport-focused, Charlie Hides advocates for mandatory presentations for all students and school staff on LGBTQ topics, which could include trans- speakers that potentially discuss the MHSAA policy and trans- students’ participation in sport, and other relevant topics. Roy Hamilton agrees with mandatory events, and maintains the need for his school to have mandatory professional development (PD) days for teachers, staff, and students on queer and trans- topics. Highlighting the direct implications of teachers’ unintelligibility around queer and trans- topics, Roy Hamilton remembers a recent conversation he had with a teacher:

I had a discussion earlier with a teacher who said like, there was only a few like teachers who joined a course about LGBT problems and she said there’s a whole bunch of terms she didn’t even know existed. So I think that’s kind of sad that a lot of teachers don’t join that and they’re missing out on something that could affect their class. [. . .] I wish those were kind of like mandatory for them cause it is a big thing now. (Roy Hamilton)

Kevin recommends strategies that are often taken-for-granted as ‘simple’ such as including the MHSAA policy on school bulletin boards or implementing mandatory ally training for teachers.

Kevin explains “it would be a lot more helpful” if teachers were more knowledgeable about LGBTQ topics “cause then at least you would know that like they [teachers] have like some kind of like background on it [LGBTQ topics] and they kind of like know how to like deal with it where they wouldn’t like over react or anything.”

In Jane’s opinion, ally training and safe space stickers in their school are somewhat controversial, as they feel ally training certificates and subsequent safe space stickers are outdated and/or misrepresentative. This exchange illustrates Jane’s point in detail:

Rae: Do you think more education then is needed like at the school level for people in like...

Jane: Like for administrators or like teachers?

Rae: Yeah like staff and teachers.

Jane: I feel like education and punishment. Like education’s great but if nothing is being like done when teachers do say horrible things.

Rae: Yeah, they keep doing it.

Jane: Yeah, they have no reason to stop.

Rae: Yeah. So more like holding teachers, principals, administration like accountable.

Jane: Accountable. [said at the same time] [. . .] Education would be great too cause like I’ve heard a bunch of teachers be like ‘Oh yeah, this school’s like so great we’ve had like meetings on like gay education or whatever’ but like this happened I think six years ago and six years ago we didn’t probably have a lot of language still and like a lot of like the stuff that we know now even. So to pretend that we’re educated because we had a seminar for the teachers six years ago, doesn’t actually mean anything to me. It sort of means like an empty promise.

Rae: Yeah, yeah I was kind of thinking along the same lines when I was walking around a bit [in their school] and um so I'm noticing that a lot of class, like a lot of doors have like the ally and safe space stickers and stuff and it's...

Jane: Yeah. That sort of just makes me feel like how dare you? Like how dare you say that.

Rae: I know, yeah. Yeah so it's like they're claiming it, but it's actually, like in theory they're claiming it, in practice it's not really happening in the actions hey?

Jane: Yeah, yeah, and it just feels like how can you take credit for that if you're not doing any work. Anyone can slap a sticker on a door. It takes 30 seconds and if you never do anything else people will still think you're like great for it.

Rae: Yes, exactly, and that's so hard when you're maybe one of the students that um needs to see something like that but you know that it's not actually that true.

Jane: Yeah and I've heard teachers say like homophobic things who have those stickers. Those just mean that you've attended the workshop six years ago. But that's what they meant initially, now there's like new teachers coming to the school and if they see those they're like 'Hey can I have one?' and they just sort of print them one. So that doesn't even mean anything anymore.

Rae: Yeah exactly. It doesn't mean they've done the work.

Jane: Yeah it's not like you went to a seminar six years ago, it's like you've had a friend who did that.

In order to actualize the policy's effectiveness, and for schools to support the policy, Jane insists that "bigger social change" is needed before that can take place, "and that's harder to do. Like it's possible, it's completely possible, but it just sort of requires people to stop being transphobic

and like tell other people to stop doing it too and that's not super likely to happen" (Jane). As Jane notes, this is a harder feat in certain schools and divisions considering the overt and covert transphobic comments heard by students *and* teachers, in and outside of sport-related spaces, in which punishment and accountability is often absent making it seem like teachers condone and agree with students' phobic actions.

One of the last questions I asked Roy Hamilton in our interview was if he could think of changes he would like to see implemented in order for high school sport to be more inclusive.

Pointedly, Roy Hamilton states,

Take out gender [chuckles] and treat everyone like people instead of like men and women. Mmm, just focus more on skill and on I guess how the students want to learn and how involved they wanna be. Cause a lot of these teachers teach the same way they've taught for like 30 years and they haven't changed with us and they expect us to be prepared for something that hasn't even happened yet, the future. (Roy Hamilton)

Furthermore, in order to feel more supported by administration, staff, and teachers when accessing school sports, Roy Hamilton states "probably just knowing that I have a support on the team and support from the coach" would make accessing sports a great deal easier.

Kevin shares a similar desire to Roy Hamilton regarding the abolishment of gender within high school sport:

I don't know, just less gender stuff. Just kind of like if anybody wants to play, everybody's welcome. Let's all do this. Cause like I kind of also do hate the competitive part where it's just like if you mess up you're off the team. [. . .] Or if like you're not good, you're not gonna be going on the team. It's just kind of like if you don't get on the team, it's just like, k that's really like, that really hits the self-esteem. I thought I was

good at this. (Kevin)

Kevin uses this time to also repeat his recommendation that gym teachers be open and willing to talking about the MHSAA policy and trans- students' experiences in sport, and open to a complete restructuring of gym class:

I mean just like having like the teacher just kinda be more open about it or like just kind of like having more conversations about it. Or just be like 'if somebody likes this go to that end of the gym, or if somebody likes that go to that end,' or just like just something else rather than 'K it's the girls. Come stand in the front we're gonna put you on a team.'

It's just kind of like 'K well I don't really want to.' (Kevin)

Similar to Kevin and Roy Hamilton's earlier comments of the importance of visibility on high school sports teams, Charlie Hides recommends,

I think it would be encouraging if someone actually was out and in a team. It would just encourage a lot more people to do it. [. . .] That would be the first step in the right direction and it would probably, it would encourage more people. I'm not into sports, so I can't speak. (Charlie Hides)

Charlie Hides also suggests the removal of binary language from the policy in order to clarify that support of trans- students, their participation in sport, and the policy in general is "not just his or her." Jane and Kevin both call for the need to hold accountable the divisions, schools, administration, and teachers that do not support or advocate for the policy and the students impacted by it. In addition, Jane suggests a section of the policy that is dedicated to providing education on how to ensure trans- students are fully, and unequivocally, supported.

I asked Roy Hamilton if there was anything he would add and/or remove from the current policy, to which he responds, "Umm, there's not much to remove. It's one sentence. [laughs]."

Joking aside, Roy Hamilton suggests moving past simply stating that trans- students can join, but implementing measures to ensure social change accompanies this policy and students' high school sport participation in order to ensure students are included in all ways, not just inclusion that involves isolation and "warming the bench." Acknowledgment of the ways in which individual schools and the MHSAA as the provincial organizing body can ensure their ongoing support of trans- students is briefly discussed by Charlie Hides as well, who states "they [the MHSAA as the policy makers] could go smaller into detail about like more ways that they're gonna actually support trans students."

Speaking to the need to have greater conversations about accessible gender-inclusive washrooms and change room spaces, Jane asserts that conversations around co-ed or gender-inclusive change rooms cannot simply be shut down because of unwarranted concerns: "I definitely think it is a conversation that needs to happen though because just saying like 'Oh like maybe this one person wouldn't use it right so we shouldn't have it,' that's not a solution. I think we need to work towards a solution. I just don't have one." Charlie Hides agrees that discussions around change rooms must "definitely" take place at the provincial organizational and school level, and inserted into this type of policy. If the provincial-wide trans-inclusion policy for high school sport included aspects related to change rooms and/or acceptance within sports teams, as two examples, Roy Hamilton shares:

Then you [trans- students] wouldn't feel like, I don't wanna say a freak, cause then you'd be the only boy going into the women's change room while the rest of your team is in the men's change room. And it would just be I don't know, a whole lot easier if it [the policy] covered the majority of our body, how we identify, our name. (Roy Hamilton)

These components, coupled with a clear indication of how students can be treated equitably on

school teams no matter what their gender identity is, as he identifies, would potentially help Roy Hamilton join school sports teams. Knowing that trans- youth have the support of their teachers, who are knowledgeable and supportive of a trans- inclusion policy, would also contribute to greater participation, as discussed by youth participants.

As Jane explains, teachers beyond only GSA advisors need to begin having conversations about the MHSAA policy and gender in order to draw more attention to the policy and foster the social change required for its effectiveness: “Maybe even having teachers like directly talk about it. Like the only people I’ve heard talk about gender are I think someone, like teachers directly involved in the GSA. Like I’ve never even heard a teacher [non-GSA teachers] like mention it.” This is an effort that Kevin believes would make trans- students feel more included and supported overall, explaining “if like the class has like a positive reaction [to teachers outwardly discussing the MHSAA policy] or are just like ‘Hey, that’s cool. We should have this,’ and teachers are like ‘Yeah this is a good thing,’ they [trans- students] might be like ‘Okay so it’s cool to come out here. I won’t be judged or anything’.” In order to make a trans- inclusive policy more prominent across Manitoba, a greater effort is necessary in re-announcing it, as discussed by Jane, Kevin, and Roy Hamilton.

Youth participants’ suggestions to make the policy’s existence more visible, and to hold schools more accountable for advocating for this type of change, include actions such as: (1) post the policy around schools including gymnasiums, a space which is recognized as one of few school spaces that do not have any safe space indications; (2) create ways in which more people have access to and know about the policy; (3) re-introduce and provide policy access to all administration and teachers across Manitoba; (4) advocate that teachers seek out the policy and its components, and; (5) encourage teachers, including gym teachers, to begin facilitating

discussions about the policy and, gender more broadly, within their classes and amongst their students including and beyond those teachers already advocating for trans- students in GSA settings, for example.

Drawing on ideas expressed by Roy Hamilton, affirmation of the complexities of gender may be lacking in a one-sentence policy as a one-sentence policy may not be able to create an entire movement of social change in high school sport for trans- students. Yet students such as Roy Hamilton recognize this social change is absolutely necessary alongside the policy. One of the main components youth participants discuss in their interviews to strengthen the policy and work toward social justice that ensures more trans- students feel comfortable and safe participating in high school sports, is a greater consideration of the entire organization of high school sport, where a desire for all-gender teams is apparent.

5.3 Discursive: Exposing Language

The narratives outlined in section 5.2 detail the material lives of trans- youth participants by presenting their voices and accounts of their own experiences. This section is intended to analyze discursive language used to express these experiences and the potentially rigidified conditions in which these narratives are experienced. This section includes a deconstruction of limitative gendered language and discourse related to sports in Manitoba high school contexts, and binary language written into existence in the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a), and the experiences that result for trans- youth in part due to this existence.

5.3.1 Discursive language and conditions of high school sports

Apparent in the interviews with trans- youth participants is a limited school-wide discourse on gender related topics, including trans- identities and experiences. The lack of conversation on these topics in high schools, as all four youth identify in diverse ways,

contributes to students feeling under supported. For example, an overall lack of awareness witnessed within schools of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a) potentially translates as a lack of support for this policy. As recommended by youth participating in this study, greater conversations facilitated by teachers in their classes can begin to work toward more trans- inclusive and queer-friendly climates within high schools. However, overt and covert experiences of transphobia detailed by youth participants must also be addressed, where a positive shift is needed in the responsibility of those within educational systems to hold others accountable in situations where transphobic acts are expressed. The urgency of this change is supported by Taylor et al.'s (2016) findings that only 18.3% of Canadian teachers report challenging transphobia in their schools (p. 125). Youth participants in this thesis have called for more serious accountability for administration, teachers, and students in schools.

As indicated by Jane, acts of overt and covert transphobia, as well as acts of racism, are largely overlooked and/or unnoticed in their school; Jane hears these accounts from both students and teachers, where the intervention by teachers during these situations is noticeably absent. Jane's experiences are reflective of Caudwell's (2014) research outlined in Chapter II, which discusses the complacency of bystanders during experiences of transphobia and exclusion. Similar to Caudwell's research, trans- youth in this thesis express that they are often on their own during experiences of transphobia and exclusion, experiences which are also present in the contexts of team sports and sport-related spaces in high schools.

Exclusion of trans- youth is unmistakable in relation to inaccessible binary change room and washroom spaces, for example, where non-binary students like Jane spend much more time running across their school to a gender-inclusive washroom before and after gym class than students who are comfortable in binary spaces; or students like Kevin whose schools do not have

gender-inclusive washrooms and therefore no alternative space to change or go to the bathroom, resulting in the pressure for students to unreasonably align themselves with binary categories to engage in gym class or use the washroom. Peter and Taylor (2013) suggest that these types of hostile climates “force students into survival navigation modes that accompany their routine movements through a school day” (p. 24). A hostile climate of this nature is recognizable in the narratives expressed by youth in this thesis.

A lack of empathy toward the intense amounts of stress associated with these spaces for many trans- youth is arguably apparent in their individual schools. Participants shared daily instances of using potentially restricted staff washrooms, the existence of only one single-stall gender-inclusive washroom in one school, which also functions as a change room, and the existence of no gender-inclusive washrooms at all in another; these are all examples of Cavanagh (2010) and Fusco’s (2006) theorization of transgressive bodies being socially abjected, literally, from spaces such as change rooms. Further distressing is the awareness that for the schools of participants that do not have access to a gender-inclusive washroom, in relation to conversations of the inaccessibility of binary change room and washroom spaces, students and staff within GSA groups in these particular schools are the only people advocating for the implementation of gender-inclusive spaces. The ongoing exclusion of trans- students from sport-related spaces, coupled with the subsequent lack of encouragement for gender-inclusive components in these very spaces, reproduces the exclusion of trans- students and the complacency of bystanders within schools. This unspoken complacency requires much greater attention in relation to, and beyond, high school sport.

The general absence of authority figures in schools, who are advocating on behalf of trans- youth for the equitable access of all school space, only works to reproduce youths’ lack of

confidence in school authority. Sykes' (2011) recommendation for supporting students in sport-related spaces by confronting the vulnerabilities of a gender binary system, suggesting that "the key is to recognize the harm caused by organizing students' gender in binary terms; to encourage students to self-select which gender group they feel comfortable with, and to respect their privacy by not requiring anyone to self-identify or explain their choices" (p. 45), is not taking place for many aspects related to high school sport. This is recognizable in Roy Hamilton's recollection of gym teachers choosing favourite, always athletic, students.

Roy Hamilton shared that students in his alternative gym class are usually targets of bullying from more athletic and mainstream gym students; the class was, in part, likely created due to environments associated with more mainstream gym classes in his school that are not always accepting of all students. There are no aspects Roy Hamilton would change about his alternative gym class indicating, "[names alternative gym class] is like something I look forward to." Before enrolling in this class, when Roy Hamilton had to mandatorily engage in a more mainstream gym class, he remembers gym teachers' favouritism toward more athletic students, as outlined in section 5.2.2. This illustration begins to draw attention to a cyclical reproduction of inequitable sport-related opportunities for students, such as equitable access to more elite levels of high school sports, if desired.

Examples of favouritism offered toward more athletic students, such as continuing to choose these students as team captains and comparing all other students in the class to these select few, included in Roy Hamilton's description, work to reproduce some teachers' assumptions that certain students, such as trans- students, are not interested in participating. This type of perception can further inhibit trans- youths' overall participation and ultimately reinforces a cyclical reproduction of inequitable sport-related opportunities for students: in

certain high school contexts, trans- youth do not feel safe and/or comfortable participating in binary-organized sports teams and/or gym class for various reasons as outlined in this thesis, prompting youth to potentially withdraw from sport-related activities and spaces. This withdrawal seems to appear to gym teachers and/or coaches to be a lack of interest, reinforcing teachers' social decisions to favour other students and recreating youths' disengagement. Drawing on the work of Barber and Krane (2007), Foley, Pineiro, Miller, and Foley (2016) remind teachers that "their inaction or silence toward a student who is LGBTQ can send a strong message to the student and their classmates that the teacher either does not care or does not support them" (p. 6). What this cyclical reproduction of inequitable sport-related opportunities ignores, however, is "the harm caused by organizing students' gender in binary terms" (Sykes, 2011, p. 45) and the multitude of barriers this structuring engenders to their participation, and further, their everyday lives within high school. Roy Hamilton's example, described in section 5.2.2, of his alternative gym class competing against, and winning over, students in a more mainstream gym class in his school further emphasizes this cyclical relationship.

While winning sport competitions is not the topic of this thesis, nor do I personally find it to be a fundamental aspect of sport, this example is worth mentioning to call attention to inequitable opportunities for trans- youth to excel in high school sports in ways that some students do, as barriers that ultimately impact high school sport participation and successes. That Roy Hamilton's alternative gym class, a class that he identifies is for students who "either don't show up or [who] don't wanna change or we're just not comfortable with the other gym students," participated against and out-competed students within a more mainstream gym class demonstrates the potential of trans- students performing at the same level, or out-performing, those students considered as ultra-athletic in high school sports, when provided with equitable

access. This is not to say the example Roy Hamilton describes is an example of equity. Rather, it supports research demonstrating that trans- youth participate in sport at disproportionately lower levels compared to cisgender youth (Taylor et al., 2011; Veale et al., 2015); indeed, none of the participants in this thesis participate in high school sports other than mandatory gym class. This speaks to the multitude of capabilities of trans- youth that can be extinguished through ongoing organization of high school sports and gym class through a binary framework.

Experiences shared by participants in this study highlight a lack of understanding and awareness among teachers who believe students' disengagement has to do solely with individual students' lack of sport-related interest rather than a result of the entire structure of gym classes, such as gender-segregated activities and inaccessible binary change rooms. For example, if trans-students are provided equitable opportunities to foster their participation in sport and eliminate the barriers they encounter—such as inaccessible change room spaces, worrying about negative responses from teachers when opting to not use binary change rooms, bullying within change rooms and sport-related spaces, gender segregation of sport activities in which trans- youth are potentially forced to align themselves with a binary categorization of gender, especially for trans-youth who actively transgress gender norms—the construction of an alternative gym class altogether may be unnecessary.

The barriers to high school sport participation as identified by all four participants remain in place and reinforce a need for safer alternative gym classes for students. In the current Manitoba educational context, in which the existence of discrimination is apparent for trans-youth, it is positive that an alternative gym class exists in specific schools to allow young people to participate in sports and physical activities in comfortable environments and at their own pace. However, it is necessary to be wary of the perception that these types of classes are a solution to

the social injustices that are apparent for trans- youth in relation to sports in Manitoba high schools. Alternative gym classes may encourage trans- youths' participation in class, yet it remains unclear as to whether this method facilitates the participation and subsequent inclusion of trans- youth on high school sports teams and the spaces this is taken up in. Instead, a binary system of organizing sport, and the barriers of access this structure enforces, remain in place and unmistakable in high schools.

5.3.2 Discursive language in the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*

Youth participating in this study identified limits apparent in the choices of language drawn on for the MHSAA policy, such as writing into existence a binary understanding of gender, where this language works to “not only describ[e] experience, but also as something that constructs it” (Ristock, 2002, p. 39). Jane’s intelligent attempt to compose an updated policy draft works to challenge the limited policy language in order to open up interpretation of the policy to those students outside of binary constructions, such as non-binary and gender non-conforming students. As quoted in section 5.2.3, Jane states: “Instead of phrasing it like ‘in sex-separated sports’ they could say maybe like ‘Any transgender student athlete with any gender identity may participate in the sport that they feel best suits their gender identity under full protection of the court’.” However, working within a framework of the dominant organization of western sport, most often structured through a gender binary, constructed policies remain limited if they do not directly challenge this predominant framework as they remain grounded in and informed by “unthinkable” (Lemert, 2007, as cited in Travers, 2013a) components of sport organization.

Although Jane’s improved draft appropriately challenges the binary language apparent in the MHSAA’s policy, the entire discursive and rigidified structure of organization with which

this language is based on remains apparent. An entire reorganization of high school sport, specifically, away from segregated structuring is needed; a discourse which remains unexplored in consideration of western sport more broadly and therefore unable to access. Jane stresses the importance, however, that simply because the MHSAA policy is not currently ideal does not mean the policy should be removed. Rather, it should be improved. This comment reflects Travers' (2006) assertion that "transgender inclusive policies tell us little about the inclusiveness of the environment for transgender participants. Still policy changes pave the way for greater inclusion and challenges to the gender binary-based sex segregation of sport" (p. 443), drawing attention to the importance of having a policy in place considering current school climates and lack of equitable access to high school sports and sport-related activities for trans- youth.

Due to the binary language apparent in the MHSAA policy, as well as the entire organization of high school sport, the policy, although attempting to be trans- inclusive, maintains that youth must continue to fit into and align with a binary system rather than creating a system with all youth in mind. Indeed, as advocated for in their document informing sport organizations on how to better include trans- people in all aspects of sport, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's Trans Inclusion in Sport Expert Working Group (2016) encourages the importance of "realiz[ing] that if an individual does not fit our ingrained assumptions about sex and gender, it is up to sport to adapt, not the individual" (p. 13). Addressing the accountability of people in these roles, then, the expert group continues to inform that "it is not solely the role of trans people to make sport inclusive; everyone has a part to play in this process and there are respectful things that everyone can do" (p. 4), including the MHSAA as policy makers, school administration, teachers, parents, and students. In our interview, Roy Hamilton spoke directly to this point, to which he believed the MHSAA and administration within his school were taking

steps to work toward this when he insightfully explained:

It's not the ideal policy but it gets me thinking and helps me understand that you are trying, like the school division's trying to take a step in between like transgender students taking our, I don't wanna say like feelings into consideration, and like making things so that they can work around us instead of us trying to work around them. (Roy Hamilton)

Roy Hamilton's perspective acknowledges positive intent behind the MHSAA policy. In contrast, participants, including Roy Hamilton, describe the ways in which to expand this policy.

In order to feel safer in high school sport and sport-related space, expansion of the MHSAA policy on the part of the provincial organizing body and implementation of co-ed teams within individual schools, as recommended by Jane, are necessary. In their interview, Jane communicates limits of organizing high school sports teams by binary gender categories and confronts, as do Roy Hamilton, Charlie Hides, and Kevin, the MHSAA's policy for not appearing conscious of students who identify as non-binary or gender non-conforming which can result in the perception that these students are not protected by the policy. In part, youth participants use the interview space to accentuate this erasure and recommend the inclusion of more identities and people who live outside of or beyond binary frameworks. These points highlight the apparent intent of the MHSAA policy to be trans- inclusive, yet there are shortcomings of the policy for many students.

As a non-binary student, Jane stresses multiple times that if sports teams at their high school were "co-ed," rather than fixed girls' teams and boys' teams, they would be decidedly more likely to try out and participate. These comments are interesting in relation to dominant options available for organization of sport in western contexts, requiring further deconstruction of the contexts with which they are made.

Often, co-ed¹⁶ teams are introduced as an alternative method for structuring sport aside from strictly women-only or men-only. However, often overlooked is the reality that co-ed leagues, with rules that often enforce a specific number of women/men engaging in sport at one time such as high school “mixed” badminton that includes one girl and one boy student, work to reproduce a binary structure of sport rather than open up the possibilities for multiple gender identities to engage in this sport. As co-ed leagues are often recognized as a primary alternative to gender-specific binary sport, it becomes problematic for many identities and bodies who do not fit into, or feel comfortable with, joining women’s, men’s, or co-ed teams, to continually rely on this method of organizing that suggests these categories as the only options.

The reliance on “co-ed” is perhaps a result of a deep-rooted investment in gender binaries that contribute to a lack of possible reimaginings of sport in high schools as anything other than women’s, men’s, or co-ed, as other examples remain invisible. The impossibilities of reimagining high school sport is indicated in both Jane and Roy Hamilton’s consideration of the possibility of eliminating gender segregated teams in favour of all-gender sports teams at their individual schools. The lack of positive responses from students which participants perceive would accompany this request and/or implementation, as detailed in section 5.2.4, speak to a perceived lack of possibility to reimagine high school sport and sport-related spaces.

It is possible that reimagining sport in high school spaces other than through a binary framework is so intensely far removed from the realm of possibilities that co-ed teams appear to be the only possible reorganizational ‘solution,’ even in consideration of its limitations for transgressive identities. However, social institutions, educational and beyond, that continue to

¹⁶ This understanding of co-ed leagues constructs these as leagues that incorporate a mix of genders on teams, yet this mix is often limited to girls/boys, women/men.

rely on binary structurings reproduce these as the only attainable options and fail to challenge the subsequent exclusions of particular students. This further works to proliferate a cyclical reproduction of inequitable sport-related opportunities for trans- students specifically.

All four participants at different points in their interviews either directly call for or imply a need for social change to accompany a policy such as the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a). As Short (2013) identifies, “the implementation of equity in schools is dependent not only upon the extent to which and the ways that policies are implemented in schools but also upon how they are affected by other cultural factors and social structures at play in schools” (p. 124). The fact that all four youth participants in this thesis did not know of the MHSAA policy prior to engaging in this research is indicative of the lack of transparency and access to school policies that affect students’ daily lives. The need for social change in schools, both in and outside of high school sport, that participants like Jane and Kevin advocate for in their interviews, begins with challenging discursive language that informs the ways in which institutions, such as sport, are structured and the subsequent dichotomous and rigidified conditions that take place within these institutions.

5.4 Reflexive: Raising Questions

To begin reflecting on my research process—my interactions with youth, stakeholders, and school administration; my interactions with interview transcripts; engagement in a media analysis, including comment sections, and; analysis of the MHSAA policy, to name a few components—I once again draw on Janice Ristock’s (2002) research process, to remain mindful that “I alone am responsible for how I have heard, the filters that I have listened through, and ultimately what I have written” (p. xii) throughout this thesis. I acknowledge this here in order to “remain accountable to participants for what I am making of their stories as I produce my own”

(Ristock, 2002, p. 43).

Throughout this thesis I strived to avoid ‘claim[ing] an authoritative voice’ on the topic of trans- youth in high school sport, instead attempting to place the voices of trans- youth at the center of this analysis, recognizing that trans- youth are “the best experts on their own experiences and lives” (Short, 2013, p. 5). However, I am aware of my ongoing struggle to not presume their high school experiences based on my own and, further, to not base my analysis on preconceived ideas of current sport contexts in Manitoba high schools. My identity as a white, trans-, university educated, working class person, and far-removed from high school contexts, is distinct from the experiences and lives of trans- youth who are very much immersed in high school cultures currently; my situatedness indicates the need to listen to, and learn from, trans- youth about their lived experiences. I do not consider myself an “insider” to high school culture, but I do believe my trans- identity contributed to a greater relationality and understanding of lived experiences between myself and the participants. With this in mind, however, it remains important to acknowledge my positionality in order to understand the lenses through which I write and the lived experiences I have from engaging in this research process.

In the awareness presented at the beginning of this chapter, that the limited space and time of this research is only able to “enlarg[e] a small slice of” participants’ lives (Ristock, 2002, p. 43), I felt conflicted throughout the research in determining what to present, where, how to present it, and in what context, as I found myself struggling with the knowledge that I have the power, as the one documenting participants’ narratives, to choose which of their lived experiences are included in this research and those that are not. Long after interviews with participants had been conducted, I was logging this feeling in my research journal during the point of organizing, writing, and connecting youth narratives to larger themes. I realized at this

point that I was constructing yet another binary where these feelings prompted a use of dichotomous language in my questioning of:

How, as a researcher, as a person not involved in really any aspect of Manitoba high schools, the same person who can hear these narratives from trans- youth but not have to personally experience the exclusions in high schools that they express, decide which of these experiences and narratives of participants are ‘worthy’ enough to tell? (Hutton, July 3, 2017)

If this research only has the ability to “enlar[ge] a small slice of” participants’ lives, how do researchers justify privileging certain narratives over others recognizing every lived experience is important? These types of questions are areas in which I remain unsure of, and make note in my research journal to continue exploring and further learning from scholars, such as Janice Ristock, who also acknowledge difficult aspects of research. Further aspects that were challenging include setting parameters on eligibility criteria with the knowledge that exclusionary aspects of high school sport and sport-related spaces are present for many youth.

Prior to obtaining ethics approval from the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB), I received feedback from the ethics committee that limited my research design to students aged 16 or older (I had originally requested to hear from all ages of trans- youth enrolled in Manitoba high schools, recognizing this variability), that stated:

After considerable discussion, we are limiting the ages of potential participants to students aged 16-18 (or over 18 if there are older high school students). ENREB thought that there is a difference in the maturity level of the students that must be taken into consideration. Please edit all recruitment and consent materials accordingly. (personal communication, July 22, 2016)

In my response to the committee, I requested that the committee consider lowering the age restriction to 15 in order to open up rather than limit recruitment possibilities and lessen the likelihood of having to turn younger participants away from participation due to age restrictions, arguing the subjectiveness of “maturity levels” based simply on age. In response, ENREB would not lower their age restriction, stating:

The participant age will be 16 or older. ENREB committee members discussed this aspect of your study in depth. While we realize that determining maturity is subjective, we thought that 16 made sense. I am willing to discuss this with you and your advisor, but I will not change this decision. (personal communication, August 8, 2016)

My perception of this somewhat obscure ruling is that restrictions were placed on this research by ENREB’s decisions, limitations that resulted in fewer students participating; I was contacted by two GSA advisors on behalf of students who were interested in participating but who did not meet the age requirements. The frustrations I felt toward this decision were exacerbated as I began to realize the levels of gatekeeping within the Manitoba educational system. These experiences sparked the beginning of frustrated research journal entries regarding recruitment.

The processes through which I was un/able to hear directly from the experiences of trans-youth across Manitoba are detailed in Chapter III, which breakdowns the number of schools, divisions, principals, and GSAs that responded (or not) to invitations for their schools to participate in this research. Reflecting on the numbers presented in Chapter III (60% of school divisions and 59% of principals either denied or ignored my research requests), as well as the different levels through which I had to gain approval to move forward this project, the intense gatekeeping that takes place in educational institutions is one of the largest barriers to accessing student voices. The experiences of attempting to gain access to Manitoba schools is also

reflective, and indicative, of the experiences and stories shared in this chapter surrounding the lack of support some youth participants feel within their schools.

The recruitment numbers outlined in Chapter III demonstrate a striking lack of interest across Manitoba in the topic of trans- youth in high school sport. Moreover, the firm declines and absent responses I received from superintendents and principals in response to invitations for divisions and/or schools to participate were alarming and extremely disappointing. For example, one rural superintendent's response to an invitation sent by email stated "Hello Jaxon,¹⁷ I am sorry that [name of school division] will not be able to participate in your research study. [name of superintendent]." When prompted for additional information as to their decision to not participate or how this final decision was made, I received no response from this superintendent. As this was the first response I received from any superintendent indicating approval, a response which sparked discouragement on my part, I noted in my research journal "Very brief response from the first superintendent to respond to my request. I've prompted them for further details of this decision and plan to send at least one follow up email to all administration levels I am in communication with who fail to respond" (Hutton, August 23, 2016).

As another example, after obtaining approval from one urban school division, I then sent letters of invitation by email to individual principals to invite their schools to participate. One hour and forty minutes after my initial request, I received a response from one principal who bluntly stated, with no greeting, "I am not interested in participating" followed by an automated signature. When prompted for additional information as to the decision to not participate or how this decision was made, I also received no response from this principal. As I was not seeking this principal's individual participation but rather participation from students in their school, this

¹⁷ All communication sent by me to superintendents and principals was signed off as "Rae."

response on behalf of the entire school indicates a lack of reading of the letter and consideration of the implications of that decision for particular underrepresented youth. I logged about my frustration in my research journal that day:

Their response seems like they didn't read the letter of invitation, which is absolutely frustrating considering access through schools is this study's design to connect with youth. It's also deeply bothering me because it seems like there was no real consideration on the superintendent's part of the importance of having these conversations. For me, this response prompts a larger question of adult authorities speaking on behalf of youth, especially in the context of people in those positions who are not supportive of trans-youth. (Hutton, October 20, 2016)

Due to the decisions made by administrators on students' behalf, all of the students from that division and individual school described above who may have wanted to have their experiences and perspectives heard, and from all other divisions and schools who declined to participate or failed to respond to their invitation, many students were not allowed to participate. This realization poses a troublesome question: if approximately 60% of administration I contacted at all levels of the Manitoba educational institution declined and/or failed to respond to this research request and are therefore not willing to offer the opportunity for conversations with trans-youth, are these conversations at all happening internally with students and amongst staff?

The gatekeeping present at all levels of the Manitoba education system contributed to the limited reach of this project and the trans-students able to participate. However, the four interviews represented throughout this chapter are a fundamental starting point that provide rich details and "truthful renditions" of their own lived experiences that may very well foster action within the cultures of educational institutions in Manitoba (Short, 2013, p. 7). Also important to

note in consideration of administrative gatekeeping in educational institutions, is the influence GSA advisors had in facilitating my interactions with students. GSA advisors were central to gaining access to interested youth.

The GSA advisors that I was in contact with were crucial in helping to facilitate meetings with youth, including: taking the time to reach out to me to express interest in my research project; coordinating schedules to host me as a speaker to share more information about the study; helping organize introductions between myself and students and sharing contact information, and; reminding students of our scheduled meeting times and booking spaces within their schools. I noted in my research journal my gratitude toward the time and energy GSA advisors spent helping to facilitate the connections and relationships between myself and the students within their GSAs, many times at which I felt I was asking too much. Recognizing this feeling, I took time to reflect further in my researcher journal where, after ongoing back and forth emails with a GSA advisor who was working to coordinate a space in their school for me to meet with one of their students, I logged, “ongoing dialogue with GSA advisor to schedule space for my interview with student. I hope I am not overstepping or asking too much of them” (Hutton, March 20, 2017). My own worries about becoming an imposition on GSA advisors, school teachers, and staff who often already have an intense workload to manage, is also reflected in a notation from my journal that expresses “after leaving the GSA space at the end of their meeting with one of the staff advisors, I tried to express my appreciation for their ongoing help. I also used this opportunity to let them know that their school’s division and their individual school had been far more accommodating and welcoming than any others, to which I was very grateful” (Hutton, March 16, 2017).

My intent throughout this thesis was to not place any labels on youth, but to use the labels

they chose for themselves, and in doing so, acknowledge the arbitrariness and fluidity of gender by designing the research to remain open to a multitude of transgressive genders. Recognizing the importance of language in all aspects of this thesis, there was one particularly challenging moment I noted and felt the need to reflect on. As described above in the participants section (5.1), Charlie Hides' description of his gender, or my perceptions of this description, changed over the course of our interactions which I note as a demonstration of the fluidity of gender. The research design intended to broaden an understanding of gender and gender identities, yet in this example I realized the limitations of static research designs in relation to the recognition of gender as endless. I found myself reflecting in my journal after my interview with Charlie Hides and posing questions such as "what if his identity is 'outside of' the 'eligibility' of this research?" This reflection process, however, presented the realization that static understandings of gender, and static understandings of research, can be problematic. For example, having set eligibility criteria around gender may not allow for research to take place with genderqueer students whose gender may change week to week. The intent that drove my design and engagement with students was to respect and validate their experiences, and all four of the participants' narratives are worthy and valuable to this research.

The process of engaging in this research was, at times, overwhelming and emotionally challenging. From developing the literature depicting intensely negative experiences of discrimination for trans- youth across Canada in Chapter II, to delineating the high percentages of school administration who failed to respond to my research requests in Chapter III, to then recounting the narratives expressed by trans- youth in Chapter V, this research took a great deal of my energy. However, each time I interacted with youth and met a new student, I was reminded of how important this study is within Manitoba and beyond.

I have multiple notations in my research journal in relation to my interviews with youth participants, such as: being “completely impressed” during, and after, my interview with Jane acknowledging the incredibly educated connections they made all throughout our interview, responses that also had aspects of humour that I appreciated; making note (with stars around it) that “I was very much encouraged by the happiness that exuded from Kevin during our interview” even recognizing the difficult narratives he shared of exclusion; recalling moments in the interview with Charlie Hides where “we both briefly shared our experiences of anxieties near the beginning of our interview, a shared component which I felt lessened some of the pressure we both may have been feeling. Our brief discussions of random topics interspersed throughout the interview such as music (Twenty One Pilots, Tegan and Sara, Lady Gaga), record collections, and RuPaul’s Drag Race, helped (for me) with that too,” and; reflecting on Roy Hamilton’s use of humour throughout our interview and noting “I didn’t get a chance to mention to him that our interview together was the first interview I have conducted with a student so far in this research, or that his presence and welcomeness made the process of my first interview much more comfortable. I’m very thankful for that.” In order to facilitate necessary social changes within Manitoba high schools in relation to sport and sport-related spaces, the voices and experiences of trans- youth must be heard. This thesis is an attempt to begin this process.

“It’s not what people say when they exclude me and my people, or how they say it, but rather it’s a very long ache that I don’t believe will stop until there’s a whole lot more room in the world for difference.”

(Bornstein, 2006, p. 242-243)

Chapter VI: Conclusions and Future Directions

This chapter provides a final representation of the major themes that have resulted from five semi-structured interviews with key stakeholder participants involved in the creation and enactment of the recently enacted *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Athletes* (MHSAA, 2015a) and four interactive semi-structured interviews with trans- youth participants regarding their navigation and experiences of high school sport, and their perceptions of this policy. This chapter provides concluding remarks and suggestions for future research directions. Most importantly, this includes a call for research that prioritizes centering the voices of trans- youth about their own experiences, rather than privileging voices that are far removed from these high school experiences.

The goal of this thesis was to better understand the daily experiences of trans- youth in sport settings in Manitoba high schools by, first, listening to and learning from trans- youth directly and, second, analyzing the impact of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* (MHSAA, 2015a). This analysis considered the limits of policies that reproduce binary gender organization, while simultaneously recognizing that in the current climate of Manitoba high schools, policy is necessary. As Travers (2006) argues, “transgender inclusive policies tell us little about the inclusiveness of the environment for transgender participants. Still policy changes pave the way for greater inclusion and challenges to the gender binary-based sex segregation of sport” (p. 443).

Therefore, it is crucial to provide space for trans- youth to have a voice in “making changes in the environments they navigate, to support their being and their becoming, their growth and their transition to adulthood” (Veale et al., 2015, p. 71) rather than speaking on behalf of, and ultimately excluding, trans- youth. This includes hearing the perspectives of youth on policies that affect their everyday lived realities. Valuing the lived experiences of trans- youth is important because it can directly inform how schools in Manitoba can better support and encourage the participation of all athletes. Thus, it is imperative to return to the research questions that drive this project: 1) how do trans- youth in Manitoba navigate and experience high school sports, and 2) what, if any, are the impacts of the new policy for trans- youth?

The research design for this project enabled me to prioritize and focus directly on the experiences of trans- youth and the ways in which they navigate high school sports and the spaces associated with sport. Relationality is important as “engaging in friendship as a type of participant collaboration requires ‘radical reciprocity,’ a shift from ‘studying them to studying us’” (Tracy, 2010, p. 844); a point often dismissed within academic institutions in fear of losing objectivity and distance, yet completely necessary and intrinsic to a relationship-based research project. Taking a relationship based approach, and with the use of interactive and semi-structured interviews, this research project remains grounded in the recognition and valuing of “connectedness between researcher and researched,” a design that begins to understand, through personal voices and lived experiences, how trans- youth navigate and experience high school sports in Manitoba.

From my discussions with stakeholder participants, the intentions to create a proactive policy were clear. As the original motivations developed into a desire to promote inclusion and access to sports for trans- students through the implementation of this policy, the passion of

stakeholder participants about the success of the policy was evident in these conversations. The experiences highlighted throughout youth narratives and the analysis of language that reproduce these experiences, however, call attention to the restrictions of a policy intended to be trans-inclusive that remains situated in (and reinforces) a binary framework.

Short's (2013) work clearly reveals a disconnection apparent in policies intended to be inclusive but that fail to change other aspects of school climate except for simply introducing a policy, stating:

endless calls for law and policies that are inclusive merely sustain oppression and threats to the safety of queer students, precluding an understanding of the day-to-day lives of queer students in schools. Inclusive policies do little to address systemic power imbalances and oppression. (p. 12)

Participants in his research call for a similar transformation within school culture as the students in this thesis, and Short (2013) advocates that “the educative element of educative and safety law and policies must be widespread and mandatory and come from the ministerial level; otherwise, teachers will not implement transformative content in curriculum, nor will transformative possibilities in general be easily achievable” (p. 12). The educative element that is necessary to accompany policies such as the MHSAA policy, is described by Reece in Chapter IV where he explains that other than sharing the policy's existence through workshops and networks, the educative element around the MHSAA policy is currently not taking place within schools. This lack is apparent and can work to signify a lack of school-wide awareness of the policy, as youth perceived no teachers in their individual schools to be discussing it nor were any of the four youth participants aware of the policy prior to engaging in this research. In part, educative elements that must accompany policy intended to be trans-inclusive recognizes the limitations of

organizing high school sport, and the spaces sport is taken up in, based on a gender binary and prompts action toward “the harm caused by organizing students’ gender in binary terms” (Sykes, 2011, p. 45).

Trans- youth participants advocate for social changes to take place in their schools. This awareness and call to action remains particularly important regarding sport policy intended to be inclusive, as introducing policy alone will not change entire school climates nor allow access to sports for all students. In relation to the current MHSAA policy, a consideration of an entire reorganization of high school sport away from binary classification is necessary. If administration and educative policy makers are serious about creating inclusive access to high school sport for trans- students (and fully acknowledging the range of gender identities that transgress normative genders), this consideration is absolutely necessary and a re-creation of this policy to avoid binary language while introducing an accompaniment of an educative element within schools is needed.

As outlined in youth narratives presented in this thesis, the MHSAA policy does not address but instead conforms to a gender binary organization of high school sports, spaces where gender segregation is prominent. Although the MHSAA policy may appear inclusive on the surface, “closer scrutiny reveals [it] to conform to conservative views of sex and gender in important ways” (Love, 2014, p. 376). Further, conforming to these views has serious implications for those directly affected by the policy, such as trans- youth. As Herman (2013) explains,

until public policy and public administration can meet the challenge to address this problem [unsafe sport-related spaces for transgender and gender non-conforming people] and rethink our reliance on gender segregation in our built environment, the onus will

always be on the individual to try to navigate these spaces safely. In considering the role gender segregation plays in our environment, we should consider whether gender segregation is necessary to organize our public spaces. (p. 78)

Even with a policy in place, the onus remains on trans- students to navigate their schools' organization of sport in ways other students do not have to and ultimately take for granted. This is a consideration that must be taken up in future research.

Due to the limits of the policy, the lack of public awareness surrounding it, and the exclusionary experiences that remain in place with high school sport, trans- youth advocate and call for more accountability and social changes in schools. Despite approximately 60% of school divisions and principals declining and/or ignoring my research requests, the eloquent voices of four students demonstrate the need for change to the entire structures in which sports operate. While Roy Hamilton does identify positive aspects of an alternative gym class in his school, much of the narratives of youth highlight barriers surrounding the current organization of high school sports and mainstream gym class as detailed in Chapter V, such as: inaccessible change room spaces, worry about negative responses from teachers when opting to not use binary change rooms, bullying taking place within change rooms and sport-related spaces, gender segregation of sport activities in which trans- youth are forced to align themselves with a binary categorization of gender, a point which is especially problematic for trans- youth who actively transgress gender norms. These barriers must be considered in future research. Most importantly, however, the voices of trans- youth must be at the forefront of future research when it comes to policy and school-based change.

More research is needed on aspects of social institutions, such as high school sport, that literally abjectify certain bodies and identities from accessing them. Future research could

include analyzing “minority stressors” (Herman, 2013, p. 67) for trans- youth present in, and literally built into, high school sport environments and sport-related spaces. As Herman (2013) argues, “as a matter of tradition and policy, we have built minority stressors for transgender and gender non-conforming people into our very environment due to our reliance on gender segregation in public facilities” (p. 67). However, the consideration of minority stressors as a result of gender segregation in relation to sport and sport-related spaces is not yet apparent. This consideration is particularly relevant to these spaces, as “minority stress develops by experiencing major stressors [. . .] [and] can also develop through everyday experiences of disrespect and disparate treatment” which can, clearly, lead to negative impacts on “mental health and social well-being” (Herman, 2013, p. 66). Attention toward this stress is important in consideration of youth narratives who share various exclusions in high school sport and sport-related space, such as Kevin’s experiences of forced alignment with binary change room categories and gender-segregated activities when engaging in gym class.

Furthermore, this discussion is particularly useful in relation to “double whammy” effects for gender minority youth outlined in Taylor et al.’s (2011) findings. A consideration of the intersections between rigid binary change room and washroom options for students, the predominance of double whammy effects in schools (harassment and/or assault toward youth based on gender identity and race), and the potential for minority stressors as a result are particularly significant for future research. This thesis is limited in that double whammy effects experienced by trans- youth in high school sport contexts, although briefly, was largely not taken up. As this thesis was only able to “enlarg[e] a small slice” of participants’ lives (Ristock, 2002, p. 43), future research designs that continue to center these voices are needed.

Although the MHSAA had positive intentions in developing a trans- inclusive policy, the

lack of awareness of the policy within Manitoba schools, the limited language, and the reinforcement of binary structures of sport does not allow for its effectiveness. Although certain individual schools have provided students with access to alternative gym classes, for example, these classes cannot be considered a solution. Instead, a consideration of the entire re-organization of high school sport is needed. Much work is needed in order for trans- students in Manitoba high schools to feel fully included in high school sports and sport-related spaces. It remains apparent from the narratives expressed by youth that more needs to be done, including actions toward social change, in high school sport and sport related spaces, and beyond.

The experiences expressed by youth participants “constitute legitimate knowledge and provide a vital commentary on our understanding of the sports world” (Fusco, 1995, p. 69) as reproducing social institutions constructed through binaries. This thesis challenges how sport is organized by showing the amount in which people, specifically high school students in this context, are excluded from accessing it based on these organizing structures, and insisting on the counteractions toward this oppression. Included at the outset of this chapter, Bornstein’s (2006) quote exposes visceral feelings of exclusion that longingly remains at the forefront of many experiences in contexts that often fail to acknowledge difference. The long ache that Bornstein (2006) speaks of is reflected in Jane’s statement included at the beginning of Chapter I: “The way I often sum it up in my head is: I love my school, my school does not love me,” where difference is not yet actively embraced in Manitoba high schools.

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APPENDIX A

Interactive/Semi-Structured Inter-view:

Within an interactive/semi-structured interview format, depending on the participant, how our conversation unfolds, the willingness to share on certain subjects/topics, and the location of our interview, not all interviews will be the same or involve the same questions. The potential questions below indicate an example of how an interactive/semi-structured, conversational and collaborative interview may take place.

1. Are you on any high school sports teams this year? Have you been on any high school sports teams in the past?

Prompts: Do you enjoy sports? Do you enjoy playing sports with your high school team? What types of sports do you enjoy? Have you always enjoyed sports? [or] What do you not enjoy about sports? Are there things about high school sport in particular that you do not enjoy? Have you always disliked sports?

[interactive/personal narrative sharing]: I played on a few different sports teams in high school, but I was very serious about soccer and basketball mostly. Depending on the sport team the student plays on, I can relate on a personal note/recollection, or if they participate in a sport that dominated in my home town (i.e., hockey), or share narratives of different sporting rivalries between our town and other surrounding towns

2. What made you want to join a high school sports team? [or] What made you not want to join a high school sports team?

[interactive/personal narrative sharing]: I wanted to join and try different sports when I was very young, but I didn't join sports teams until I was older. I was scared about what other teams and my own teammates who I sometimes didn't know personally would think of me and how I looked. I knew I was good at sports, but I knew that my appearance was focused on more than my athletic ability. I also found it challenging to play on a girls/women's sports team that I didn't necessarily identify with, but also had no other option available if I really wanted to play. Traveling to other towns for games and tournaments was really hard, because it amplified the tensions among opposing teammates and their communities.

3. Were you encouraged by coaches to join the team or welcomed in a friendly way by coaches and other teammates?

Prompts: Who encouraged you most to play sports? Was it your own decision to try participating in high school sports? Are there people who discourage you from participating in sports?

[interactive/personal narrative sharing]: I remember some of my friend's parents would encourage me to play sports like hockey because they knew I could be tough and they knew my athletic ability. I never did try hockey although I always thought I'd be good at it. I don't think those parents (or my friends or other teammates) realized the strength it took to try to participate when I visibly (and emotionally) didn't fit in with everyone else around me, or the fear about my gender that was always there when I did participate.

4. Can you share with me your experiences on high school sports teams? [or] Can you

expand on why you do not participate in high school sports?

Prompts: Do you participate in any sports outside of high school sport?

[interactive/personal narrative sharing]: When I first go into high school in grade nine, at the start of every new season of the various sports I played I'd tell my friends I was not playing this year and would not show up to the first athlete meeting. There was new coaches and sometimes new players that I didn't know, and that made me really nervous because I did not know how they would react or perceive me. Those fears around other people's perceptions, reactions, rude comments, fear of change room spaces especially when we had to travel to play, all of those things made me not want to play and I almost ended up not playing. I played soccer in our community league as well, but mostly all of those same fears came back each week when we'd play a new team or have to travel to their town to play. One thing that was a bit better about community league was that I could change at home before I showed up to the game or traveled to the other town!

5. Can you tell me about some of the kinds of things you like about being on the team?
 - a. What is it about those kinds of things/moments that make them stand out for you as favourites? What makes you like those things about being on the team? Can you give a more detailed description of those experiences? Do you have more examples of this?

[interactive/personal narrative sharing]: I enjoyed actually playing the sport. If I could just play, without having to hear comments from other teams or be worried the entire day leading up to the game about what kind of change room space would be available, for example, it'd make all the difference. I did make some new friends on my teams that I would likely not have gotten to know if we did not play sports together.

6. Can you tell me about some of the things you do not like about being on the team? [or] Can you tell me about some of the things you do not like about sports in your school that may contribute to why you do not participate?
 - a. What makes you not like those particular things? Can you give a more detailed description of those experiences? Do you have more examples of this?

[interactive/personal narrative sharing]: Traveling to other towns/cities/communities to play games and tournaments was the worse. It was like entering the unknown, or sometimes the "known" in terms of knowing the hostility that I would face when entering into the opponent's community. I also didn't like the uniforms women were supposed to wear. I always dreaded the change rooms and washrooms, and the interactions that took place in these public spaces. Overnight tournaments and having to share accommodations with teammates made these fearful feelings more intense because of the constant sharing of spaces (like washrooms, showers) with other teammates and opponents.

7. Do you know about the new Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association policy (MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students) that was created to include trans- athletes on high school sports teams in Manitoba? (If not, explain).

[interactive/personal narrative sharing]: There was never a policy around like this when I was involved in high school sports. What is it like having this kind of policy now? Do you find it helps? Has there been any change/difference since the policy was enacted?

8. Do you think the new policy helps support trans- youth who want to play on high school sports teams? Do you think the policy helps trans- youth feel safe and encouraged in high school sport?
 - a. In what ways do you think the policy has helped in your participation on the sports team? Can you give a more detailed description of those experiences? Do you have more examples of this? [or]
 - b. In what ways do you think the policy hasn't helped in your participation on the sports team? Can you give a more detailed description of those experiences? Do you have more examples of this?
 - c. Do you think the goal of the policy to help trans- youth participate in sport has been effective?
 - d. Do you know of any ways that your school ensures that coaches, students, teachers, etc, follow this policy to make sure all students feel welcome?

9. What would you add or remove from the policy if you could change the policy in any way?

Prompts: Do you have any suggestions of ways that you would feel more included and accepted if you wanted to participate in sport? What kinds of things would you like to see change for high school sport to make it a more inclusive setting?

APPENDIX B

Semi-structured inter-views with key stakeholders:

- 1) Can you share the motivations for wanting to create a policy such as the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*, from your perspective and your involvement?
Prompts: Were there voices in and around the high school community encouraging the creation of this type of policy? Was there any pressure from youth and their parent(s) in creating this type of policy?
- 2) What do you feel was the overall goal of creating the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*?
- 3) In as much detail as you'd like, can you please explain your role as a key stakeholder in the creation and implementation of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*.
- 4) In as much detail as you'd like, can you provide a description of the original conception of creating this type of policy? Can you provide a description of the process of how MHSAA created the policy?
Prompts: Was there a committee involved in the policy's creation? Who were the main voices in dialogue during the creation of this policy? How were decisions made when conflicts and/or conflicting viewpoints arose? What was the process and decisions that led to the policy being developed as one sentence? How long did the process take from initially thinking through the idea of creating a policy to the implementation of this policy?
- 5) Were the experiences and voices of trans- youth heard throughout the initial discussions? Were the experiences and voices of trans- youth heard during the ongoing creation and implementation of the final policy?
Prompts: Were the voices that were heard (if any) high school aged trans- youth? How many took part in these discussions?
- 6) In what ways were school divisions and high schools in Manitoba introduced to and informed of the new policy?
Prompts: Can you provide a more detailed description of the process? How was the policy shared with school divisions and schools? What resources were given to school divisions and high schools in relation to this policy?
- 7) In what ways did people directly involved in Manitoba high schools, such as teachers, coaches, principals, students, and parents, respond to the implementation of the policy? In what ways did the general public in Manitoba respond to the implementation of the policy?
- 8) In what ways does the MHSAA and/or school divisions and/or high schools themselves monitor whether or not the policy is being enforced within all school divisions and schools across Manitoba? Do you have any thoughts or ideas on how monitoring should,

or can, happen?

Prompts: Does the MHSAA have a process in place for schools, coaches, teachers, etc that do not abide by and/or follow the policy's inclusiveness? In what ways is this policy enforced? If no procedure in place: Do you have any thoughts moving forward as to how this policy could be more widely enforced?

- 9) Is there any monitoring of how the policy has perhaps changed the climate within high schools for youth who identify on the trans- spectrum?

Prompts: What do you feel is the MHSAA's role to ensure it is upheld in all high schools in Manitoba?

- 10) Can you share if there has been feedback about how the policy is aiding in more trans-youth participating in sport?

Prompts: Do you feel the policy is generally accepted within Manitoba high schools? Among trans- and cisgender people? Have you heard any recommendations for suggested changes to the policy? Do you feel that the policy has been influential in helping trans-youth participate (and be encouraged and accepted while participating) in sport?

- 11) Do you feel that the goal of the policy that you shared earlier has been effective or achieved? Why or why not? Can you explain further?

- 12) Since the policy has been in place for over a year now, are there any recommendations or changes to the policy that you see as necessary at this point?

- 13) Are there any other key stakeholders that were involved in the creation and implementation of this policy that I should speak with?

- 14) Can you think of any final thoughts, comments, concerns that you would like to share about the policy?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview.

Additional probing questions:

- a) Could you say more about that?
- b) Can you give a more detailed description of what happened?
- c) Do you have further examples of this?

APPENDIX C



102 Frank Kennedy Centre
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2

Dear [name of stakeholder],

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba, and I am conducting a study entitled “Exploring the Effectiveness and Impact of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students: Learning from the Experiences of Trans-Youth in Manitoba High Schools.*” This study is a large component of my Master’s degree.

This project is grounded in the Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association’s (MHSAA) effort to provide space for youth who challenge societal standards of gender, through the creation and enactment of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* that states, “any transgender student athlete may participate fully and safely in sex-separated sports activities in accordance with his or her gender identity” (MHSAA, 2015). Further, this project seeks to better understand whether this sport policy makes it easier, more encouraging, or accepting for trans- students to participate. The overall objective of this research project is to provide space for trans- youth in Manitoba high schools to voice their experiences in sport, to better understand Manitoba athletic policies that center trans- youth, and to share recommendations and strategies from trans- youth directly to more adequately inform policy development.

With the MHSAA policy in effect for over a year, this project seeks to gain insight and begin to understand the effectiveness and impact of the MHSAA policy in the lives of trans- youth in Manitoba by hearing firsthand accounts of these students’ experiences in, and perceptions of, physical education and sport. Providing space for trans- youth to voice their experiences and perceptions of high school sport can lead to future recommendations for policy development that ensures the acceptance and encouragement of trans- youth within high school sport in Manitoba. This study will also give participants (both stakeholders and youth) a chance to speak openly and honestly about their experiences and the newly enacted policy and to comment, criticize, or demonstrate

their support for recent changes in a comfortable setting, without fearing repercussions for voicing their perceptions and reflections publically.

I am sending this letter to invite you to participate in a one-on-one, open-ended, semi-structured interview with myself, Rae Hutton. I seek to recruit 2-3 stakeholders involved in the creation and enactment of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*. The purpose of these interviews is to gather a history of the policy, including descriptions of the initial motivation to create such a policy, the general trajectory of the policy development, an overview of decision-making processes, and the overall reactions and responses to the new policy. Interviews will last approximately 1-2 hours and will take place at a location of your choosing. If interested in participation, a list of questions will be provided to you prior to the interview for you to review if desired. The interview will be recorded using a digital recording device and transcribed verbatim by myself after signing a transcriptionist oath of confidentiality. Participants will have the option to review the transcribed document, make changes, clarify comments, and add/delete information. This process may take approximately 30 minutes. Once participants have approved their transcript and returned it to myself it will be coded using qualitative research techniques.


Stakeholders interested in participating will have the option to use a pseudonym if they do not wish to be identified in the study and, if desired, will be referred to by this pseudonym in their transcript and any resulting publications in order to conceal their identities. However, even with taking all necessary steps to maintain confidentiality, there may be some people who will still recognize or be able to guess who you are as a stakeholder participant. Participants can withdraw from the study at any time by informing Rae of their decision in person, by email, or by telephone and may answer as many or as few questions as they choose during the interview process. The results of the analysis may be published in academic journals and presented at academic conferences, and a 3-5 page summary and final report will be sent to all participants.

I would be very happy to provide any additional information you may want, such as access to my ethics submission and approval, or answer any further questions regarding this research project. Additionally, if you have questions that you would prefer to direct toward my advisor, Dr. Sarah Teetzel, her contact information is: email: Sarah.Teetzel@umanitoba.ca phone: (204) 474 8762 mailing address: 112 Frank Kennedy, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2

Thank you for your time. I very much appreciate your consideration to participate in this study. Please feel welcome to contact me at any of the options provided below to indicate your response.

Sincerely,

Rae Hutton


umhutto3@myumanitoba.ca

APPENDIX D



102 Frank Kennedy Centre
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2

Stakeholder - Informed Consent Form

Research Project Title: Exploring the Effectiveness and Impact of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*: Learning from the Experiences of Trans- Youth in Manitoba High Schools

Principal Investigator and contact information: Jaxon (Rae) Hutton

Please contact Rae Hutton if you have any questions:

Master of Arts Student, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

Email: umhutto3@myumanitoba.ca

Phone and/or text: [REDACTED]

Research Supervisor and contact information: Dr. Sarah Teetzel

Email: Sarah.Teetzel@umanitoba.ca

Phone: (204) 474 8762

Mailing address: 112 Frank Kennedy, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2

Sponsor: SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship - Masters

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

What is the study about?

In an effort to provide space for youth who challenge societal standards of gender, the Manitoba High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) enacted a one-sentence *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* in February of 2015 that states, “any transgender student athlete may participate fully and safely in sex-separated sports activities in accordance with his or her gender identity” (MHSAA, 2015). It is unclear whether this sport policy makes it easier, more

encouraging, or accepting for trans- students to participate. The overall objective of this research project is to provide space for trans- youth in Manitoba high schools to voice their experiences in sport, to better understand Manitoba athletic policies that center trans- youth, and to share recommendations and strategies from trans- youth directly to more adequately inform policy development.

Since the MHSAA policy has been in place for over a year, this project seeks to gain insight and begin to understand the effectiveness and impact of the MHSAA policy in the lives of trans-youth in Manitoba by hearing firsthand accounts of these students' experiences in, and perceptions of, physical education and sport. Providing space for trans- youth to voice their experiences and perceptions of high school sport can lead to future recommendations for policy development that ensures the acceptance and encouragement of trans- youth in high school sport in Manitoba. This study will also give participants (both stakeholders and youth) a chance to speak openly and honestly about their experiences and the newly enacted policy and to comment, criticize, or demonstrate their support for recent changes in a comfortable setting, without fearing repercussions for voicing their perceptions and reflections publically.

What am I being asked to do?

Participation in the study involves participating in a one-on-one, open-ended, semi-structured interview with myself, Rae Hutton, at a location of your choice. During the interview, you will be asked to answer questions (a script of these questions has been provided prior to the interview for you to review) centering around the creation and implementation of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*. The purpose of these discussions is to gather a history of the MHSAA policy to better understand initial motivations behind creating the policy, its trajectory, decision-making, timelines, and overall reactions/responses to the policy.

The interview will take approximately 1-2 hours and will be recorded with a digital recording device and later transcribed by the researcher, Rae Hutton, after signing a transcriptionist oath of confidentiality to assure protection and confidentiality of all participants involved. You have the option to be sent a transcript of your interview by email or mail, based on your preference, and will be asked to verify the accuracy of it and change, clarify, remove, and/or add any comments or concerns you wish. This process may take approximately 30 minutes of your time. Once you have approved your transcript and returned it to myself it will be coded using qualitative research techniques. The results of the analysis may be published in academic journals and presented at academic conferences, and a 3-5 page summary and final report will be sent to all participants.

On July 1, 2018, after the completion of the study, printed transcripts will be destroyed by shredding and the digital audio files and electronic transcript files will be erased and deleted.

During the interview you will be able to ask questions or choose not to answer any question(s). Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you will be given ongoing opportunities to decide whether or not to continue participating. You can withdraw from the study or stop your interview at any point. If you do not want to answer a question you are asked, you may state so and choose not to answer without any negative consequences. Your answers supplied prior to the point of withdraw will only be used if you provide permission to do so. You can request that the recording of the interview be stopped at any point by verbally indicating

your decision. You can refuse to answer any questions without having to terminate your involvement in the interview or in the study. If you change your mind after the interview is over, you can contact me by telephone or email to declare you would like to withdraw from the study, and I will delete your interview recording and shred the transcript.

Will anyone know what I said?

As a public figure and part of an organization listed as a stakeholder involved in the creation and discussions of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*, you may be identifiable to those reading any summary, final report, publication, and/or presentation resulting from this study. Every effort to protect your identity and maintain confidentiality will be implemented throughout the entire study; however, confidentiality can never be guaranteed. If you wish to mask your identity, you are able to choose a pseudonym at the beginning of the interview before the tape recorder is turned on, so that your name and identifying features will not be associated with your interview. No identifying information will be included in your transcript or any documents or communications resulting from this study. Your city and organization affiliation will not be used either. However, even with taking all necessary steps to maintain confidentiality, there may be some people who will still recognize or be able to guess who you are as a stakeholder participant. All files will be stored in locked filing cabinets in my home office at [REDACTED] on a password-protected laptop that only I can access. Your electronic transcript and digital audio files will be kept on password-protected USB stick. All materials with identifying information about participants will be kept in a separate and secure location from the anonymized data, specifically in a separate locked drawer of a locked filing cabinet the above listed home office. During the interview you will be asked the same questions as other stakeholder participants; a copy of these questions are already in your possession in which you were given time to review them if desired. No one other than myself, Rae Hutton, will know if you opt to participate in this research study or not. If you wish to use a pseudonym and do not want to be identified, every measure will be taken to ensure to the greatest extent possible that no one else will be able to attribute your specific answers to you in any oral or written communication of results. Direct quotes from the transcribed interviews might be used in presentations and publications stemming from this research, which can pose a risk of identification for the participant quoted. In the case where potential identification is not desired, only pseudonyms will be used, and identifying details will be removed in order to mask participants' identities. At the time of your interview, if you choose to use your daily name instead of a pseudonym you can contact myself at any point during this project if you change your mind and would prefer to use a pseudonym in replace of your daily name.

Consenting to participate

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study my participation will require roughly 1-2.5 hours of my time, consisting of 60-120 minutes to answer the interview questions and roughly 30 minutes to review a copy of my transcript. I understand that my interview will be recorded using a digital recording device and transcribed by the researcher, Rae Hutton, who has taken a pledge of confidentiality.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time by informing Rae Hutton of my decision in person, by email, or by telephone. I recognize that if I feel uncomfortable with a question I can skip that question and choose to remain in the study or withdraw from the study

completely by stating my preferences to Rae Hutton.

I understand that due to my role as a public figure and being part of an organization listed as a stakeholder involved in the creation and discussions of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*, I may be identifiable to those reading any summary, final report, publication, and/or presentation resulting from this study. I understand that to protect my anonymity I may pick a pseudonym to be referred to by in any analysis, publications, or presentations stemming from this research project. I have the option to read my interview transcript, sent to me by email or mail based on my preference, which will allow me the opportunity to change any information I wish to remove or that I feel would serve to identify me. I understand that my name, if I choose to use a pseudonym, and all identifying features will not appear in any written or verbal report, document or presentation that may result from the study.

I understand the data for the project will be destroyed by shredding and deleting 1 year following the completion of the research on July 1, 2018.

I also understand that there is no anticipated benefit to me of participating and that risks of participating in this study are not expected to be greater than those experienced in the normal conduct of my everyday life.

I will keep a copy of this Informed Consent Form for my records.

Do not sign this consent form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have received satisfactory responses to all of your questions.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I wish to use a pseudonym to protect my anonymity and confidentiality to the greatest extent possible:

Yes: _____ No: _____

I consent to having my interview recorded with a digital recording device:

Yes: _____ No: _____

I wish to receive a copy of my transcript(s) to review for changes, clarifications, and/or to add additional comments:

Yes: _____ No: _____

If yes, I wish to receive a copy of my transcript(s) and a 3-5 page summary of the final results at the end of the study (no later than one month after the completion of the study: August 1, 2017) by:

Email at: _____

OR

Mail at:

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX E



102 Frank Kennedy Centre
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2

Dear [name of superintendent],

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba, and I am conducting a study entitled “Exploring the Effectiveness and Impact of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students: Learning from the Experiences of Trans-Youth in Manitoba High Schools.*” This study is a large component of my Master’s degree.

This project is grounded in the Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association’s (MHSAA) effort to provide space for youth who challenge societal standards of gender, through the creation and enactment of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* that states, “any transgender student athlete may participate fully and safely in sex-separated sports activities in accordance with his or her gender identity” (MHSAA, 2015). Further, this project seeks to better understand whether this sport policy makes it easier, more encouraging, or accepting for trans- students to participate. The overall objective of this research project is to provide space for trans- youth in Manitoba high schools to voice their experiences in sport, to better understand Manitoba athletic policies that center trans- youth, and to share recommendations and strategies from trans- youth directly to more adequately inform policy development.

With the MHSAA policy in effect in schools across Manitoba for over a year, this project seeks to gain insight and begin to understand the effectiveness and impact of the MHSAA policy in the lives of trans- youth in Manitoba by hearing firsthand accounts of these students’ experiences in, and perceptions of, physical education and sport. Providing space for trans- youth to voice their experiences and perceptions of high school sport can lead to future recommendations for policy development that ensures the acceptance and encouragement of trans- youth within high school sport in Manitoba. This study will also give participants a chance to speak openly and honestly about their experiences and the newly enacted policy and to comment, criticize, or demonstrate their support for recent changes in a comfortable setting, without fearing repercussions for voicing their perceptions and reflections publically.

The overall aim of this study is to benefit trans- youth in Manitoba schools. Studies have shown

that trans- youth report having disproportionately negative experiences in physical education and sport within high school, and a great majority of trans- youth feel unsafe in physical activities that take place in their schools. These unsafe feelings are especially felt in spaces associated with physical education and sport including washrooms, change rooms, and gymnasiums. Providing space for trans- youth to voice their experiences, concerns, and to share the ways in which the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* impacts (if at all) their participation is important in order to begin signalling to trans- youth that adults are concerned about their wellbeing in high school athletic spaces, and are recognizing the need to establish athletic spaces by listening to and incorporating the needs of those students who feel most marginalized. The inclusion of firsthand experiences of trans- youth has the potential to contribute to the advancement of inclusive high school policies for trans- youth, through recommendations coming from trans- youth directly.

This study seeks to recruit 10-12 trans- youth as participants from both urban and/or rural locations who self-identify their gender on the spectrums of trans-, gender variant, gender non-conforming, gender diverse, gender independent, gender creative, non-binary and/or gender identity labels outside of Eurocentric conceptions such as Two-Spirit, Hijra, and Mak Nyah. Participants must be at least 16 years of age and enrolled in a Manitoba high school, and willing to participate in one or more casual interactive semi-structured interviews with myself, Rae Hutton. Interactive interviews with youth will take approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour in length and will discuss youths' experiences and perceptions of high school sport and phys. ed. in Manitoba high schools, as well as thoughts and perceptions of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*. Interactive interviews will be recorded with a digital recording device and later transcribed by the researcher, Rae Hutton, after signing a transcriptionist oath of confidentiality to assure protection and confidentiality of all participants involved. Depending on each youths' preference, multiple interactive interviews may take place to continue our conversations. In the case of multiple interviews, consent will be needed at the beginning of each interactive interview. Youth will have the option to be sent a transcript of their interview by email or mail, based on their preference, and will be asked to verify the accuracy of it and change, clarify, remove, and/or add any comments or concerns. This process may take up to 30 additional minutes of youth participants' time.

Interactive semi-structured interviews are intended to be 'interactive' in that trans- youth and myself collaboratively discuss these topics. The purpose of interactive interviews is to build relationships between participants and researchers (Rae), as I will offer to share my personal experiences and retell potentially similar experiences in relation to high school phys. ed. and sport, working to further develop relationships with the participants where interviews can become more of a conversation as oppose to feeling like an 'interrogation.' All youth will use a pseudonym of their choice and will be referred to by this pseudonym in their transcript and any resulting written communication and/or publications in order to conceal their identities. Youth participants can withdraw from the study at any time by informing myself, Rae Hutton, of their decision in person, by email, or by telephone. For youth who may not be comfortable informing me directly of their decision to discontinue their participation, they may share this with a faculty advisor or parent/legal guardian who will then share this information with me. All participants may answer as many or as few questions as they choose during the interview process.

At the end of this project, a final report will be compiled for superintendents, principals, and the MHSAA sharing themes, strategies, and recommendations from interactive interviews that take place with trans- youth. This report will discuss the experiences of trans- youth in Manitoba high school sport contexts. The strategies and recommendations that arise from discussions with trans- youth will contribute to the needed awareness and education within high school contexts of the current experiences of trans- youth and may highlight any necessary improvements in need of implementation to ensure athletic spaces are accessible to all students, regardless of gender that may be perceived as transgressing the gender binary. This information may be invaluable to future educational and athletic policy development in Manitoba high schools.

I am sending this letter to request approval to conduct this study within your school division, [name of division], and to contact school-based Gay Straight Alliances (GSA) to begin building relationships with students and faculty advisors as a main site for recruitment of youth. Additionally, I am sending this letter to request your assistance to distribute the recruitment materials to GSA faculty advisors throughout your school division, in order to provide the opportunity for GSA faculty advisors to then contact myself if interested in providing access to their GSA space. Pending faculty advisors contacting myself with potential interest, I will begin sharing information about the study and attending GSA spaces if asked. My intent to be involved in various GSAs is dependent on the desire of the organizers of the GSA and the students of the GSA to have me present and engaged. My role will also be dependent upon the position and involvement that members of each GSA wish for me to be involved in. For example, if a GSA is interested in my active participation in GSA activities and conversations I will do my best to fill this role. Alternatively, if a GSA wishes for me to act as a silent observer, I am also very willing to take up this position. The length of my time involved with each GSA is also dependent upon and will be negotiated with members of each GSA. It is my intent for the purpose of this project that my involvement and role as researcher with GSAs will end upon the completion of my Master's thesis. However, I am interested in continuing to be involved and connected with these communities upon completion of my Master's thesis in whatever way and role that interests them.

This research study is grounded in relationality, and I believe that building relationships with youth prior to any involvement in research and/or interviews is a key component. Approval to conduct this study in your division allows for this initial relationship building to take place, as well as the potential for future casual interactive semi-structured interviews to take place with any interested trans- youth participants. At no point will youth be pressured to participate in this study. Participation is entirely voluntary, and youth who wish to participate can withdraw their participation at any point of the study.

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca

I would be very happy to provide any additional information you may want, such as access to my ethics submission and approval, or answer any further questions regarding this research project. Additionally, if you have questions that you would prefer to direct toward my advisor, Dr. Sarah Teetzel, her contact information is: email: Sarah.Teetzel@umanitoba.ca phone: (204) 474 8762

mailing address: 112 Frank Kennedy, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2

Thank you for your time. I very much appreciate your consideration to allow this study to take place in GSAs within your school division in order to learn from the experiences and perceptions of trans- youth in relation to high school sport and physical education in Manitoba. Please feel welcome to contact me at any of the options provided below to indicate your response.

Sincerely,

Rae Hutton



umhutto3@myumanitoba.ca

APPENDIX F



102 Frank Kennedy Centre
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2

Dear [name of principal] and all GSA faculty advisors,

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba, and I am conducting a study entitled “Exploring the Effectiveness and Impact of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students: Learning from the Experiences of Trans-Youth in Manitoba High Schools.*” This study is a large component of my Master’s degree.

This project is grounded in the Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association’s (MHSAA) effort to provide space for youth who challenge societal standards of gender, through the creation and enactment of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* that states, “any transgender student athlete may participate fully and safely in sex-separated sports activities in accordance with his or her gender identity” (MHSAA, 2015). Further, this project seeks to better understand whether this sport policy makes it easier, more encouraging, or accepting for trans- students to participate. The overall objective of this research project is to provide space for trans- youth in Manitoba high schools to voice their experiences in sport, to better understand Manitoba athletic policies that center trans- youth, and to share recommendations and strategies from trans- youth directly to more adequately inform policy development.

With the MHSAA policy in effect in schools across Manitoba for over a year, this project seeks to gain insight and begin to understand the effectiveness and impact of the MHSAA policy in the lives of trans- youth in Manitoba by hearing firsthand accounts of these students’ experiences in, and perceptions of, physical education and sport. Providing space for trans- youth to voice their experiences and perceptions of high school sport can lead to future recommendations for policy development that ensures the acceptance and encouragement of trans- youth within high school sport in Manitoba. This study will also give participants a chance to speak openly and honestly about their experiences and the newly enacted policy and to comment, criticize, or demonstrate their support for recent changes in a comfortable setting, without fearing repercussions for voicing their perceptions and reflections publically.

The overall aim of this study is to benefit trans- youth in Manitoba schools. Studies have shown

that trans- youth report having disproportionately negative experiences in physical education and sport within high school, and a great majority of trans- youth feel unsafe in physical activities that take place in their schools. These unsafe feelings are especially felt in spaces associated with physical education and sport including washrooms, change rooms, and gymnasiums. Providing space for trans- youth to voice their experiences, concerns, and to share the ways in which the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* impacts (if at all) their participation is important in order to begin signalling to trans- youth that adults are concerned about their wellbeing in high school athletic spaces, and are recognizing the need to establish athletic spaces by listening to and incorporating the needs of those students who feel most marginalized. The inclusion of firsthand experiences of trans- youth has the potential to contribute to the advancement of inclusive high school policies for trans- youth, through recommendations coming from trans- youth directly.

This study seeks to recruit 10-12 trans- youth as participants from both urban and/or rural locations who self-identify their gender on the spectrums of trans-, gender variant, gender non-conforming, gender diverse, gender independent, gender creative, non-binary and/or gender identity labels outside of Eurocentric conceptions such as Two-Spirit, Hijra, and Mak Nyah. Participants must be at least 16 years of age and enrolled in a Manitoba high school, and willing to participate in one or more casual interactive semi-structured interviews with myself, Rae Hutton. Interactive interviews with youth will take approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour in length and will discuss youths' experiences and perceptions of high school sport and phys. ed. in Manitoba high schools, as well as thoughts and perceptions of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*. Interactive interviews will be recorded with a digital recording device and later transcribed by the researcher, Rae Hutton, after signing a transcriptionist oath of confidentiality to assure protection and confidentiality of all participants involved. Depending on each youths' preference, multiple interactive interviews may take place to continue our conversations. In the case of multiple interviews, consent will be needed at the beginning of each interactive interview. Youth will have the option to be sent a transcript of their interview by email or mail, based on their preference, and will be asked to verify the accuracy of it and change, clarify, remove, and/or add any comments or concerns. This process may take up to 30 additional minutes of youth participants' time.

Interactive semi-structured interviews are intended to be 'interactive' in that trans- youth and myself collaboratively discuss these topics. The purpose of interactive interviews is to build relationships between participants and researchers (Rae), as I will offer to share my personal experiences and retell potentially similar experiences in relation to high school phys. ed. and sport, working to further develop relationships with the participants where interviews can become more of a conversation as oppose to feeling like an 'interrogation.' All youth will use a pseudonym of their choice and will be referred to by this pseudonym in their transcript and any resulting written communication and/or publications in order to conceal their identities. Youth participants can withdraw from the study at any time by informing myself, Rae Hutton, of their decision in person, by email, or by telephone. For youth who may not be comfortable informing me directly of their decision to discontinue their participation, they may share this with a faculty advisor or parent/legal guardian who will then share this information with me. All participants may answer as many or as few questions as they choose during the interview process.

At the end of this project, a final report will be compiled for superintendents, principals, and the MHSAA sharing themes, strategies, and recommendations from interactive interviews that take place with trans- youth. This report will discuss the experiences of trans- youth in Manitoba high school sport contexts. The strategies and recommendations that arise from discussions with trans- youth will contribute to the needed awareness and education within high school contexts of the current experiences of trans- youth and may highlight any necessary improvements in need of implementation to ensure athletic spaces are accessible to all students, regardless of gender that may be perceived as transgressing the gender binary. This information may be invaluable to future educational and athletic policy development in Manitoba high schools.

I am sending this letter to request assistance to distribute recruitment materials to GSA faculty advisors at your school, in order to provide the opportunity for GSA faculty advisors to then contact myself if interested in providing access to their GSA space. Pending faculty advisors contacting myself with potential interest, I will begin sharing information about the study and attending GSA spaces *if asked*. My intent to be involved in various GSAs is dependent on the desire of the organizers of the GSA and the students of the GSA to have me present and engaged. My role will also be dependent upon the position and involvement that members of a GSA wish for me to be involved in. For example, if a GSA is interested in my active participation in GSA activities and conversations I will do my best to fill this role. Alternatively, if a GSA wishes for me to act as a silent observer, I am also very willing to take up this position. The length of my time involved with each GSA is also dependent upon and will be negotiated with members of each GSA. It is my intent for the purpose of this project that my involvement and role as researcher with GSAs will end upon the completion of my Master's thesis. However, I am interested in continuing to be involved and connected with these communities upon completion of my Master's thesis in whatever way and role that interests the members. I am sending this letter to begin building relationships with faculty advisors and potentially interested students and to request the consideration of students within your GSA to participate in this study.

This research study is grounded in relationality, and I believe that building relationships with youth prior to any involvement in research and/or interviews is a key component. Consideration of this study allows for this initial relationship building to take place, as well as the potential for future casual interactive semi-structured interviews to take place with any interested trans- youth participants. At no point will youth be pressured to participate in this study. Participation is entirely voluntary, and youth who wish to participate can withdraw their participation at any point of the study.

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca

I would be very happy to provide any additional information you may want, such as access to my ethics submission and approval, or answer any further questions regarding this research project. Additionally, if you have questions that you would prefer to direct toward my advisor, Dr. Sarah Teetzel, her contact information is: email: Sarah.Teetzel@umanitoba.ca phone: (204) 474 8762 mailing address: 112 Frank Kennedy, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2

Thank you for your time. I very much appreciate your consideration to allow this study to take place in your school's GSA in order to learn from the experiences and perceptions of trans-youth in relation to high school sport and physical education in Manitoba. Please feel welcome to contact me at any of the options provided below to indicate your response.

Sincerely,

Rae Hutton



umhutto3@myumanitoba.ca

APPENDIX G



Research study:

**EXPLORING THE EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT OF THE *MHSAA*
POLICY ON TRANSGENDER STUDENTS:
LEARNING FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF TRANS- YOUTH IN
MANITOBA HIGH SCHOOLS**

THIS STUDY SEEKS TO: hear from trans- youth on their experiences/perceptions of sport and phys. ed. in Manitoba high schools, and their perceptions/thoughts on the Manitoba High School Athletic Association’s Policy on Transgender Students. These experiences will inform how sport and athletic policies in Manitoba schools can be more inclusive and trans-friendly.

YOUTH ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

- Age 16–21
- Enrolled in a Manitoba high school
- From rural or urban Manitoba
- Participate in high school sport or not
- Identify gender somewhere outside of/beyond gender binary, such as transgender, trans, Two-Spirit, gender non-conforming, non-binary, gender independent, gender creative, gender diverse, gender variant, Mak Nyah, Hijra, or any self-identified transgressive gender

PARTICIPATION INCLUDES:

- Casual, interactive semi-structured interview in a mutually decided safe location
- More than one interactive interview if necessary
- Interviews: approx. 30 min–1 hour, recorded using a digital recording device
- Discussion of the MHSAA ‘Policy on Transgender Students,’ effectiveness of the policy, whether or not the policy impacts participation in high school sport

For questions, more information, and/or to inquire about participation, please contact Rae via email, phone, or text: umhutto3@myumanitoba.ca, [REDACTED]

To contact Rae’s advisor, Dr. Sarah Teetzel: (email) Sarah.Teetzel@umanitoba.ca (phone) 204 474 8762

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. For any concerns or complaints about this project, please contact the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca

APPENDIX H



102 Frank Kennedy Centre
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2

Legal Guardian - Informed Consent Form

Research Project Title: Exploring the Effectiveness and Impact of the MHSAA ‘Policy on Transgender Students’: Learning from the Experiences of Trans- Youth in Manitoba High Schools

Principal Investigator and contact information: Jaxon (Rae) Hutton

Please contact Rae Hutton if you have any questions:

Email: umhutto3@myumanitoba.ca

Phone and/or text: [REDACTED]

Research Supervisor and contact information: Dr. Sarah Teetzel

Email: Sarah.Teetzel@umanitoba.ca

Phone: (204) 474 8762

Mailing address: 112 Frank Kennedy, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2

Sponsor: SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship - Masters

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

What is the study about?

In an effort to provide space for youth who challenge societal standards of gender, the Manitoba High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) enacted a one-sentence “Policy on Transgender Students” in February of 2015 that states, “any transgender student athlete may participate fully and safely in sex-separated sports activities in accordance with his or her gender identity” (MHSAA, 2015). It is unclear whether this sport policy makes it easier, more encouraging, or accepting for trans- students to participate. The overall objective of this research project is to provide space for trans- youth in Manitoba high schools to voice their experiences in sport, to

better understand Manitoba athletic policies that center trans- youth, and to share recommendations and strategies from trans- youth directly to more adequately inform policy development.

Since the MHSAA policy has been in place for over a year, this project seeks to gain insight and begin to understand the effectiveness and impact of the MHSAA policy in the lives of trans-youth in Manitoba by hearing firsthand accounts of these students' experiences in, and perceptions of, physical education and sport. Providing space for trans- youth to voice their experiences and perceptions of high school sport can lead to future recommendations for policy development that ensures the acceptance and encouragement of trans- youth in high school sport in Manitoba. This study will also give participants (both stakeholders and youth) a chance to speak openly and honestly about their experiences and the newly enacted policy and to comment, criticize, or demonstrate their support for recent changes in a comfortable setting, without fearing repercussions for voicing their perceptions and reflections publically.

What am I being asked to do?

Participation in the study involves participating in a casual interactive semi-structured interview with myself, Rae Hutton, at a collaboratively decided upon time and safe location (e.g. GSA space and/or walking around the schoolyard together). During the interactive interview, you will be asked questions centering on your experiences and perceptions of high school sport and phys. ed. in Manitoba high school contexts, as well as your thoughts and perceptions of the MHSAA 'Policy on Transgender Students.' The design of this interview process is intended to be interactive, in as much or as little interaction as you want. The 'interactive' process differs from traditional interview styles in that trans- youth can also ask me questions and we collaboratively discuss these topics. The purpose of interactive interviews is to build relationships between participants and researchers (Rae), as I will offer to share my personal experiences and retell potentially similar experiences in relation to high school phys. ed. and sport, working to further develop relationships with the participants where the interview can become more of a conversation as oppose to feeling like an 'interrogation.' The purpose of these discussions is to better understand current experiences of trans- youth in sport and phys. ed., whether or not the MHSAA policy is positively impacting trans- youths' participation, and to provide a safe space in which these experiences can be shared.

The interactive interview may take between 30 minutes to 1 hour and will be recorded with a digital recording device and later transcribed by the researcher, Rae Hutton, after signing a transcriptionist oath of confidentiality to assure protection and confidentiality of all participants involved. Depending on your preference, multiple interactive interviews may take place to continue our conversations. In the case of multiple interviews, consent will be needed at the beginning of each interactive interview. You have the option to be sent a transcript of your interview by email or mail, based on your preference, and will be asked to verify the accuracy of it and change, clarify, remove, and/or add any comments or concerns you wish. This process may take up to 30 additional minutes of your time. Once you have approved your transcript and returned it to myself it will be coded using qualitative research techniques. The results of the analysis will be sent to all participants in a 3-5 page summary and final report, and results may be published in academic journals and presented at academic conferences.

On July 1, 2018, after the completion of the study, printed transcripts will be destroyed by shredding and digital audio files and electronic transcript files will be erased and deleted.

During the interview you will be able to ask questions or choose not to answer any question(s). Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you will be given continuing opportunities to decide whether or not to continue participating. You can withdraw from the study or stop your interview at any point. If you do not want to answer a question you are asked, you may state so and choose not to answer without any negative consequences. Your answers supplied prior to the point of withdraw will only be used if you provide permission to do so. You can request that the recording of the interview be stopped at any point by verbally indicating your decision. You can refuse to answer any questions without having to terminate your involvement in the interview or in the study. If you change your mind after the interview is over, you can contact me by telephone or email to declare you would like to withdraw from the study, and I will delete your interview recording and shred the transcript.

Will anyone know what I said?

Every effort to protect your identity and maintain confidentiality will be implemented throughout the entire study; however, confidentiality can never be guaranteed. To mask your identity, you will choose a pseudonym (an alternate name) at the beginning of the interview before the tape recorder is turned on, so that your name and identifying features will not be associated with your interview. No identifying information will be included in your transcript or any documents or communications resulting from this study. Your city, sports team affiliations, school, school division, GSA name, will not be used either. All files will be stored in locked filing cabinets in my home office at [REDACTED] on a password-protected laptop that only I can access. Your electronic transcript and digital audio files will be kept on a password-protected USB stick. All materials with identifying information about participants will be kept in a separate and secure location from the anonymized data, specifically in a separate locked drawer of a locked filing cabinet the above listed home office. No one other than myself, Rae Hutton, and my Master's Advisor, Dr. Sarah Teetzel, will know if you opt to participate in this research study or not, and every measure will be taken to ensure to the greatest extent possible that no one else will be able to attribute your specific answers to you in any oral or written communication of results. Direct quotes from the transcribed interviews might be used in presentations and publications stemming from this research, which can pose a risk of identification for the participant quoted. However, only pseudonyms will be used, and identifying details will be removed in order to mask participants' identities.

Consenting to participate

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study my participation will require roughly 30 minutes to 1.5 hour of my time total, consisting of 30-60 minutes to participate in interactive interview(s) and roughly 30 additional minutes to review a copy of my transcript. I understand that my interview will be recorded using a digital recording device and transcribed by the researcher, Rae Hutton, who has taken a pledge of confidentiality.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time by informing Rae Hutton of my decision in person, by email, or by telephone. I understand that if I am not comfortable informing Rae directly of my decision to discontinue participation, I am able to share this decision with a

parent/legal guardian, and/or faculty advisor who will then inform Rae. I recognize that if I feel uncomfortable with a question I can skip that question and choose to remain in the study or withdraw from the study completely by stating my preferences to Rae.

I understand that to protect my anonymity I will pick a pseudonym (an alternate name) to be referred to by in any analysis, publications, or presentations stemming from this research project. I have the option to read my interview transcript, sent to me by email or mail based on my preference, allowing me the opportunity to change or remove any information I wish or that I feel would serve to identify me. I understand that my name and all identifying features will not appear in any written or verbal report, document or presentation that may result from the study.

I understand the data for the project will be destroyed by shredding, deleting and reformatting 1 year following the completion of the research on July 1, 2018.

I also understand that there is no anticipated benefit to me of participating and that risks of participating in this study are not expected to be greater than those experienced in the normal conduct of my everyday life.

I understand that any information that I share disclosing and/or indicating experiences of abuse, the researcher (Rae) is required to notify appropriate authorities immediately—this includes informing faculty advisors, principals, and superintendents of misconduct and abuse within schools among youth, as well as reporting serious offences that are required to be report to legal authorities, such as suicidal tendencies and any form of child abuse. I understand it is the researcher's (Rae) responsibility to inform school and legal authorities in particular circumstances.

I will keep a copy of this Informed Consent Form for my records.

Do not sign this consent form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have received satisfactory responses to all of your questions.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you

may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I consent to having my interview recorded with a digital recording device:

Yes: _____ No: _____

I wish to receive a copy of my transcript(s) to review for changes, clarifications, and/or to add additional comments:

Yes: _____ No: _____

If yes, I wish to receive a copy of my transcript(s) and a 3-5 page summary of the final results at the end of the study (no later than one month after the completion of the study: August 1, 2017) by:

Email at: _____

OR

Mail at:

I consent to my responses being included in a final report that presents overall themes, strategies, and recommendations regarding high school sport, athletic spaces, and sport policy intended for chief superintendents, principals, and the MHSAA.

Yes: _____ No: _____

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX I



102 Frank Kennedy Centre
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2

Youth Assent Form

Research Project Title: Exploring the Effectiveness and Impact of the MHSAA ‘Policy on Transgender Students’: Learning from the Experiences of Trans- Youth in Manitoba High Schools

Principal Investigator and contact information: Jaxon (Rae) Hutton

Please contact Rae Hutton if you have any questions:

Email: umhutto3@myumanitoba.ca

Phone and/or text: [REDACTED]

Research Supervisor and contact information: Dr. Sarah Teetzel

Email: Sarah.Teetzel@umanitoba.ca

Phone: (204) 474 8762

Mailing address: 112 Frank Kennedy, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2

Sponsor: SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship - Masters

This assent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

What is the study about?

The Manitoba High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) enacted a one-sentence “Policy on Transgender Students” in February of 2015 that states, “any transgender student athlete may participate fully and safely in sex-separated sports activities in accordance with his or her gender identity” (MHSAA, 2015). It is unclear whether this sport policy makes it easier, more encouraging, or accepting for trans- students to participate. The objective of this research project is to listen to and learn from trans- youths’ experiences in sport and phys. ed. in Manitoba high schools, to better understand Manitoba athletic policies about trans- youth, and to share

recommendations from trans- youth to directly inform policies to make sure trans- youth are accepted and encouraged to participate if they desire. This study will give participants a chance to speak openly about their experiences and the newly enacted policy and to comment, criticize, or demonstrate their support for recent changes in a comfortable setting, without fear of backlash for voicing these thoughts/opinions.

What am I being asked to do?

Participation in the study involves participating in a casual interactive semi-structured interview with myself, Rae Hutton, in a safe location and time that we decide together (e.g. GSA space and/or walking around the schoolyard together). During the interactive interview, you will be asked questions about your experiences and thoughts of high school sport and phys. ed. in your high school, as well as your thoughts of the MHSAA 'Policy on Transgender Students.' This interview process intends to be interactive, with as much or as little interaction as you want. In an 'interactive' interview, you can also ask me questions and we get to discuss topics like high school sports together. The purpose of interactive interviews is to build relationships between participants and researchers (Rae), and I will offer to share my personal experiences and retell potentially similar experiences of high school so we can develop friendships and make the interview space feel like more of a conversation as oppose to feeling 'interrogated' or 'analyzed.'

The interactive interview may take between 30 minutes to 1 hour and will be recorded with a digital recording device and later transcribed by myself, Rae Hutton, after signing a transcriptionist oath of confidentiality to assure protection and confidentiality of all participants involved. Depending on your preference, multiple interactive interviews may take place to continue our conversations. In the case of multiple interviews, consent will be needed at the beginning of each interactive interview. You have the option to be sent a transcript of your interview by email or mail, based on your preference, and will be asked to verify the accuracy of it and change, clarify, remove, and/or add any comments or concerns you wish. This process may take up to 30 additional minutes of your time. Once you have approved your transcript and returned it to myself it will be coded using qualitative research techniques. The results of the analysis will be sent to all participants in a 3-5 page summary and final report, and results may be published in academic journals and presented at academic conferences.

On July 1, 2018, after the completion of the study, printed transcripts will be destroyed by shredding and digital audio files and electronic transcript files will be erased and deleted.

During the interview you will be able to ask questions or choose not to answer any question(s). Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you will be given ongoing opportunities to decide whether or not to continue participating. You can stop the interview and/or stop your participation at any point. If you do not want to answer a question you are asked, you may choose not to answer without any negative consequences. If you stop participation in the study, the answers you provide will only be used if you provide permission. Your answers supplied prior to the point of withdraw will only be used if you provide permission to do so. You can request that the recording of the interview be stopped at any point by verbally telling me this. You can answer as many or as few questions as you would like, without having to stop participating in the interview or the study. At any point, even after your interview is over, if you change your mind and wish to end your participation, you can contact me by telephone or

email to tell me if do not want to continue participating and I will delete your interview recording and shred the transcript. If at any point you are not comfortable informing Rae of your decision stop participation, you can also share this decision with a parent/legal guardian, and/or faculty advisor who will then inform Rae.

Will anyone know what I said?

Every effort will be made to protect your identity and keep your responses anonymous throughout the entire study; however, confidentiality can never be guaranteed. To help with this, you will choose a pseudonym (an alternate name) at the beginning of the interview before the tape recorder is turned on, so that your name and identifying features will not be associated with your interview. No identifying information will be included in your transcript or any documents. Your city, sports team affiliations, school, school division, GSA name, will not be used either. All files will be stored in locked filing cabinets that only I can access. Your electronic transcript and digital audio files will be kept on password-protected USB stick. All materials with identifying information about participants will be kept in a separate and secure location from the anonymized data, specifically in a separate locked drawer of a locked filing cabinet the above listed home office. No one other than myself, Rae Hutton, and my Master's Advisor, Dr. Sarah Teetzel, will know if you opt to participate in this research study or not. To the greatest extent possible, no one else will be able to attribute your answers to you. If direct quotes are used from your interview, only pseudonyms will be used and identifying details will be removed in order to protect your identity.

Assenting to participate

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study my participation will require roughly 30 minutes to 1 hour of my time: 30-60 minutes to participate in interactive interview(s), and roughly 30 additional minutes to review a copy of my transcript. I understand that my interview will be recorded using a digital recording device and transcribed by the researcher, Rae Hutton, who has taken a pledge of confidentiality.

I understand that I can stop participating in the study at any time by informing Rae Hutton in person, by email, or by telephone. I understand that if I am not comfortable informing Rae directly of this decision, I am able to share this decision with a parent/legal guardian, and/or faculty advisor who will then inform Rae. I recognize that I can answer as many or as few questions as I want while participating in this study.

I understand that to protect my identity so that no one can identify responses/answers being mine, I will pick a pseudonym (an alternate name) to be used in replace of my day-to-day name for the entire project. I have the option to read my interview transcript, sent to me by email or mail based on my preference, where I can change, remove/add any information that I wish or that I feel would identify me. I understand that my day-to-day name and all identifying features will not be used in any written or verbal report/document resulting from the study.

I understand the data for the project (interviews, transcripts) will be destroyed by shredding and deleting 1 year after the research study ends, on July 1, 2018.

I also understand that there is no anticipated benefit to me of participating and that risks of participating in this study are not expected to be greater than those experienced in the normal conduct of my everyday life.

I understand that any information that I share disclosing and/or indicating experiences of abuse, the researcher (Rae) is required to notify appropriate authorities immediately—this includes informing faculty advisors, principals, and superintendents of misconduct and abuse within schools among youth, as well as reporting serious offences that are required to be report to legal authorities, such as suicidal tendencies and any form of child abuse. I understand it is the researcher's (Rae) responsibility to inform school and legal authorities in particular circumstances.

I will keep a copy of this Assent Form for my records.

Do not sign this assent form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have received satisfactory responses to all of your questions.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I have provided the Informed Consent form signed by a parent or legal guardian, indicating consent for my participation in this study:

Yes: _____ No: _____

I approve my responses being included in a final report that presents overall themes, strategies, and recommendations regarding high school sport, athletic spaces, and sport policy intended for chief superintendents, principals, and the MHSAA.

Yes: _____ No: _____

I approve having my interview recorded with a digital recording device:

Yes: _____ No: _____

I wish to receive a copy of my transcript(s) to review for changes, clarifications, and/or to add additional comments:

Yes: _____ No: _____

If yes, I wish to receive a copy of my transcript(s) and a 3-5 page summary of the final results at the end of the study (no later than one month after the completion of the study: August 1, 2017) by:

Email at: _____

OR

Mail at:

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX J



102 Frank Kennedy Centre
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2

Mature Minor - Informed Consent Form

Research Project Title: Exploring the Effectiveness and Impact of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*: Learning from the Experiences of Trans- Youth in Manitoba High Schools

Principal Investigator and contact information: Jaxon (Rae) Hutton

Please contact Rae Hutton if you have any questions:

Email: umhutto3@myumanitoba.ca

Phone and/or text: [REDACTED]

Research Supervisor and contact information: Dr. Sarah Teetzel

Email: Sarah.Teetzel@umanitoba.ca

Phone: (204) 474 8762

Mailing address: 112 Frank Kennedy, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2

Sponsor: SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship - Masters

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

What is the study about?

In an effort to provide space for youth who challenge societal standards of gender, the Manitoba High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) enacted a one-sentence *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students* in February of 2015 that states, “any transgender student athlete may participate fully and safely in sex-separated sports activities in accordance with his or her gender identity” (MHSAA, 2015). It is unclear whether this sport policy makes it easier, more encouraging, or accepting for trans- students to participate. The overall objective of this research project is to provide space for trans- youth in Manitoba high schools to voice their experiences in

sport, to better understand Manitoba athletic policies that center trans youth, and to share recommendations and strategies from trans- youth directly to more adequately inform policy development.

Since the MHSAA policy has been in place for over a year, this project seeks to gain insight and begin to understand the effectiveness and impact of the MHSAA policy in the lives of trans-youth in Manitoba by hearing firsthand accounts of these students' experiences in, and perceptions of, physical education and sport. Providing space for trans- youth to voice their experiences and perceptions of high school sport can lead to future recommendations for policy development that ensures the acceptance and encouragement of trans- youth in high school sport in Manitoba. This study will also give participants (both stakeholders and youth) a chance to speak openly and honestly about their experiences and the newly enacted policy and to comment, criticize, or demonstrate their support for recent changes in a comfortable setting, without fearing repercussions for voicing their perceptions and reflections publically.

What am I being asked to do?

Participation in the study involves participating in a casual interactive semi-structured interview with myself, Rae Hutton, at a collaboratively decided upon time and safe location (e.g. GSA space and/or walking around the schoolyard together). During the interactive interview, you will be asked questions centering on your experiences and perceptions of high school sport and phys. ed. in Manitoba high school contexts, as well as your thoughts and perceptions of the *MHSAA Policy on Transgender Students*. The design of this interview process is intended to be interactive, in as much or as little interaction as you want. The 'interactive' process differs from traditional interview styles in that trans- youth can also ask me questions and we collaboratively discuss these topics. The purpose of interactive interviews is to build relationships between participants and researchers (Rae), as I will offer to share my personal experiences and retell potentially similar experiences in relation to high school phys. ed. and sport, working to further develop relationships with the participants where the interview can become more of a conversation as oppose to feeling like an 'interrogation.' The purpose of these discussions is to better understand current experiences of trans- youth in sport and phys. ed., whether or not the MHSAA policy is positively impacting trans- youths' participation, and to provide a safe space in which these experiences can be shared.

The interactive interview may take between 30 minutes to 1 hour and will be recorded with a digital recording device and later transcribed by the researcher, Rae Hutton, after signing a transcriptionist oath of confidentiality to assure protection and confidentiality of all participants involved. Depending on your preference, multiple interactive interviews may take place to continue our conversations. In the case of multiple interviews, consent will be needed at the beginning of each interactive interview. You have the option to be sent a transcript of your interview by email or mail, based on your preference, and will be asked to verify the accuracy of it and change, clarify, remove, and/or add any comments or concerns you wish. This process may take up to 30 additional minutes of your time. Once you have approved your transcript and returned it to myself it will be coded using qualitative research techniques. The results of the analysis will be sent to all participants in a 3-5 page summary and final report, and results may be published in academic journals and presented at academic conferences.

On July 1, 2018, after the completion of the study, printed transcripts will be destroyed by shredding and digital audio files and electronic transcript files will be erased and deleted.

During the interview you will be able to ask questions or choose not to answer any question(s). Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you will be given continuing opportunities to decide whether or not to continue participating. You can withdraw from the study or stop your interview at any point. If you do not want to answer a question you are asked, you may state so and choose not to answer without any negative consequences. Your answers supplied prior to the point of withdraw will only be used if you provide permission to do so. You can request that the recording of the interview be stopped at any point by verbally indicating your decision. You can refuse to answer any questions without having to terminate your involvement in the interview or in the study. If you change your mind after the interview is over, you can contact me by telephone or email to declare you would like to withdraw from the study, and I will delete your interview recording and shred the transcript.

Will anyone know what I said?

Every effort to protect your identity and maintain confidentiality will be implemented throughout the entire study; however, confidentiality can never be guaranteed. To mask your identity, you will choose a pseudonym (an alternate name) at the beginning of the interview before the tape recorder is turned on, so that your name and identifying features will not be associated with your interview. No identifying information will be included in your transcript or any documents or communications resulting from this study. Your city, sports team affiliations, school, school division, GSA name, will not be used either. All files will be stored in locked filing cabinets in my home office at [REDACTED] on a password-protected laptop that only I can access. Your electronic transcript and digital audio files will be kept on a password-protected USB stick. All materials with identifying information about participants will be kept in a separate and secure location from the anonymized data, specifically in a separate locked drawer of a locked filing cabinet the above listed home office. No one other than myself, Rae Hutton, and my Master's Advisor, Dr. Sarah Teetzel, will know if you opt to participate in this research study or not, and every measure will be taken to ensure to the greatest extent possible that no one else will be able to attribute your specific answers to you in any oral or written communication of results. Direct quotes from the transcribed interviews might be used in presentations and publications stemming from this research, which can pose a risk of identification for the participant quoted. However, only pseudonyms will be used, and identifying details will be removed in order to mask participants' identities.

Consenting to participate

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study my participation will require roughly 30 minutes to 1.5 hour of my time total, consisting of 30-60 minutes to participate in interactive interview(s) and roughly 30 additional minutes to review a copy of my transcript. I understand that my interview will be recorded using a digital recording device and transcribed by the researcher, Rae Hutton, who has taken a pledge of confidentiality.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time by informing Rae Hutton of my decision in person, by email, or by telephone. I understand that if I am not comfortable informing Rae directly of my decision to discontinue participation, I am able to share this decision with a

parent/legal guardian, and/or faculty advisor who will then inform Rae. I recognize that if I feel uncomfortable with a question I can skip that question and choose to remain in the study or withdraw from the study completely by stating my preferences to Rae.

I understand that to protect my anonymity I will pick a pseudonym (an alternate name) to be referred to by in any analysis, publications, or presentations stemming from this research project. I have the option to read my interview transcript, sent to me by email or mail based on my preference, allowing me the opportunity to change or remove any information I wish or that I feel would serve to identify me. I understand that my name and all identifying features will not appear in any written or verbal report, document or presentation that may result from the study.

I understand the data for the project will be destroyed by shredding, deleting and reformatting 1 year following the completion of the research on July 1, 2018.

I also understand that there is no anticipated benefit to me of participating and that risks of participating in this study are not expected to be greater than those experienced in the normal conduct of my everyday life.

I understand that any information that I share disclosing and/or indicating experiences of abuse, the researcher (Rae) is required to notify appropriate authorities immediately—this includes informing faculty advisors, principals, and superintendents of misconduct and abuse within schools among youth, as well as reporting serious offences that are required to be report to legal authorities, such as suicidal tendencies and any form of child abuse. I understand it is the researcher's (Rae) responsibility to inform school and legal authorities in particular circumstances.

I will keep a copy of this Informed Consent Form for my records.

Do not sign this consent form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have received satisfactory responses to all of your questions.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you

may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I consent to having my interview recorded with a digital recording device:

Yes: _____ No: _____

I wish to receive a copy of my transcript(s) to review for changes, clarifications, and/or to add additional comments:

Yes: _____ No: _____

If yes, I wish to receive a copy of my transcript(s) and a 3-5 page summary of the final results at the end of the study (no later than one month after the completion of the study: August 1, 2017) by:

Email at: _____

OR

Mail at:

I consent to my responses being included in a final report that presents overall themes, strategies, and recommendations regarding high school sport, athletic spaces, and sport policy intended for chief superintendents, principals, and the MHSAA.

Yes: _____ No: _____

Participant's Signature (Mature Minor) _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____