SEX SEGREGATION AND THE PARTICIPATION OF TRANSGENDER ADULTS IN RECREATIONAL SPORT

by
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DECLARATION

This thesis is a product of my own work and is not the result of anything done in collaboration.

I agree that this thesis may be available for reference and photocopying, at the discretion of the University.

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THESIS EXAMINATION COMMITTEE SIGNATURE PAGE

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Department of Recreation & Tourism Management for acceptance, the thesis titled "*Sex segregation and the participation of transgender adults in recreational sport*" submitted by SonTung Nguyen in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management.

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ABSTRACT

Sport participation has been made difficult for transgender people due to sex segregation in sport separating two normative sexes of male and female based on biological differences. Sex segregation policies and transgender participation in physical activity, professional, and collegiate sport is well documented, but this examination has not reached recreational sport. Although recreational sport guidelines identify inclusion as an imperative in sport participation, they have failed to lay out the means to achieve it. Specifically, concrete inclusion policies and practices with action plans are lacking for recreational transgender sport participants, leaving them to struggle on their own with stigmatization. In light of these limitations, the purpose of this study is: 1) determine how transgender adults' participation in recreational sports in BC, Canada is informed by their experiences with the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport; and 2) inform an enhanced and intentional change in transgender-inclusive policies and practices in terms of the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport in BC, Canada. A qualitative research design was adopted, with data collected from two methods: first, textual data was extracted from written biographies and film documentaries about transgender people in sport. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eleven transgender adults recruited from recreational sport leagues and transgender-related organizations across BC. A thematic narrative analysis was employed, and informed by social justice theory, stigma theory, and gender theory. Findings show a persistence of transgender stigma and a lack of explicitness about transgender inclusivity in recreational sport, which heavily influence how transgender people participate in recreational sport. Lastly, the study serves as a platform for transgender participants to introduce their own ideal scenarios for change in policies and practices towards achieving greater inclusivity of transgender people in recreational sport.

SETTING THE SCENE

Tung: *Tell me a little bit about your experience playing in soccer as a transgender person.*

Terra: *Yeah… it was a little bit awkward. There was a whole like "Oh, we need another girl to play right now because two women have to be on the field at any given time". So… because I was getting ready to transition, in some day-to-day things I already transitioned and to some people I was already "she, her". When they said "Oh, we need another girl", I'd have the hesitation of "Oh, is that me? Oh, wait, no, it's not. The other team knows me as a guy so they wouldn't accept that".*

Tung: *Right. This is really interesting. Were you playing for the men's team or the women's team at that time?*

Terra: *It was a co-ed team. So, the team requires at any given time two women on the field and the rest could be guys… [T]here are also the jokes here and there of "Terra. Come on, hurry up and transition so we can just have you as one of the girl count!"… There was always the worry of "Are enough girls gonna join the team today, so we can actually play?".*

Tung: *Oh, right. How did you take those kinds of jokes?*

Terra: *They were funny… because it's light-hearted, it's fine. But there's some days where you see yourself as "Oh, am I really a woman or am I lying to myself?". So, it feels awkward and uncomfortable… In general, like, if you're playing and the other team is, like, "Oh, you only have one woman playing right now. We got to stop the game and get someone else to join as well". It just seems to ruin the game in general. Why bring gender politics into this [sport]?*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The context of the research

Sport has been considered a foundation for Canada's national identity creation (Grix & Carmichael, 2012) through sport success on the international stage. However, Canada has witnessed a number of issues in sport that is related to public policies (Thibault & Harvey, 2013), one of which is the lack of a formal specific policy on sport participation (Donnelly, 2013). Tasked by the Government of Canada (2017) to set a direction for all governments, institutions and organizations in sport, the *Canada Sport Policy* (CSP) 2012 is the effective policy for the period of 2012 - 2022. According to Sport Canada (2012), the CSP 2012 envisions "to have, by 2022, a dynamic and innovative culture that promotes and celebrates participation and excellence in sport" (p. 5). The policy also emphasizes that recreational sport participants should "have the opportunity to participate ... for fun, health, social interaction and relaxation" (Sport Canada, 2012, p. 8). Furthermore, with inclusion as one of the new foundational elements, the CSP 2012 aspires to reach a broader participation (Frisby & Ponic, 2013) by increasing the involvement of historically excluded populations. Nevertheless, both the CSP 2012 and its predecessor, the CSP 2002, fail to lay out the means to achieve this outcome (Donnelly, 2013) even though they identify it as an imperative goal. Frisby and Ponic (2013) further argue that concrete policies with action plans were lacking for those underrepresented groups, including the community of two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and other identities (2SLGBTQ+).

Aligned with CSP 2012, the *Framework for Recreation in Canada: Pathways to Wellbeing* also highlights inclusion as one of the goals with the priorities to "enact policies of nondiscrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression", and "provide a welcoming and safe environment for people with all sexual orientations and sexual identities

(Canadian Parks and Recreation Association [CPRA], 2015, p. 23). This can be considered to point towards issues surrounding the inclusion of transgender individuals in sport. Canadian governments at local, regional and provincial/ territorial levels are urged to implement action plans in their jurisdiction with the employment of this framework. Given that the present study was conducted in British Columbia (BC), Canada, it is worth mentioning some background information about the province and its vision for sport. Recognized as one of the leaders in Canada in terms of sport participation in general (Government of British Columbia, n.d.), BC has recently released a document entitled *Pathways to Sport* as a strategic framework for the sport sector in BC from 2020 to 2025. This framework, similar to other frameworks/policies mentioned above, continues to assert the significance and urge to make sport more inclusive, especially in relations to gender equity. The guidelines, once again, are yet ambiguous, giving no specific set of actions needed to be taken towards mitigating issues around transgender inclusion in sport. The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES, 2012) support the previous statement, noting that in the absence of policies or guidelines, transgender participants struggle on their own to "navigate the inconsistencies, or to challenge prejudice" (p. 20). In a commentary on transgender athletes' exclusion in sport, Teetzel and Weaving (2017) also point out a lack of "nationwide policy regarding the inclusion of trans[gender] athletes in sport" in Canada. Interestingly, in the view of Pal (2010), action and inaction chosen by the governments are both parts of policies, in other words, having no policies or guidelines about the inclusion of transgender people in sport could be considered one of the governments' default policy.

Inclusion is not only a common goal across sport policies and guidelines, but also a concern voiced by Canadian people (Frisby & Ponic, 2013). Based on a report done by the CCES (2008) about the tremendous potential of community sport system, "there is a growing gap between the positive benefits Canadians believe sport can provide for their children and

their communities and what they are actually experiencing" (p. 13). In other words, while sport can bring people together, fostering inclusion, it is not really what is happening nowadays in the sporting world. But the question is "What is inclusion?". Responding to this question, Donnelly and Coakley (2002) consider inclusion as a human rights issue in which the diversity of everyone's sport-related experiences and identities are celebrated and acknowledged rather than being demeaned. Frisby and Ponic (2013) add that inclusion was more complex than simply "opening the door" for everyone. Its complexity goes to the extent where feelings of inclusion and exclusion can be experienced at the same time (Ponic, 2007). Thus, for the inclusion seed to be planted, the CCES (2012) suggests that old assumptions need to be unlearnt. Elaborating the above, with the achievement of equitable recreational experiences for all continuously stressed by sport policy makers (CPRA, 2015), a call for a renewed set of policies on how to best include transgender people in recreational sport might be needed.

1.2 Research questions, research purpose and the significance of the research

As a leisure activity, sport (or physical activity in general) is believed to be associated with reduced risks of non-communicable diseases, such as cancer, diabetes or cardiovascular diseases (World Health Organization [WHO], 2018). Additionally, research also indicates that sport positively affects psychological well-being and mental health issues, including self-esteem, depression, and many others (Chatzisarantis & Hagger, 2007; Leong & Bartlett, 2017). On a side note, sport is particularly beneficial for transgender people in transitional hormone treatment as well as their well-being (Buzuvis, 2012; Caudwell, 2014; Elling-Machartzki, 2017; Hargie et al., 2017). However, transgender people encounter multiple barriers when participating in sport due to stigmatization, whether at professional level or recreational level. These barriers are firmly entrenched in the gender binary and all the assumptions that come with it, such as hormone therapy as one eligibility requirement (Jones

et al., 2017b), the use of gendered sport facilities or gendered language (Semerjian & Cohen, 2006; Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2012), and transphobia (Jones et al., 2017a). The present study will be a contemporary contribution to the existing body of literature on lived experiences of transgender people in sport, particularly in recreational settings. Furthermore, the fact that transgender people are excluded from sport extends beyond gender inequity, it is indeed a human rights concern (Voyles, 2019). Multiple empirical research papers have discussed transgender people's lived experiences in physical education or sport of collegiate settings (e.g. Sykes, 2009; Caudwell, 2014; Devís-Devís et al., 2017; Kulick et al., 2018) and many more (e.g. Reeser, 2005; Buzuvis, 2012; Pieper, 2015; Müller, 2016; Leong & Bartlett, 2017; Shin, 2017; Jones et al., 2017b) examined the impact of sex segregation policies on transgender athletes' participation in professional sport. However, it appears that the lived experiences of transgender adults and their participation particularly in sex-segregated recreational sport settings are not very well explored, which points to the purpose of this present research paper.

In light of the above and in the context of British Columbia (Canada), the purpose of this qualitative research is to: 1) determine how transgender adults' participation in recreational sports is informed by their experiences with the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport; and 2) inform an enhanced and intentional change in transgender-inclusive policies and practices in terms of the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport. This research holds some promise to facilitate a two-way dialogue between sport policy makers and transgender recreational sport participants by exploring the relationship between their experiences and their participation in sport. That being the case, the present research is guided by the following primary research question and its sub-questions:

- Do sex-segregation policies and practices in recreational sports influence if and how transgender adults participate in recreational sports?

- What sex-segregated recreational sports do transgender adults participate in, or are interested in participating, and why?
- How do social identities of transgender adults inform their experiences with recreational sex-segregated sports?
- What characteristics of recreational sex-segregated sports influence the way in which transgender participants experience it?

The aim of this study is geared towards sustainability. Along with time, the concept of sustainability has three dimensions: environmental, economic, and social (Lozano, 2008). Lozano (2008) adds that in order to achieve societal sustainability, it is important to "use holistic, continuous and interrelated phenomena amongst" (p. 1845) those three dimensions. That said, sport not only builds a healthy society, but also has the potential to boost the economy, contribute to environmental wellness, and bolster social inclusion. Economically, regular participation in sport can be considered as preventive health care and can result in lower health care costs (City of Richmond, 2016). Moreover, spending on a multitude of services and goods for sport also helps generate myriad employment opportunities across different fields, leveraging the economy at the same time (The Conference Board of Canada, 2005). In terms of the environmental aspect, though sport could easily inflict a negative footprint on the environment (University of Pennsylvania, 2013), it can be used as a vehicle for education towards increasing awareness of participants. Last but not least, social interactions along with community spirit could be promoted because "sport is one way in which social exclusion can be tackled" (City of Richmond, 2016, p. 4). Additionally, it is believed by Tirone (2004) that through effective inclusion policies and practices in sport, issues like gender equity could really be addressed.

Understanding the experience of transgender recreational sport participants in sex-segregated sports can provide valuable insights for sports organizers and authorities. That

way, new policies and strategies for meaningful inclusion can be identified, making sport a more inclusive site for all. Maybe there will be no need to have trans-only teams, or trans-only sports programming, but all-are-welcome teams, and all-are-welcome sports programming.

1.3 Positionality in research

Every person has a story to tell, thus, it is critically important that I recognize myself and have a clear view of my position in this research. I am a 29-year-old gay man from Vietnam, who is currently living and studying in Canada. I have had the opportunities to relocate to multiple countries, being exposed to many diverse cultures. Hence, my knowledge about the 2SLGBTQ+ community has been significantly broadened and challenged at the same time. I have never been active with the 2SLGBTQ+ community until I came to Canada in August 2019, where I joined the Nanaimo Pride Society with the intention to help enhance the empowerment of both myself and individuals within the Pride community. Though transgender people and I exist under the umbrella acronym 2SLGBTQ+, I consider myself an outsider to the transgender community. Therefore, I do see the need to understand my background, my point of view, and how they might influence the way I undertake this research. Indeed, Malterud (2001) states that "a researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions" (p. 483-484). Inspired by the earlier work of Lucas (2009), to demonstrate this process of positionality, I have asked myself a series of questions as if I were in my own interview.

So, how do you identify yourself?

Well, I identify myself as an Asian gay cis-man.

Where did you grow up? And what was your experience growing up as a gay person?

I grew up in Vietnam, a country in Asia. Growing up gay in Vietnam was not easy, but it was not difficult if you knew how to. It was not easy because not only was I the first person in my immediate family to have access to tertiary education, but also I am the eldest grandchild of my grandparents: which means people in my family expect a lot from me. Witnessing how my aunt was treated when my family discovered that she was a lesbian, I knew that with the responsibilities I am carrying, it would be hard to reveal my true sexual orientation. So I created another identity for myself (heterosexual, less talkative, less expressive) which is how I still present myself whenever I am with my family members. It's been 29 years and I still need to remember what needs to be done so no one will suspect my sexuality. It would seem that no one in my family really knows who I really am. Nonetheless, I have no concerns publishing my thesis as to it could potentially expose my true identity.

Is that why you've come to Canada, you know, to be able to live with your true self?

Kind of. Before coming here, I finished my biggest mission, which was to come out to my parents. Their reception was better than how I expected. I decided to go to Canada to be free, and not to let my parents feel obliged to see their son becoming someone different from what they imagined. When I expressed the intention to go to Canada to study, my parents were fully supportive and hopeful that I would be able to settle down in Canada in the future. My parents would like me to be distant from Vietnam so people could kind of forget about my existence, making it easier for my parents to cover up my sexual orientation.

Apart from being able to be your true self, how has your view towards all 2SLGBTQ+ issues developed?

I think, to be able to live in such a welcoming place for the 2SLGBTQ+ community has enhanced my self-esteem and given me an opportunity to reflect more on who I am as a person. Yet, I haven't been able to find what's called 'sense of belonging' due to my Asian identity. I feel like there is a difference between 'being able to be yourself' and

'feeling like you belong here'. Though I have been able to be myself as a gay person, I find it hard to think that I have a sense of belonging in Canada. As an Asian person living in a predominantly White country, I can't help but experience expressions that convey the message of "You don't belong here". An aquaintaince of mine, for example, told me that he didn't feel like he was living in Canada anymore because he saw so many Asian people in Vancouver. I was 'fascinated' by his remark.

On the other hand, coming here to Canada has broadened my knowledge in many ways. One year ago, I wasn't even able to define the terms transgender, androgynous, queer, gender identity, etc. but now I can. I used to always try to find answers for myself, trying to know a person's sexual orientation, gender. But now, I've come to realize that there is actually no need to try to put people in labels. I mean, what is the point of asking people if they are gay or bisexual, transgender or queer? Everyone should be welcome for who they truly are, so why categorize people?

Furthermore, as I have navigated through all the courses in the Sustainable Leisure Management Master's program, especially the course SLM 604, I have come to realize that power dynamics flow so strongly in society. Those who have not had their voice heard keep being pushed away by how power is distributed in society. There must be a way to empower those more vulnerable, so that they go on to empower others in the community. I do think that if we cannot change our way of thinking, we cannot get change of results that we want. We need to challenge, question, and even unlearn tacit old normative assumptions.

Is it because of these changes in your view that influenced your thesis topic of interest?

Oh yeah partially yeah. The other part is that I grew up being picked on and treated unfairly because I was perceived to be different. So, a part of me would really want to do justice for people who are 'different' like me, people in my 2SLGBTQ+ community. To

my knowledge, of all the letters in the widely used acronym 2SLGBTQ+, the letter T suffers very much from stigmatization just for being who they are. Moreover, working with the Nanaimo Pride Society since I came to Canada has allowed me to realize that even in an extremely open country like Canada, transgender people have not achieved the equity that they've been fighting for. Because of that, I want to be able to contribute whatever it is that I can to help the transgender community in particular, and my 2SLGBTQ+ community in general, for we thrive to have a more just and equitable society. To add on, it is also because of my past experiences in sport that dictate why I chose sport as my thesis topic.

Can you share a little bit about those experiences in sport?

I used to play football when I was a child, and I have always been the one that stood out. Surprisingly it was neither because I was the best nor the worst player, but because I was different from the other boys, I was not masculine enough. The other boys would mimic how I kicked the ball, or how I ran towards it and they would laugh at that. Then, I started to distance myself from football as I felt alienated, like an outcast. Time went by, I grew up leaving all of those things behind, learning to feel proud of myself for who I am. But football came back to haunt me in 2014 when I, as a Portuguese-Vietnamese interpreter, went to assist the retired football player Cristiano Roland with preparing for the Football Coaching license exam. Since I was 'visibly gay', many players who were there at the time tried to ask if I shared the same bed with Roland and made jokes about it. Even Roland had to stand up to defend me once, nearly punching one of the guys in the face. Later that night, Roland explained to me how conservative and homophobic football was, and that I should consider changing my behaviors. As a result, every time on the field, I tried to buff up my voice, masculinize my gait, mimicking every gesture that a 'normative' footballer should have. I had to adjust my gender expression in order just to be able to blend in with others in sport.

Do you still play sport?

No, I don't. To be fair, I was never a fan of sport. I was forced by my uncle to play because he wanted to make me behave like other boys in the neighborhood. That, plus the experiences I have just shared above, I don't play sport anymore.

What is your understanding about transgender people?

I initially didn't know much about transgender people. I have only one transgender friend, and I have always been too scared to openly talk to them about them being transgender because I didn't want to unintentionally hurt them by my ignorance. The only thing I knew about transgender people before commencing this project was that they feel the sex assigned to them is somehow wrong. It's like they feel something is not synchronized between their anatomical body and their inner sense of gender, that they want to have changes in their body to truly reflect their gender. To this day, I've learnt and significantly enhanced my knowledge about transgender people by spending time reading the literature and working with the Nanaimo Pride Society, as well as throughout this thesis project.

Do you think your limited understanding about transgender people and your past engagement in sport could be a disadvantage in doing this research?

Certainly, they would be big constraints for me in terms of having to explore these two areas in depth in order to reap sufficient information for the research. However, I am fascinated by the topic alone, and plus the determination to do something for the 2SLGBTQ+ community has also fueled the fire I need to push myself forward.

What does it mean for you to bring your not-so-pleasant experiences with your sexual orientation in sport into this research?

I do believe that my background, my childhood, my knowledge, my education, places I have been to, how I was raised, how I navigated through my life, all of that shape the way I approach and understand the studied phenomenon. I gracefully bring those experiences into this research as, in my opinion, they are what makes this research valuable and special. I

acknowledge the perspective from which I use to look at the issue surrounding transgender people and sport. Connecting the study with my own experiences is the right thing to do, but being mindful about the influence that my experience might have on steps taken throughout the whole research process is necessary.

You wearing the researcher hat in this research, plus the fact that you do not self-identify with the transgender community who are being studied, what does the relationship between you and transgender research participants look like?

Right. So, my role in this research is the researcher trying to explore the experiences of a community that I do not self-identify with. I acknowledge a power differential here between myself as the researcher and the research participants, because this researcher role can entail an 'extractive nature'. That is, I 'extract' information from the studied participants to serve my purpose of publishing a master's thesis and graduate. Second, it fulfills both my personal as well as academic interest in advancing my understanding of the transgender community. My knowledge about gender and sport is significantly expanded thanks to this research. Although I try my best to position myself along with transgender participants in my study to work towards more inclusive recreational sport, I am the one that gets those guaranteed benefits, not the people who participate in the study. The study may benefit the transgender participants in the long run, but whether recreational sport policies and practices are to be changed is not up to my authority or capacity.

1.4 Organization of the thesis

This thesis research paper consists of five chapters: 1) Introduction, 2) Literature review, 3) Methodology, 4) Findings, and 5) Discussion & Conclusion. The first chapter lays out the study's context, the purpose of the research along with the research question by which the study is guided. In addition, the significance of the research is also discussed in this very first chapter. Meanwhile, Chapter 2 presents significant past research findings about

transgender people in sex-segregated sport and the gap in the literature where the current study aspires to fill. The second chapter is organized in three main themes: a) the ideology behind sex segregation in sport and how this structure has challenged transgender people, b) experiences and challenges that transgender people have faced in sex-segregated sport, and c) what has and has not been done in the scholarship surrounding transgender people in sex-segregated sport. Next, Chapter 3 titled ‘Methodology’ introduces methodological decisions adopted in the study, following by their rationale and justification. More specifically, discussions about research design, methodological approach, research paradigm, research methods, data collection and analysis plan, and ethical considerations in research will be presented. Chapter 4 outlines key research findings of data analysis that emerged from both textual data analysis and interview data analysis. A section to explain the complementarity of findings from those two sources is also included in the chapter. Finally, Chapter 5 offers discussions on key research findings, their applied considerations along with the study’s limitations and recommendations for future studies, which is followed by a conclusion for the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to: 1) determine how transgender adults' participation in recreational sports in BC, Canada is informed by their experiences with the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport; and 2) inform an enhanced and intentional change in transgender-inclusive policies and practices in terms of the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport in BC, Canada. This chapter is concerned with presenting significant past research findings about transgender people in sex-segregated sport. The first section of the chapter discusses the ideology behind sex segregation structure in sport, and how this structure has been challenged by the existence of transgender people. In continuation, the second section addresses transgender inclusion policy along with relevant and findings in regard to transgender people' experiences in sport, including challenges they have faced. After that, the last section of the chapter maps out what the literature has done on this very topic, then provides justification for what this present study aspires to contribute.

2.2 The naturalization of sex and sport

In accordance with The Conference Board of Canada (2005), sport is defined as a physical activity that requires a certain extent of physical prowess and efforts while often being of competitive nature. For the sake of clarity, in this present study, the term 'sport' will be used only to refer to primarily physical activities that satisfy the conditions above, acknowledging other forms of sport such as primarily mind (e.g. chess) or predominantly motorized (e.g. Formula 1) (SportAccord, 2010).

Rooted in the belief that people in society are best demarcated by sex differences (Theberge, 2000; Messner, 2005), the majority of sports in the world is structured based on the binary biological traits of male and female (Kirby & Huebner, 2002), and thus sex-

segregated (Davis & Edwards, 2014). Fink et al. (2016) mention that sex segregation in sport has been long endorsed in defense of the preconceived assumption about male athletic superiority and female athletic inferiority. That is, as Channon et al. (2015) describe, males are perceived to be naturally faster, stronger, and better than females in terms of athletic performance. Seen as one of the most powerful examples, the study of Fogel and Quinlan (2015) illustrates how the cyber backlash was towards Mark Cuban's intention of appointing a female basketball player named Brittney Griner to play in his professional men's team Dallas Mavericks of the National Basketball Association. A comment that might have stood out the most from the cyber community is "The fastest girl in the WORLD is not faster than the average 16 year old guy" (p. 179, emphasis original). In the same fashion, another observation has been made by Leong and Bartlett (2017) in tennis where women are allowed to play only three sets while men are allowed to play five sets, showing a significant gap regarding perceived athletic capabilities. Though unproven (Leong & Bartlett, 2017), the above assumption makes it clear that those assigned male at birth should compete with/against others assigned male at birth while those assigned female at birth should practice and compete with/against others assigned female at birth (Davis & Edwards, 2014). This mindset has been deeply embedded in society with sport organizations establishing boy-only programs, limiting sport participation opportunities for girls under the guise of safety concerns (Buzuvis, 2011). In addition, fairness is also reported by Buzuvis (2011) to be one of the reasons that sex segregation in sport exists, when boys are not allowed to compete in girls' team and vice-versa, because of the "substantial risk that boys would dominate the girls' program and deny them equal opportunity to compete in interscholastic events" (p. 8). Furthermore, sex segregation has paved the way for a hierarchy that celebrates men's masculine superiority and women's feminine inferiority by categorizing different types of sports for men and women. To better illustrate, Lucas (2009) presents some common

stereotypes, sports that involve heavy physical contact and those that call for domination of the opponent are to be played by men, whereas proper sports for women are those with little (if not none) contact with the opposition and focus on natural body movements. Clearly, men's sports (e.g. basketball, football, ice hockey) praise speed, strength, force, and size, in which men stereotypically tend to excel (Leong & Bartlett, 2017). In a stark contrast, women are stereotypically expected to exert "traditionally less-valued skills like agility, coordination, balance, flexibility, and strategy" (Leong & Bartlett, 2017, p. 1820) in those so-called 'women's sports' (e.g. cheerleading, netball). Given how teams and activities are segregated based on biological sex, a male realm like sport (Travers, 2009) worships male hegemonic masculinity and is organized by heterosexuality (Anderson, 2002; Messner, 2005). Failure to express congruence with these sport's traditional beliefs leads to prejudice and discrimination (Sartore & Cunningham, 2008). The idea of 'heterosexuality is the only legitimate sexuality' is reinforced when men and women sport participants operate to avoid assumptions associated with sexualities that contradict heterosexuality (Sartore & Cunningham, 2009). The more successful men are in sport the less their sexuality becomes questioned, but the higher achievement women get in sport the more suspicious their sexuality becomes (Griffin, 1998). Thus, as voiced by Segrave (2015), sport marginalizes not only women but also the community of two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and other identities (2SLGBTQ+). According to Muchicko et al. (2014), 2SLGBTQ+ is not a homogenous group, thus the necessity to understand each of the group's contributing letters as independent of the others. Indeed, though the marginalization of the 2SLGBTQ+ community has been long discussed by a plethora of scholars (Cragg et al., 2016; Lisahunter, 2017; Herrick & Duncan, 2018; Baiocco et al., 2018; Pariera et al., 2019), Cunningham and Pickett (2017) argue that the prejudice in sport toward transgender people remain much greater than that toward their LGB peers. Symons et al. (2010) add that sports participation

has been made difficult for transgender people due to sex segregation in sport being challenged by transgender people since "their existence disrupts essential and binary ideas about sex that are reflected in the historical and contemporary organization of sport" (Bal, 2011, p. 8).

Carrying complex meanings, the three terms 'sex', 'gender', and 'transgender' are used by different people and thus, might be understood in different ways. As Christina (1997) suggests, in order for an effective dialogue to emerge, a common understanding must be obtained. Having said that, it is critical at this point to discuss about the definition of 'sex', 'gender', and 'transgender'.

2.2.1 Sex and gender

First of all, sex is not gender, and gender is not sex (Leong & Bartlett, 2017). Sex is determined by multiple biological and physiological characteristics including chromosomes, hormones, external genitalia and reproductive organs (Brown & Rounsley, 1996; Clarke, 2018). On the other hand, gender is described by these authors to be the characteristics socially and culturally constructed. Mosier (2020) further rectifies that although gender is the complex relationship between one's physical features and internal sense, gender is not necessarily associated with one's physical anatomy. However, gender has been assumed to be inherently connected to sex in today's society; that is, as Delphy (2003) depicts, anyone with male anatomy is expected to be a masculine man and anyone with female anatomy is expected to be a feminine woman. This categorization of sex and gender as binary and dichotomous is so pervasive (Lucas, 2009) that "to be male is to be NOT female, to be masculine is to be NOT feminine" (p. 4, emphasis original). Yet, the rigorousness of the sex binary categorization has been challenged by the existence of intersex people, who are born with sex characteristics that do not fit into traditional medicalized definitions of male and female (Ontario Human Rights Commission, n.d.). In alignment with studies having found

that sex and gender are not binary (Leong & Bartlett, 2017; Clarke, 2018), Oakleaf and Richmond (2017) also criticize the assumption that people assume their gender assigned at birth and continue to live with that gender for the rest of their lives. While many individuals might have a gender that matches their sex assigned at birth, this is not true for transgender people.

2.2.2 Cisgender, transgender and transsexual

The term 'cisgender' refers to individuals who have gender identity and gender expression aligned with their sex assigned at birth (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011). Transgender people, on the other hand, are described to be at "incongruence between the gender they were assigned at birth ... and their gender identity/experienced gender" (Jones et al., 2017b, p. 702). While Semerjian and Cohen (2006) and Mayer et al. (2008) agree with the preceding definition, Enke (2012) offers a more detailed and inclusive definition to the term 'transgender'. According to Enke (2012), transgender individuals have "a gender identity that differs from the sex assigned at birth; a gender expression that differs from that conventionally expected of people according to their bodily sex; and/or a desire for alteration of the body's sex/gender characteristics" (p. 19). The latter of this definition refers to those individuals who choose to seek medical interventions by taking hormones or sex reassignment surgery, reflecting the term 'transsexual' (Krane et al., 2012; Mosier, 2020). As an umbrella term that includes 'transsexual', the term 'transgender' also encompasses non-binary people who do not position themselves in the traditional binary gender categories of man and woman (Semerjian & Cohen, 2006; Buzuvis, 2011). Indeed, as noted in the work of Bornstein (1995), people who seek technological alteration of the body to change their assigned gender from one category to the other within the gender binary are 'gender conformers', whereas people who "reject the binary, either entirely or in favor of a continuum" (Travers, 2006, p. 434) are 'gender transformers'. As stated by Riggle and Mohr

(2015), there is a variety of different terms that people use when referring to ‘gender transformers’. Unlike Travers (2006), instead of ‘gender transformers’, Morris and van Raalte (2016) would use the term ‘gender nonconforming’ or ‘genderqueer’, or Herrick and Duncan (2018) would say ‘non-binary’, which is considered to be one of the most common terms to represent these individuals (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2018). Non-binary people identify with a more fluid gender concept, that is not exclusively masculine/men or feminine/women (Herrick & Duncan, 2018). It is important to note that not all non-binary individuals identify as transgender (Morris & van Raalte, 2016) and vice versa (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2018). For the sake of clarity and consistency, this paper will use only two terms ‘transgender’ and ‘trans’ (a short form for ‘transgender’) as an umbrella term, to refer to those who self-identify as transgender both opting to and not opting to undergo medical intervention(s) with their body, and those who do not posit themselves within the gender binary. That said, the term ‘transsexual’ will not be used in this study, given that it is a “sometimes misunderstood term… considered by some to be outdated or possibly offensive” (PFLAG, 2021, *transsexual* section).

Some transgender people choose to transition socially, legally, or medically (Bornstein, 1995; Prosser, 1998), in an attempt to fully realize themselves. Medical transition can be referred to hormone treatment alone or a combination of hormone treatment and sex-reassignment surgery (Buzuvis, 2011). Mosier (2019) goes on asserting that transgender people may take on any or all of those mentioned procedures, and that completing all of those mentioned procedures does not make anyone more or less trans than transgender people who opt to do none. In the same fashion, as concluded by Krane et al. (2012), “there is not a monolithic path for transitioning” (p. 18) for transgender people considering the compatibility of transitioning with their gender identity, life situations, and the extent to which they feel comfortable with the process.

2.3 Transgender people in sport

A recent report by the CCES (2016) suggests that there are nearly 175.000 Canadians who identify as trans, accounting for about 0.5% of the Canadian population. Albeit an increasingly visible group (Travers, 2006; Symons & Hemphill, 2007), transgender people are amongst one of the social groups that are discriminated against (Lombardi et al., 2002; Wirtz et al., 2020). Trans people face discrimination from many places such as workplaces, medical institutions (Giblon & Bauer, 2017), and schools (Chih et al., 2020). Semerjian and Cohen (2006) provide an example of a case where a school administration blamed a trans person for being bullied by others, and also suggested that this trans person wear gender-appropriate attire to school. According to Stryker (2008), trans people are being bullied and harassed because they challenge the dichotomous gender categories. It is, therefore, unsurprising that trans people are struggling in sport, a site that is notoriously known for preserving an extremely rigid sex-based segregation.

2.3.1 Transgender inclusion policy in sport

Given the perceived male athletic superiority and female athletic inferiority, there have been multiple efforts made by sport organizations to safeguard concerns about fairness. One of such concerns is whether or not transgender people should be allowed to compete in elite sport in the gender they identify with, as opposed to their gender ‘assigned at birth’. In 2004, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), arguably one of the most influential international sport governing bodies, adopted the Stockholm Consensus, to facilitate the inclusion of transgender people in sport competitions. According to the Stockholm Consensus (IOC, 2004), transgender people are eligible to compete in the gender that aligns with their gender identity, as long as they are able to provide legal documentation of gender change, have completed sex-reassignment surgery, have been on cross-sex hormones and lived in that gender for at least 2 years. This policy was critiqued for its irrationality of excluding a large

proportion of transgender people, including those who are transitioning, who do not have access to medical interventions, or who simply do not wish to have their body changed (Jones et al., 2017b). Yet, many other international sport organizations (e.g. Ladies European Golf Tour, the United States Golf Association, Women's Golf Australia, USA Track and Field, and the Canadian Cycling Association) have subsequently adopted the Stockholm Consensus (Sykes, 2006; Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2012). In November 2015, the IOC (2015) announces policy changes in relations to mandates of sex-reassignment surgery in hopes of addressing earlier stated deficiencies. More specifically, transgender women are asked to maintain testosterone level below 10 nmol/L for at least 12 months prior to competitions, and to have had declared their gender identity for 4 years. As progressive as this 2015 IOC policy is compared to the 2004 version, it poses flaws. Jones et al. (2017b) question not only the lack of supporting evidence for the mandatory testosterone level, but also the irrationality of the 4-year period. In the view of these authors, the 2015 IOC policy promotes, rather than tackle, the exclusion of transgender women, by asking them to compete in the men's category should they fail to meet the requirements for transgender women athletes. Given the lack of evidence-based requirements imposed on transgender people by elite sport policies (Jones et al., 2017b), Müller (2016) concludes that elite sport policies were designed to "treat and 'normali[z]e' people who are difficult to categori[z]e … in order to subsume them into the existent gender categories" (p. 405).

It is the above characteristics of international sport policies regarding the inclusion of transgender people that induce Canada's very first theoretical and practical discussion paper around the inclusion of trans people in sport: *Including Transitioning and Transitioned Athletes in Sport: Issues, Facts and Perspective* (Wagman, 2009). From the report's standpoint, Canada firmly stands against the IOC's Stockholm Consensus for elite sport (Wagman, 2009). Further, for the past decade, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport

([CCES], n.d.), "as the facilitator and elevator of the conscience of Canadian sport" (*About us* section), has been immensely proactive in providing guidance for Canadian sport organizations in terms of creating more transgender-inclusive and welcoming sport policies. Indeed, three comprehensive discussion papers were introduced in 2012, 2016, and 2018 by the CCES in collaboration with many other Canadian sports organizations such as Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, Sport Canada, and Department of Canadian Heritage. In providing guidance for sport policy makers in Canada, the CCES (2016) strongly opposes to the mandates of trans people making "any changes to their bodies whatsoever in order to participate fairly… in the gender with which they identify" (p. 17). The CCES (2016) makes it clear that, especially for sport played at recreational level, all individuals "should be able to participate in the gender with which they identify and not be subject to requirements for disclosure of personal information beyond those required of cisgender athletes. Nor should there be any requirement for hormonal therapy or surgery" (p. 26). These invasive, expensive, and complex procedures should rather be trans people' autonomous decision than a mandatory condition. In addition, the CCES (2016) also suggested that individuals self-identifying outside of the gender binary be able to move "between men's/women's teams more than once, or simultaneously participating on a men's team in one sport and the women's team in another" (p. 25).

As a result of both increasing number of trans people in sport, as well as Canadian sport organizations seeking to improve their transgender-inclusive policies, the CCES (2018) published a policy and practice template, which is built entirely on the guidance offered in the policy guidance previously introduced (CCES, 2016). Canadian sport organizations are strongly encouraged to implement policy recommendations by the CCES (2016) and include aspects in the policy template (CCES, 2018), acknowledging some democratic freedom for each organization to design their own sport policies based on their own stance. However, this

freedom is still subject to federal and provincial jurisdictions where the sport organization operates. In BC, where the study takes place, gender identity and gender expression are recognized by *Canadian Human Rights Act* (2017) and the *BC Human Rights Code* (2021) as prohibited grounds for discrimination. As a result, many recreational sport organizations in BC have adapted their policies to the CCES's recommendations (2016; 2018) , including Field Hockey BC, Vancouver Ultimate League, and BC Wheelchair Sport Association. In agreement with policy guidance by the CCES (2016), such organizations rule that transgender people can participate in recreational sport in the gender they identify with without having to make any changes in their body. On the other hand, there are BC sport organizations that still subscribe to the gender binary and embrace transgender inclusion policies where medical interventions are considered mandatory (e.g. Volleyball BC, BC Amateur Softball Association). Also, restrictions with sex-based participation are applied in most recreational sport organizations in BC, with co-ed teams being offered in some of the leagues (e.g. Urban Rec, Victoria Sport and Social Club). However, certain amounts of men and women on the team are still strictly required in those co-ed teams, thus forcing participants to identify within the traditional sex/gender binary. Therefore, current recreational sport policies across organizations in BC are inclusive of transgender people to some extent, at the expense of excluding non-binary people.

In summary, the influence of the IOC's transgender inclusion policies to those of other sport organizations is indisputably big. Canada has always been opposed to requirements imposed by those policies on transgender sport participants. In collaboration with other Canadian sport organizations, multiple advocacy efforts have been made by the CCES towards greater inclusion of transgender people in sport. When played at recreational level, sport should be accessible to all individuals without asking them to make changes to their body. There are two main issues with the current state of recreational sport policies in

BC related to the participation of transgender people. First, an inconsistency in transgender inclusion policy implementation across recreational sport organizations in BC is identified. Second, as Leong and Bartlett (2017) wrap up, sport authorities are heavily "wedded to the idea of a sex binary" (p. 1817), hence continuing to challenge the sport participation of transgender people who do not identify within the binary or do not alter their body to fit in the binary. It is because of these two issues that there is a need to have an enhanced and intentional change in transgender-inclusive policies and practices in terms of the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport in BC, Canada.

2.3.2 Cultural theories of gender in sport

The field of sport and physical activity is believed by Herrick and Duncan (2018) and Lisahunter (2017) not to be an amicable place for any gender identity or gender expression that does not conform with gender normativity. Conveying a message of gender hierarchy, sexism, homophobia, and especially transphobia (Travers, 2009), sex segregation serves as a powerful agent to reinforce cisnormativity in sport. Oakleaf and Richmond (2017) explain that cisnormativity is the assumption that everyone's gender is matched with the gender assigned at birth based on biological sex, and both are immutable (Symons & Hemphill, 2007). In a social institution like sport, both reflecting and informing societal practice (Segrave, 2015), cisnormativity ensures that the presence of trans people is obscured (Bauer et al., 2009). As described by Coakley (2015) and Wellard (2016), sport is a site where the male-female demarcations are symbolized, demonstrating the socially expected behaviors from each of the sex/gender categories. For example, the American Super Bowl was described by Connell (2002) to have been one of the sporting events that exihibit clear gender corporeal demarcations, with 'large armoured men' and 'thin women in short skirts'. As added by Tagg (2008), behavioural demarcations become even clearer "when

watching [male] football players violently crash into each other and [female] cheerleaders dance provocatively" (p. 409). In the words of Semerjian and Cohen (2006), "the discourse surrounding trans athletes has remained unchanged, focused in such a way that the ideology of the rigid gender binary is reproduced, rather than challenged" (p. 30). Pieper (2015) criticizes elite sport authorities for repeatedly attempting to circumscribe womanhood and manhood, women and men. Indeed, as documented by Müller (2016) and Leong and Bartlett (2017), many transgender inclusion sport policies still seek to normalize the gender binary, forcing transgender sport participants to subsume themselves into existing binary gender categories of man or woman in order to play. That way, transgender people, those who identify outside of the gender binary or who are forced to participate in sport as the gender they do not identify with, compromise their self-identity or become invisible in sport (Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2012). In turn, the gender binary is fostered, thus, only men and women are visible.

Not only is sport cisnormative, but also heteronormative (heterosexuality as the norm). Sport activities that are not gender-appropriate are associated with homosexuality, thus, not tolerated. For example, boys are ridiculed for dropping the ball, or girls are ridiculed for playing football better than boys (Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2012). Given that sport is a masculine preserve (Cahn, 1993; Messner, 2005), the more successful men are in sport the less their sexuality becomes questioned, but the higher achievement women get in sport the more suspicious their sexuality becomes (Griffin, 1998). Therefore, men and women both learn how to appropriately perform their gender perceived to be linked with biological sex (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Sartore & Cunningham, 2008). Now that is another challenge for transgender folks, who do not perform the gender expected from society based on their assigned sex. Fear and shame are reported to emerge in broad sporting environments (Elling-Machartzki, 2017) among transgender people should their sex be questionable, or their

overall features raise assumptions of being transgender. Transgender women, for instance, having a masculine-sounding voice that does not match with their feminine appearance means they often experience stigma and feelings of unease in sport (Elling-Machartzki, 2017; Stewart et al., 2018). On the other hand, transgender participants in the study of Stewart et al. (2018) recalled how they were appraised and 'accepted' when being able to demonstrate a congruence between their vocal and physical traits. In attempts to overcome this barrier to recreation participation, one of the strategies chosen by some transgender individuals is "not to speak to anybody" because "a lot of times people don't pick up on it as long as [they] don't speak" (Oakleaf & Richmond, 2017, p. 113). Alternatively, reducing sport participation (Bockting et al., 2013) or disengaging from physical activity leisure spaces (Elling-Machartzki, 2017) are also indicated to have been common choices for a number of transgender people to avoid stigma of transphobia. As a result, transgender people, already marginalized by ignorance and prejudice in sport (Symons et al., 2010), become more marginalized and with their participation in sport constrained by the dualistic view of gender.

2.3.3 Gendered sport facilities

A recent meta-synthesis study by Pérez-Samaniego et al. (2019) shows that the majority of the transgender community face negative experiences with gendered sport facilities, especially locker rooms and changerooms. Across different sport settings, changing facilities and locker rooms have become one of the biggest constraints to transgender people's participation as they are perceived to be a powerful agent to police the gender binary (Halberstam, 1998; Atkinson & Kheler, 2010). For example, in broad physical activity and sporting contexts (Hargie et al., 2017; Herrick & Duncan, 2018; Cunningham et al., 2018) argue that sex-segregated bathrooms and locker rooms happen to be traumatic spaces and anxiety-inducing for transgender participants. Similarly, in school-based sport, Caudwell (2014) and Kulick et al. (2018) add that feelings of fear and alienation prevail in the absence

of sense of belonging when trans folks come to locker rooms or bathrooms. Likewise, Oakleaf and Richmond (2017) documented how some transgender people tend to avoid locker rooms or pools in public recreation facilities, which are regarded as dangerous and scary. This argument is evidenced in the early work of Whittle et al. (2007), where nearly 50% of transgender-identifying study participants chose not to frequent leisure centres for fear of not being allowed to utilize changing rooms or locker rooms that align with their gender identity. Also, an earlier study conducted by the Trans and Gender Variant Inclusion Working Group ([TGVIWG], 2014) shows that 42% of transgender respondents in Vancouver, Canada agree that the lack of adequate change room/washroom options poses as a substantial challenge for accessing public recreational facilities and programming. When being forced to use changing rooms or physical activity facilities that do not reflect their gender identity, transgender people often find it stressful (Úbeda-Colomer et al., 2020), embarrassing (Elling-Machartzki, 2017), and unbearable (Hargie et al., 2017). These feelings arise because of not only how they feel internally about their gender identity, but also because of concerns with others' feelings of discomfort. In addition to the fear of people staring in open areas and finding genital differences (Jones et al., 2017a), some transgender people are reported to be anxious considering "their bodies cannot 'measure up' to cisgender's bodies" (Elling-Machartzki, 2017, p. 258). An example is provided by Hargie et al. (2017), where one transgender man participant, who had yet to undergo medical transition, recalled his changing room experience: "I'm looking at guys and going, 'right, that's the body I want to have but I don't have it'. I just want to leave" (p. 230). Similar findings to those of other sport settings above are also found in existing studies about sport in recreational contexts (Semerjian & Cohen, 2006; Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2012), where transgender people face struggles in finding gendered sport facilities like locker rooms or changing rooms safe and inclusive. While a number of transgender people avoid gendered locker rooms or changing rooms for fear of

stigma (Semerjian & Cohen, 2006), some seek opportunities to subvert gendered boundaries within those gendered spaces. Lucas-Carr and Krane (2012) provide an example where one transgender man recalled his involvement in the "boys club" inside the women's locker room, consisting of "masculine identified lesbians or butch women and all the gender-queer or trans [people]" (p. 35).

Further, Jones et al. (2017a) critique the lack of privacy of these sporting facilities, that these spaces encourage bodily scrutiny, which in turn bolsters the "normative regulation of gender identity" (Pérez-Samaniego et al., 2019, p. 446) for transgender folks. Therefore, according to trans participants in the study of Hargie et al. (2017), gendered locker rooms or showers ought to have individual cubicles to safeguard participants' privacy. This is in alignment with what is recommended in the proposed action plan named *Building a Path to Parks and Recreation for All: Reducing Barriers for Trans & Gender Variant Community Members* by the TGVIWG (2014) to the Vancouver Park Board. More specifically, the TGVIWG (2014) recognizes the lack of, and need to have more, single-user washrooms, private change booths, and universal change rooms. In addition, it has also been stressed by the TGVIWG (2014) that multi-user washrooms need clearly posted indications that the *BC Human Rights Code*, which allows patrons to use the washroom and/or change room that aligns with their gender identity, is respected. From Semerjian's (2018) standpoint, because cisnormativity and heteronormativity are so firmly entrenched in these sport facilities, having gender-neutral bathrooms along with sex-segregated bathrooms is another possible way to address the issue.

2.3.4 Attitudes, transphobic language, misgendering and dead names

Transphobic and derogatory language is yet another impediment to the participation of transgender people in sport (Gill et al., 2010; Symons et al., 2010). Verbal harassment against transgender individuals ranges from blatant attacks like "faggot" (Wilchins, 2004),

"she-male" (Egale, n.d.) to very subtle discriminatory forms such as praising someone for not "looking trans" (Herrick & Duncan, 2018). Though sometimes unintentional, these subtle discriminatory forms are what Herrick and Duncan (2018) would call microaggressions, which can be detrimental to one's self-esteem and negatively impact sport participation (Pérez-Samaniego et al., 2019). Microaggressions are often difficult to detect or describe because of their subtle nature and nuances, hence, "the same scenario may be viewed as traumatic or inconsequential by different people" (Herrick & Duncan, 2018, p. 329). Microaggressions against transgender people are well documented across sport settings, such as lesbian softball league (Travers & Deri, 2011), public recreation facilities (Oakleaf & Richmond, 2017), broad physical activity contexts (Elling-Machartzki, 2017; Herrick & Duncan, 2018), educational institutions and other spaces of organized sports (Kulick et al., 2018). Within recreational sport settings, discriminatory behaviours experienced by transgender participants in the two studies of Semerjian and Cohen (2006) and Lucas-Carr and Krane (2012) may be categorized as microaggressions, although the term was not used in these studies.

Pronouns are probably one of the things that cisgender people generally do not have to worry about, but transgender people being called with inappropriate pronouns equals a refusal to acknowledge their gender identity (Egale, n.d.). In the words of Butler (1993), "the naming is at once the setting of a boundary, and also the repeated inculcation of a norm" (p. 8). As such, gender concepts are bound within the use of language, which is repeated over time and subsequently becomes the gender norm which society abides by. That is, associating "she" with female characteristics and a "he" with male characteristics. Having said that, within an extremely sexed and gendered institution like sport, it is evidently not uncommon for trans folks with body characteristics contradicting to how they identify internally to be misgendered or addressed with incorrect pronouns (Pérez-Samaniego et al., 2019).

Purposefully misgendering or refusing to use the correct pronoun that corresponds to a trans person's gender identity is considered transphobic bullying (Egale, n.d.). An example in a lesbian softball league was brought forward in the study of Travers and Deri (2011), where a transgender man was "sistered" by one of their fellow teammates. According to this transgender man, having been told "right on sister" (p. 496) was even worse than being called "she". Similarly, a white bisexual transgender man is reported in the work of Herrick and Duncan (2018) to be misgendered the whole time at the gym and thus often feeling already emotionally exhausted prior to heading there. Elling-Machartzki (2017) documented a similar experience of a transgender woman who, while starting hormones, felt like a freak for continuously being intentionally misgendered; her female identity was not accepted by her teammates in a recreational badminton group.

Recognition also lies in the use of signage and forms. Although the TGVIWG (2014) acknowledges the benefits of collecting demographic gender-related information for recreation centres, it is important to be cognizant of the risks associated with it. First of all, when gender options on forms require patrons to choose within the gender binary (man/woman) that does not reflect their gender identity, it is problematic for transgender people. The same goes with bathroom/change room signage, in which there are often only two choices that reflect normative sex categories of man and woman. Further, when transgender people do not "see themselves" in printed materials, they do not feel included or welcome in such strongly sexed/gendered spaces (TGVIWG, 2014). Secondly, the disclosure of gender-related information on forms might trigger significant safety concerns from patrons, thus should not be made compulsory but optional on all forms (TGVIWG, 2014).

These above instances should be regarded as significant barriers to sport participation for the transgender community, which explains why a number of scholars have called for

some reorganization around transgender inclusive policies in sporting environments (Symons et al., 2010; Travers & Deri, 2011; Semerjian, 2018; Pérez-Samaniego et al., 2019).

2.4 Literature gap and the current study

Transgender people are becoming more visible in the world of sport, thus increasing attention has been given to their lives and sporting experiences (Morris & van Raalte, 2016). Since sex segregation structure has been argued to be one of the biggest constraints to transgender people's participation in sport (Symons et al., 2010; Krane, 2014), the topic became one of interest to many scholars, both at professional and recreational level. Distinguishable from elite sport, recreational sport is played with the prime interest of leisure, fun, and enjoyment as opposed to elite sport where the goal of winning is predominant (Fortier et al., 1995). In theory, the above demarcation is true however, in practice, the line that differentiates these two types of sport is thin (World of Sports Science, 2020), "and it seems to be getting thinner all the time" (Dell'Antonia, 2013, para. 3). The impact of sex segregation policies on transgender people's participation in elite sport has been extensively studied (Reeser, 2005; Buzuvis, 2012; Pieper, 2015; Müller, 2016; Leong & Bartlett, 2017; Shin, 2017; Jones et al., 2017b). On the other hand, much attention was also paid to the experience of transgender people in sport-related physical activity contexts (Oakleaf & Richmond, 2017; Elling-Machartzki, 2017; Hargie et al., 2017; Cunningham et al., 2018; Pérez-Samaniego et al., 2019), physical education or sport of collegiate settings (Sykes, 2009; Caudwell, 2014; Devís-Devís et al., 2017; Kulick et al., 2018) Yet, to the researcher's knowledge, there are merely two studies (Semerjian & Cohen, 2006; Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2012) that explored the lived experiences of transgender people with recreational sex-segregated sports. The impetus of these two studies was driven by the dearth of research on transgender people in sex-segregated sport from participant's stories and experiences derived from individual multiple identities, as opposed to the majority of studies in the past looking at

this topic only from a physiological standpoint (Semerjian & Cohen, 2006; Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2012). The findings of these two studies, though focused on recreational sport settings, are considered geographically sparse and limited to different places in the United States. Further, the policy aspect of segregating recreational sports based on sex remains untouched in these two studies. On that note, given that the last study known of this kind was of Lucas-Carr and Krane (2012) while studies done on other sporting contexts are more contemporary, it can be considered necessary to examine transgender people's experience in recreational sex-segregated sport after eight years of sport policy evolution, especially in BC, Canada where the present study is conducted. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, there is an inconsistency in transgender inclusion policy implementation across recreational sport organizations in BC. Further, due to strict adherence to the gender binary and all the assumptions that come with it, current policies are unfairly excluding a large proportion of transgender people, including those who do not identify within the binary or do not alter their body to fit in the binary. Responding to the call of Jones et al. (2017a) to conduct research about transgender people's experience in sport-related physical activity for leisure, and in light of those limitations mentioned above, the present study aspires to: 1) determine how transgender adults' participation in recreational sports in BC, Canada is informed by their experiences with the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport; and 2) inform an enhanced and intentional change in transgender-inclusive policies and practices in terms of the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport in BC, Canada. The current study aims to bridge the mentioned gap in the literature and contribute to the body of knowledge centering around transgender people in sex-segregated sport, by elucidating transgender people's experiences with sex-segregated sport in recreational settings.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research design is crucial as it "provide[s] specific direction for procedures in a research study" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 11). This chapter is concerned with the methodological choice and its impact on the research process and outcomes. Discussions in the methodology chapter will mainly revolve around the adopted research paradigm along with its basic belief systems, research approach, data collection strategies used in the research, and a review of the data analysis plan. Additionally, ethical considerations to safeguard research participants' rights in all respects will also be presented by laying out the means to mitigate confidentiality issues and to ensure the anonymity of participants. Since a qualitative research approach will be used in this study, concerns about trustworthiness and reflexivity in research will also be addressed in this chapter.

3.2 Research paradigm

Research is a systematic process (Burns, 1997) that involves data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation in order to "understand, describe, predict or control an educational or psychological phenomenon or to empower individuals in such contexts" (Mertens, 2005, p. 2). Kuhn (1962) regards research paradigms as philosophical assumptions, orienting the researchers towards finding a suitable framework for the research (as cited in Klenke, 2016). For enhanced clarity, Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) add that the selection of a research paradigm would subsequently inform the research's intent, motivation, and expectations. It is, therefore, critically important that a research paradigm be introduced as the first step in to set the direction for the ensuing selections of methodology, methods, research design, or literature (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

3.2.1 Qualitative research approach

Qualitative research is "an emergent, inductive, interpretive and naturalistic approach to the study of people, cases, phenomena, social situations and processes in their natural settings in order to reveal in descriptive terms the meanings that people attach to their experiences of the world" (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 312). Previously, on the other hand, Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined qualitative research as any research whose findings are not obtained by statistical procedures or quantifiable means. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) state that qualitative researchers seek to understand the meaning behind people's experience, how people experience what they experience, and how people interpret their experience through their worlds. In other words, qualitative research will give the researcher the opportunity to understand how participants assign meaning to their experience and to the world around them (Yilmaz, 2013) by engaging in a close relationship with the participants. A qualitative approach was used in this study.

Indisputably, in order to effect change in policies and practices, one must be able to demonstrate the need for change. As such, it is important that sport policy makers understand how sex-segregated sport is experienced by sport participants, among which are transgender recreational sport participants. Thus, by elucidating findings about the experience of transgender adults in recreational sex-segregated sport, this study's ultimate goal is to inform a change in transgender-inclusive policies and practices related to the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sports organizations in BC, Canada. Denzin (2009) attests that findings from qualitative research are normally less preferred to statistical evidence. However, as Barabasch (2018) suggests, ideas to improve circumstance through policy change or the change itself can be elicited from qualitative inquiry. As a result, a qualitative research approach is considered an adequate approach in this present study.

3.2.2 Transformative paradigm and its belief systems

There are, according to Lincoln and Guba (2013), four fundamental research belief systems that inform research paradigms: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. Mertens et al. (2008) articulate that ontology pertains to the nature of reality, while epistemology is concerned with not only the nature of knowledge but also the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Meanwhile, Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) refer to methodology as "the overall approach to research linked to the paradigm or theoretical framework" (p. 6), and axiology relates to what is considered ethical (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). In order to fully understand the paradigm through which this present study was undertaken, there is a need to address each of the four philosophical belief systems described above.

3.2.2.1 Transformative paradigm.

Research often is set within several major paradigms, among which constructivist is the paradigm where qualitative approach is originally primarily favoured (Mertens, 2020). Interestingly, the need of placing the research in social justice inquiries has continuously been stressed by qualitative researchers using the constructivist paradigm (Mertens, 2020). That said, given the potential to further social justice from constructivist research (Denzin, 2003; Lincoln, 2009), ethical principles of the constructivist paradigm are inclined to aligning with those of the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2020). More specifically, according to Mertens (2020), this tendency occurred when the voice of those who were previously oppressed and silenced entered the discourse of qualitative research. However, Creswell and Creswell (2003) note a lack of success from the constructivist paradigm in terms of adequately addressing issues revolving around social justice and marginalized people. As such, the dissatisfaction with other existing and dominant paradigms, which have mainly

employed only theories "developed from the white, able-bodied male perspective and ... based on the study of male subjects" (Mertens, 2005, p. 17), has led to the emergence of the transformative paradigm during the 1980s and 1990s. Both the constructivist and transformative paradigms recognize that realities are socially constructed (Mertens, 2020), or in other words, subjectively interpreted by the mind(s). Yet, researchers "are no longer called to just *interpret* the world … but to *change* the world and to change it in ways that resist injustice while celebrating freedom and full, inclusive, participatory democracy" (Denzin, 2018, p. 86-87, emphasis original). Hence, as put forward in both early and recent work by Mertens (1999; 2020), transformative researchers are united in seeking to redress social oppressions, not only by analyzing asymmetric power relationships and linking the research results to greater questions about social justice, but also by positioning themselves abreast with the less powerful. According to Mertens (2010), pressing social justice issues, such as gender inequity, could be challenged by involving a policy-related change (as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018) in research with the transformative paradigm. That said, this study is situated within the overarching constructivist paradigm due to its nature of reality construction, but leans more towards the transformative paradigm given that the study's ultimate purpose is to mediate suggestions for policies and practices between transgender participants and recreational sport policy-makers.

Jackson et al. (2018) believe that the transformative paradigm allows research to access the voice of those who have traditionally been marginalized. This allows for transgender recreational sport participants to express how they want to be included in recreational sport, as opposed to those who are already included in recreational sport making the decisions on how to include those they assess are not included (Frisby & Ponic, 2013). Indeed, in the words of Mertens and Ginsberg (2008), the transformative paradigm

> embraces the critical examination of versions of perceived reality in terms of the cultural and societal parameters that have traditionally permitted those in positions imbued with formal authority and power to define reality for those who do not share this privileged position (p. 486).

There is a tacit assumption in sport that those in positions of power know how to include others (Frisby & Ponic, 2013). In fact, this is the way dominant ideologies work, not only within sport, but also in society. According to Wolff (2017), there are "unarticulated assumptions about [power] hierarchy" (p. 178) where society expects people who are not in positions of power to understand 'their place', and that ideas and claims coming from 'their place' are often thought to be "worth less, or are improper, or can be ignored" (p. 178). Therefore, Mitchell and Shillington (2005) caution against a policy making process lacking the voices of those who are most directly affected by the policy, hence nourishing social exclusion. As such, the use of the transformative paradigm in this study aims to interrogate power differences in the sport system, establishing a platform for transgender people to influence change in policies and practices, by bringing forward their own version of reality through their experiences. Most importantly, this research, when powered by the transformative paradigm, holds some promise to facilitate a two-way dialogue between sport policy makers and transgender recreational sport participants so that new policies and strategies for meaningful inclusion can be identified. To do that, the researcher will consult and invite the study's participants to co-create an executive summary report of the study's findings and the applied considerations. The executive summary will be shared with recreational sport organizations and 2SLGBTQ+ organizations across BC where study participants were recruited from (see Appendix A).

3.2.2.2 Ontology.

In the transformative paradigm, the ontological belief system directs the researcher to ask questions such as: “How is reality defined? By whom? Whose reality is given privilege?” (Mertens, 2007a, p. 87). The transformative paradigm recognizes multiple versions of reality (Mertens, 2020). Nonetheless, the transformative paradigm underlines that by accepting multiple versions of the truth, factors that privilege one version over another are being ignored and causing damage to those less privileged (Mertens, 2020). Thus, transformative researchers are to be concerned with the presence of realities in the research (Mertens, 2005). Besides, Mertens (2007a) cautions that there are people who would most likely experience exclusion in society because greater powers are occupied by members of certain privileged dominant groups (e.g. White, cisgender, etc.). As such, to determine the realities of transgender inclusivity in sex-segregated recreational sports, the researcher is interested in bringing forward the ‘unexamined version of reality’ from transgender recreational sport participants’ narratives.

3.2.2.3 Epistemology.

A transformative epistemological stance questions the neutrality of the relationship between the researcher and the researched participants, from whom the knowledge is sought. One of the typical questions Mertens (2007a) points out was “Should I be close to the participants so I can really understand their experiences, or should I maintain distance between myself and the participants so I can be neutral?” (p. 88). In an attempt to answer the above question, Mertens et al. (2008) emphasize the need to be cognizant of establishing a trusting and interactive relationship between the researcher and the participants. Furthermore, Merten’s works (2007a; 2008) in this area also flag the importance of acknowledging the cultural diversity within the community, where cultural biases and power inequities must be

taken into account. As a result, Mertens et al. (2008) argue that, from a transformative epistemological standpoint, it would be impossible for the researcher to remain neutral with the participants, which is in alignment with the nature of qualitative research, making the transformative paradigm different from some of the other paradigms. As a researcher, being cognizant of this role is imperative as to realize that research findings are a product of the researcher's values and the participants' ways of understanding the world. That being the case, in order to build an epistemologically inclusive mode for inquiry, diverse and contrasting perspectives must be sought out for the most possible accurate representation of everyone from the researcher's positionality in participants' worlds, not only the ones that align with the researcher's experience (Mertens et al., 2008).

However, Mertens and Ginsberg (2008) ask how the researcher can involve participants in a respectful and supportive way, and how trust can be built in this relationship. For example, how can a non-transgender researcher gain trust and respect along with support from the members of the transgender community who are identified as beneficiaries of the research? Prior to conducting the study, I voluntarily served on the Board of Directors of the Nanaimo Pride Society to learn how the organization approaches different constituents of the 2SLGBTQ+ community in general, and the transgender community in particular. Further, during the research process, I made it respectfully clear to research participants that despite the 'book learning' I have done about transgender people in sport, I was here to learn more about their experiences so as to work towards greater inclusivity of the transgender community in sport as well as in society. Moreover, Mertens et al. (2008) recommend that the researcher delve into the participants' worlds, and acknowledge the uniqueness of their experiences while striving to continually identify and be critical of any assumptions that may arise from the researcher's point of view during the process. Supporting this

recommendation, Charmaz (2004) concludes that it is the researcher's task "to learn the logic of the experience [they] study, not to impose [their] logic on it" (p. 982).

3.2.2.4 Methodology.

After understanding how realities are shaped from the ontological standpoint and learning about the nature of knowledge created from the epistemological standpoint in the transformative paradigm, it is, then, logical to discuss how one can study knowledge of realities. The methodological belief system within the transformative paradigm offers researchers a guidance on the selection of research design and implementation in order to obtain knowledge of realities (Mertens et al., 2008). In other words, as described by Walter (2006), the term methodology implies a frame of reference in the research whereby theoretical frameworks and philosophical assumptions inform how the research should be conducted.

There is a confusion that often arises when it comes to methodology and methods, and so it is beneficial to distinguish these two for the sake of clarity. According to Kaplan (1964), methodology is "the study — the description, the explanation, and the justification of methods, and not the methods themselves" (p. 18). On the other hand, methods are the tools used to help the researcher answer the questions that the study seeks to answer (Smith & Heshusius, 1986).

Methodologically, it is advised that the researcher be considerate in terms of selecting suitable methods for data collection and data analysis (Mertens & Ginsberg, 2008). That said, given the scope of this study, a qualitative research approach will be utilized as to "allow for the emergence of the complexity of human experience, couched in issues of differential access to power" (Mertens & Ginsberg, 2008, p. 488), which is crucial to address social justice issues.

3.2.2.5 Axiology.

Axiology provides a foundation for the conceptualization of other belief systems in the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2007a). From the axiological standpoint, transformative researchers are guided towards the sphere of human rights and social justice right from the very beginning of the research process (Mertens, 2020). Axiological assumptions reflect the need to answer questions such as: What is the nature of ethical behaviors? How does one define ethical theory and its application in practice? To facilitate the understanding of axiology while considering the ethical value of people involved in the research, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) render the above questions to: "What values will you live by or be guided by as you conduct your research? What ought to be done to respect all participants' rights? What are the moral issues and characteristics that need to be considered?" (p. 28).

With this present study, what is considered as an ethical behaviour when learning about the experiences of transgender adults in recreational sex-segregated sports? Starting from the primal understanding that transgender people are among some of the most marginalized groups in society (Lombardi et al., 2002; Wirtz et al., 2020), it is paramount that the research not further marginalize this community. In order to achieve that goal, the researcher ought to consider possible consequences, risks, and benefits of the researcher's methodological choices (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Questions such as "How to best represent the community's interest in research?" or "How do I ethically listen to the experiences of transgender recreational sport participants?" or "How do I ethically analyze the data I collect?" should be constantly asked during the research process. Furthermore, practices to ensure the transparency of data interpretation, along with steps taken to protect transgender participants' rights and data privacy should be laid out in a clear manner with consent obtained (see sections 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 below).

3.3 Methods

Methods are described as the tools used to help the researcher answer the questions that the study asks (Smith & Heshusius, 1986). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), there are multiple forms of methods to collect data that qualitative researchers can rely on. Examples include interviews, observations, document analyses, or audiovisual information. The methods chosen for this qualitative approach were textual data and semi-structured interviews. This section will present what and how these two chosen data collection methods were taken place, along with participant recruitment strategies.

3.3.1 Textual data analysis

Textual data analysis is a systematic procedure that involves reviewing and evaluating documents, including the examination and interpretation of the data (Bowen, 2009). According to Merriam (1988), "documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem" (p. 118). Further, Bowen (2009) asserts that textual data analysis can be a complementary method to the interviews, from which the data collected can be contextualized with textual data that can also exist in a variety of forms. The analysis of textual data was undertaken as sensitizing concepts (Bowen, 2019). As Bowen (2019) describes, sensitizing concepts "alert researchers to some important aspects of a particular research situation as they undertake fieldwork" (p. 2) and served as the first stage of data collection to gain insights about the research topic that was going to be addressed in interviews with the researched participants during the second data collection stage. These documents provided data about transgender people and their gender identity development journey along with challenges or accomplishments they have had during this journey. Not only did this initial data analysis help the researcher design a more refined interview protocol for the second data collection phase, but also it was foundational to the understanding of the narratives around the

examination of transgender participants' experiences within recreational sport. Together with the literature review, the data collected from these documents aimed to strengthen the findings emerged from the semi-structured interviews. This is in agreement with what sociologist Charmaz (2003) had put forward, that sensitizing concepts "provide starting points for building analysis, not ending points for evading it" (p. 259).

3.3.1.1 Textual data document selections.

The present study draws upon three film documentaries and two written biographies that center around transgender people's experiences in sex-segregated sports. The list of three documentaries and two biographies used for the present study is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Documents for textual data collection

No.	Document title	Document type	Author	Year issued
1	In The Turn	Documentary film	Erica Tremblay	2014
2	Transgender Journey: The Struggle for Rights and Respect	Documentary film	CPAC	2016
3	My name is Jay, I transitioned and I'm a disabled young athlete	Biography (book chapter)	Jay Anonymous	2017
4	Becoming me: Transitioning, training and surgery	Biography (book chapter)	McCormack & Hanold	2017
5	Man Made	Documentary film	T Cooper	2018

The selection of these documents was made after multiple searches on the Google search engine. I used key words like "transgender people in sport documentary", "trangender and sport biography", "transgender sport film", or "transgender sport story" to find

biographies/documentaries that are related to transgender people and sport in general. Afterwards, I randomly picked five documents from the search results, two of which I did not have access to ("The story of my life" book by Caitlyn Jenner, and "Changing the game" documentary by Michael Barnett). Therefore, I had to continue my search and ended up with the five documents listed in Table 1.

First, the documentary "In The Turn" (Tremblay, 2014) was produced by a non-transgender director who self-identifies within the 2SLGBTQ+ community. The documentary was made to challenge the notion that queerness is at odds with sport from the perspective of a 10-year-old transgender girl named Crystal, specifically in the context of roller derby collectives like Vagine Regime. Viewers have a chance to witness, in this documentary, how Crystal went from being excluded in sport to being able to find acceptance in roller derby with Vagine Regime. Second, the documentary "Man Made" (Cooper, 2018) offers a compilation of four different stories from four transgender athletes in the sport of body building. Produced by a transgender director, "Man Made" brings forward the struggles four transgender bodybuilders face in daily lives with their gender identity, and praise Trans Fit Con being an all-transgender body building competition as a transgender-inclusive sporting space. The next two biographies titled "My name is Jay, I transitioned and I'm a disabled young athlete" and "Becoming me: Transitioning, training and surgery" are two stories written by two transmasculine athletes in the book "Transgender Athletes in Competitive Sport" (Anonymous, 2017; McCormack & Hanold, 2017). Narratives centering around these two athletes' gender identity journey and how that manifests in their sport participation are the focus of the biographies. In addition, the two biographies showcase strategies or steps taken by two athletes to navigate throughout their sporting experiences being transgender. Lastly, the documentary named "Transgender Journey: The Struggle for Rights and Respect", produced by Canada's Cable Public Affairs Channel ([CPAC], 2016), offers a voice to

transgender people from different backgrounds to tell their stories. More specifically, a general understanding of who transgender people are, why they make decisions (not) to transition, and challenges they face (including sport) is facilitated by the documentary. Moreover, several transgender people's family members and loved ones in the documentary are also able to share their view and their journey of learning to embrace the changes in their lives when having someone in the family identifying as transgender.

Overall, the five documents selected for textual data analysis were randomly chosen from a pool of search results for documentaries/biographies that looked at transgender people and sport. The struggle that transgender people face in society in general, and in sport in particular, was widely acknowledged across all five documents. Such a platform allows transgender people to voice their concerns, tell their own stories, and most importantly, enhance people's understanding of transgender people's experiences with social institutions like sport. Since it was found that those documents were made towards increasing the inclusion of transgender people in sport, they appropriately fit the purpose of conducting a textual data analysis in this study.

3.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

As a data collection method, interviews are a staple of qualitative research (Oltmann, 2016). Indeed, Tierney (2000) suggested to conduct interviews with participants, allowing the narratives to be shared in their own ways. In this study, I used semi-structured interviews, which consisted of "a blend of closed- and open-ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up why or how questions" (Adams, 2015, p. 493). Mirroring Adams's note (2015), one of the strengths of semi-structured interviews is the space for probing open-ended questions to each individual, paving the way for the unique independent thoughts on a particular event to be shared.

3.3.2.1 Semi-structured interview setting.

Given the critical situation of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and public health directives issued by governments for indeterminate durations in the year of 2020, in-person interviews were not possible. The directives aimed to protect people's health and maintain physical distancing. Therefore, video call interviews were conducted using an online platform called Zoom. Video call interviews are most like in-person interviews (Krouwel et al., 2019).

Each interview was assigned with a one-time only unique Zoom meeting ID. The meeting ID was communicated with each participant via email two days prior to the interview. Compared to in-person interviews, video call interviews were much more cost-efficient and less time consuming as both the interviewer and interviewees did not have to travel (Krouwel et al., 2019). In addition, participants were encouraged to choose a place in their home where they would be as undisturbed as possible, and where they felt comfortable to do the interview. Participants also had the option to do an audio interview via Zoom instead of a video interview, should participants be uncomfortable with the video aspects of a Zoom session, or should they not have the required bandwidth or if they experienced other technical issues with video. In either case, participants were required to have access to an electronic device (e.g. computer, tablet, laptop, etc.) that was connected to the Internet, equipped with a microphone and, if they agreed to the video aspects of an interview, a front camera. Participants who did not have access to this kind of device were unfortunately excluded from the interview.

3.3.2.2 Participant selection.

The study involved individuals who were 19 years of age or older, having a gender identity or sex different from their gender/sex 'assigned at birth', and have been currently engaged in recreational sports, or played in recreational sports in the past, regardless of

frequency level. All recruited participants were able to speak English, but did not necessarily have to be English native language speakers. The recruited participants had to currently live in BC, and have participated in recreational sport in BC. The number of recruited participants in the study was eleven. Details about each participant are offered below in Table 2.

Table 2

Interview participant profiles

No.	Name used in the thesis	Self-identifies as	Recreational sport(s) played
1	Nicola	Transgender woman	Soccer
2	Terra	Transgender woman	Soccer
3	Darrien	Transgender woman	Ice hockey
4	M.	Transgender woman	Soccer
5	L.C.	Transgender woman	Hockey
6	Tiffany	Transgender woman	Basketball
7	Emily	Transgender woman	Soccer
8	Marisa	Transgender woman	Ice hockey
9	Kira	Transgender woman	Volleyball
10	Remy	Transgender man	None (looking to play)
11	J.T.	Transgender man	Soccer, volleyball

3.3.2.3 Participant recruitment.

Transgender people are often cautious about non-members of the transgender community because they face multiple forms of discrimination in society (Namaste, 2000). In addition, according to the American Psychological Association (2015), the transgender community tends to be skeptical and doubtful in terms of participating in research, as they lack conviction that research is being done in their best interest. Meanwhile, Bernard (2002) endorses the use of purposive sampling as an informant selection tool to solicit one or a few individuals in the community of interest to act as guides to a culture. These key informants will then aid the researchers to identify potential research participants among their acquaintances in the community, which reflects the snowball sampling procedure (Sharma, 2017). In their work, Sharma (2017) adds that snowball sampling is useful when it comes to

facilitating the researcher's access to 'hidden populations'. Given the above trust-related circumstances and the aforementioned rationale for the use of these two sampling methods, this study used purposive and snowball sampling strategies to recruit interview participants. The following describes the detailed steps that were taken in the participant recruitment plan:

a) **Purposive strategy**: Through my volunteer work as a member on the Board of Directors of the Nanaimo Pride Society (NPS), I personally had connections with several people who are active in the transgender community on Vancouver Island and across British Columbia. As the first step, I contacted those people within my network to solicit interest in participating in the study. I made a written declaration (Appendix B) to NPS's Board of Directors explaining the intention of my research in terms of recruiting participants in our shared community. I made it clear to those I contacted that I was not conducting the research on behalf of NPS or any other organization, and that the research was related to the pursuit of my independent study for my Master's degree in Sustainable Leisure Management program at Vancouver Island University (VIU). In addition, I also sent emails containing a participant recruitment poster (Appendix C) that had basic information about the research to organizations and groups that are related to the 2SLGBTQ+ community and sport. A list of sample organizations is provided in Appendix A. Interested participants were able to reach out to me directly through email and phone number mentioned in the poster. Once confirmed, I set up a Zoom meeting interview at the time that was convenient for the interviewee and the interviewer.

b) **Snowball strategy**: At the same time, I asked people within my own personal network (see a) above and Appendix B) for their assistance in recruiting potential interviewees. I sent them the participant recruitment poster (Appendix C) so that they could help forward this document to potential participants that they were aware of within their own network. In this poster, interested participants could find my email address as well as

phone number, and reach out should they wish to participate in the study. After that, I sent the Consent Form (Appendix D), plus a list of Community Counselling Options (Appendix E) to interested participants. Once confirmed, I set up a Zoom meeting interview at a time that was convenient to the interviewee and the interviewer.

3.3.2.4 Semi-structured interview procedure.

Interviews lasted from 45 to 60 minutes in duration to "minimize fatigue for both interviewer and respondent" (Adams, 2015, p. 493). As suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018), all interviews adhered to the use of an interview protocol (Appendix F) which basically had three main thematic areas of enquiry: 1) social intersectional identities, 2) recreational sport participation, and 3) experiences in recreational sport as they are associated with transgender identity. Details and purposes of these three thematic areas of enquiry can be found below in Table 2. Creswell and Creswell (2018) propose that the interview protocol be used consistently throughout all interviews. Yet, Adams (2015) suggests that the researcher consider the interview protocol a work in progress, hence the need to reassess the interview protocol after each interview, including the sequence of questions, the way the questions are posed, or newly emerged ideas from previous interviews. That said, after each interview, I reviewed the interview protocol to refine the way the interview questions should have been framed. From the epistemological and axiological standpoint within the transformative paradigm, it is necessary that the researcher and the research participants establish respectful and trusting interactions where it is understood that the research is being done in participants' best interest without prying into participants' lives. One of the examples is instead of asking participants specific questions about ethnicity, nationality background, or religion, I changed to asking, "Would you like to start by sharing a little bit about yourself?". This way of asking allowed the participants to have the capacity to be comfortable sharing

whatever that they decided to share. The following Table 2 describes the thematic areas of the interview:

Table 3

Thematic areas of the interview

Thematic areas	**Type of questions**	**Purpose and research question(s) to be answered**
Social intersectional identities	● What is your ethnic and nationality background? ● Do you have a religion? ● How do you identify yourself in terms of gender? ● Since when did you come to realize your gender identity?	● How do transgender adults' social identities inform their experiences in recreational sex-segregated sports?
Recreational sport participation	● Is there a sport you would have liked to play in and don't because of issues related to your gender? ● Can you tell me the reasons you chose to participate in those recreational sports? ● Did/ Do you have to choose to be in a men's team or a women's team in order to play?	● What sex-segregated recreational sports do transgender adults participate in, and why?
Experiences in recreational sport as they are associated with transgender identity	● How is your relationship with your teammates/coaches? ● Can you tell me a story about any positive experiences you have encountered in those sports as a transgender person? ● Can you tell me a story about any challenges you have encountered in those sports as a transgender person? ● If you could change a policy about transgender people and their participation in recreational sports organizations, what would be your suggestion?	● How do transgender adults' social identities inform their experiences in recreational sex-segregated sports? ● What characteristics of recreational sex-segregated sports influence the way in which transgender participants experience it? ● The last question allows participants to make recommendations in policies and practices

During the interviews, probing questions were always used, as part of the semi-structured interviews' characteristics, when I felt more information was needed, or an explanation was required. Guest et al. (2012) define probing questions as those designed to allow "the researcher to clarify expressions or meaning and further permits participants to tell their story" (p. 13). These probing questions were of help when the interviewee had little to say. However, as recommended by Leech (2002) and Amis (2005), I tried to avoid leading questions or negatively worded questions during the interviews. Leech (2002) further stresses the importance of avoiding such types of questions, even when prompting probing questions, in attempts not to put "words in [participants] mouths" (p. 668). That way, it allowes for the participants' narratives to be authentically explored and not framed in any of the researcher's predetermined expectations or assumptions.

With participants' consent and based on their preference, all interviews were video recorded for transcription purposes. Data from the interviews were transcribed using the dictation function in Microsoft Word. Each transcribed interview was edited for clarity and readability by the researcher and was sent to the participant via email two days after the interview was completed. Handwritten notes were taken during each interview. Mack et al. (2005) recommend using handwritten notes to capture non-verbal information, which in turn can aid the researcher in terms of recalling important interview contextual information for data analysis process (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Another good use of handwritten notes during the interview is reported by Taylor (2017), which is to store the researcher's new ideas that emerge or possible thought reactions to the participant's answers. These newly emergent ideas or thought reactions were not part of the interview transcripts, but proved useful to data interpretation or served as sources to touch base on in other interviews that follow. Indeed, while participants were speaking, I took notes of follow-up questions I wanted to ask at a

later time so I did not forget, instead of interrupting the participants. These questions were, at times, used in different interviews with different participants.

3.4 Data analysis

Within qualitative research, data analysis is considered as the most complex process (Thorne, 2000), and should therefore be systematically handled as to deliver a meaningful interpretation to others (Malterud, 2001). Particularly in this study, the data interpretation should be made useful and accessible to sport policy makers in order to effect change. That said, textual data was first collected and analyzed and then another set of data was collected through semi-structured interviews. It is acknowledged that the textual data analysis helped inform and shape the interview questions as the researcher reaped a certain amount of insightful information about the studied topic prior to coming to the interviews. Both data analysis stages adhered to the data analysis approach and theoretical frameworks mentioned in the following sections.

3.4.1 Thematic narrative analysis approach

"Everyone has a book inside of them - but it doesn't do any good until you pry it out"

Jodi Picoult

Thematic analysis is an approach to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns of meaning within qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Such patterns of meaning are often referred to as themes and are constituted of codes, which capture interesting features of data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). According to Braun and Clarke (2006) and King (2004), the use of thematic analysis is appropriate when it comes to examining different participants' lived experiences and perspectives, given its ability to produce unanticipated insights and highlight similarities along with differences. Therefore, a thematic narrative analysis was utilized in this study for textual data and data collected from semi-structured interviews.

Feldman et al. (2004) suggest that narrative data can be extracted from many different sources, especially from documents and interviews. Praising the power of narratives, or storytelling, early work by Novak (1975) articulated that "story... is an ancient and altogether human method. The human being alone among the creatures of the earth is a storytelling animal: sees the present rising out of a past, heading into a future; perceives reality in narrative form" (p. 258). Indeed, the researcher relied on participants' narratives to make sense of their behaviours and attitudes, from the participants' lens (Feldman et al., 2004; Allan & Lewis, 2009). More than that, Barabasch (2018) acknowledges the ability of the narrative inquiry to help researchers grasp some sense of comprehension around the historically socially structured worlds that shape participants' experience. That said, the researcher when analyzing narratives often asked why the stories were told that way, what the narrators meant, or what was included and excluded from the narrators' stories (Feldman et al., 2004). More specifically, because of its bare, continual, and fluid nature, the narrative approach was able to afford the complexity and multi-faceted characteristics of transgender individuals' life experiences. Reflecting on the above, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that "people live stories, and in them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones... Stories ...educate the self and others, including the young and those, such as researchers, who are new to their communities" (p. xxvi).

In an attempt to capture reoccurring themes and insights found in the stories told by transgender people, both from textual data and interview data, I analyzed the data with the aid of NVivo software. The use of NVivo software was helpful given its ability to flexibly allocate data and organize codes as opposed to the copy-and-paste burden in manual data analysis (Zamawe, 2015). In this study, both inductive and deductive approaches were used in data analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) define an inductive approach as a data analysis process driven by the data itself without being framed in a pre-existing framework/theory,

whereas a deductive approach refers to a data analysis process driven by a pre-existing framework/theory or by the researcher's analytical preconceptions. Although most qualitative research tend to subcribe to an inductive approach (Hyde, 2000), Patton (1991) endorses the use of both approaches in qualitative research. Patton (1991) adds that at first, the researcher "may be open to whatever emerges from the data, a discovery or inductive approach…then begin to focus on verifying and elucidating what appears to be emerging, a more deductive approach to data collection and analysis" (p. 194). In the current study, a preliminary thematic narrative analysis was conducted using an inductive approach at first to get a sense of what the data was telling. Then, a comprehensive thematic narrative analysis was performed using stigma theory (see 3.4.2.2 below) to deductively frame one of the themes emerged. The rest of the themes were built inductively directly from the data itself. Braun and Clarke (2006) introduce a procedure for thematic analysis in which there are six steps:

Step 1: Prepare and familiarize with the data for analysis. This includes gathering notes taken from textual data, transcribing interviews, finalizing transcripts after participants' feedback, labelling and categorizing all data based on the information sources.

Step 2: Start coding all of the data. Coding is referred to as the assignment of a representing term, used by participants in most cases, to bracketed chunks of text.

Step 3: Search for themes. This process refers to collating codes into potential themes. A number of themes should emerge during the coding process. With a deductive approach, pre-existing theme(s) should be identified here.

Step 4: Review themes. Check if components of each theme correspond to theme's overall meaning. Create a map of themes if possible.

Step 5: Define and name themes. Refine the themes, understand theme's meaning, generating a definition and name for each theme.

Step 6: Produce a report. Select compelling participants' quotes that best represent the themes, final review of each theme and start writing an analysis report.

The above six-step procedure was applied in both stages of data analysis since both textual data and semi-structured interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. That way, a consistency in the data analysis process of both stages was ensured, allowing for the comparison, reflection, and classification to happen across data collected.

3.4.2 Theoretical frameworks

Theoretical frameworks are embedded in research to help generate more accessible, more useful, and more meaningful research findings by showcasing coherent structures in the presentation of these research findings (Polit & Beck, 2004). Indeed, LoBiondo-Wood (2010) affirms that the presence of suitable theoretical frameworks in research brings confidence to the researcher in terms of delivering the research findings, thus strengthening the study. Presented in the sections that follow, the theoretical frameworks used in this study consist of Social justice theory, Stigma theory, and Gender theory.

3.4.2.1 Social justice theory.

As previously mentioned, the present study is located in the transformative paradigm and aims to bring forward the experiences of transgender adults in sex-segregated recreational sports. One of the ethical theories identified by Simons (2006) to clarify the transformative axiological standpoint is social justice theory. In their early work, Allison (2000) had pointed out the need to challenge and change various forms of power, ideology, and domination in leisure experiences lived by people. Moreover, Allison (2000) further emphasized the imperative of the justice paradigm in leisure research to understand what formulated these differences, and subsequently "the institutional conditions, properties, and processes that foster exclusion" (p. 5). In fact, a similar argument was later presented by

Henderson (2014), who comments that should social justice be the goal in leisure research, simply describing oppression is not sufficient. Leisure scholars like Parry et al. (2013) add that both the researched participants and the researcher are co-depicting the emancipatory vision of the world they would want to live in. With social justice theory, research participants are not regarded as distant objects, but rather they are

> neighbors, lovers, friends, family members and/or allies… Understanding this lived experience is essential because the social justice researcher becomes an additional spokesperson or advocate for causes and issues, helps people articulate enduring and emergent problems, or brings together key stakeholders for community discussions/actions (Parry et al., 2013, p. 83).

With regard to the present study, it is important to look at how power and privilege are distributed in a sporting world highly dominated by cisnormativity. If engaging in leisure activities like recreational sport is a source of oppression for transgender people, then there is a potential for leisure to become a venue to resist oppression (Theriault, 2019), challenge negative stereotypes and societal norms (Lewis et al., 2019), and further social justice for this population (Yuen and Fortune, 2019). Rather than acting as a definitive concept or theory, social justice in leisure research serves as a guide, directing attention to the "assessment of its [research] impact, outcomes, and capacity to move communities or groups of people in the direction of a more socially just set of relations" (Stewart, 2014, p. 327). This study, powered by the transformative paradigm and guided by a social justice agenda, seeks to dismantle the normative gender hierarchy, as well as the gender binary and the assumptions that come with it. Questions in relation to power distribution, social inclusion should be constantly asked. Are transgender recreational sport participants given the capacity to voice their opinion and to freely express their true selves? Do transgender people receive equitable opportunities in sport? Who gets to decide the needs of transgender people? Who gets to determine when and

how to effect change? What is most likely the reason that the experience of transgender people happened the way it happened?

3.4.2.2 Stigma theory.

In one of their early studies, Goffman (1963) believes that people suffer from stigma if society rules that they possess identities that reflect "an undesired differentness" (p. 5) and "an attribute that is deeply discrediting" (p. 3). Echoing the statement, Paetzold et al. (2008) later define stigma as "an attribute that produces a social identity that is devalued or derogated by persons within a particular culture at a particular point in time" (p. 186). While stigma is explained to be contextual and socially constructed (Goffman, 1963), Herek's work (2007, 2009) suggests a theory of stigma that offers multi-level perspective on the process of stigmatization, facilitating a more holistic approach to understanding this phenomenon. That said, according to the studies of Herek (2007, 2009), stigma can be observed and understood at structural level and individual level. Although Herek's stigma theory (2007, 2009) focuses on stigma aimed towards LGB individuals, it can be applied to this current study to highlight multi-level stigma against transgender people in recreational sport.

Structural stigma represents the law, regulations, policies, facilities, institutions, or any entity that operates at societal or institutional level. Stigma at this level is legitimated and perpertuated by ideological systems that work to subjugate identities of the target group (Herek, 2007; 2009). In the case of transgender people and sport, for example, structural stigma is manifested through sport policies and guidelines that require transgender women to make medical changes to their body in order to be considered eligible to compete in the women's category (e.g. International Olympic Committee, 2015). Another example is high school students in many states of the United States are only allowed to play on teams that match their gender 'assigned at birth' (Cunningham et al., 2018).

Individual stigma has three key manifestations: enacted stigma, felt stigma, and internalized stigma (Herek, 2007; 2009). Enacted stigma takes on all forms of discrimination, harassment, prejudice, and bullying. An example for this kind of stigma is illustrated in studies of Elling-Machartzki (2017) and Herrick and Duncan (2018) where transgender people are constantly intentionally misgendered. Meanwhile, felt stigma refers to the state of consciousness that stigma exists, thus the strategies taken to avoid it. Transgender people reducing sport participation (Bockting et al., 2013), disengaging from physical activity leisure spaces (Elling-Machartzki, 2017), or adjusting behaviours in the locker rooms (Semerjian & Cohen, 2006) are a few examples of felt stigma. On the other hand, internalized stigma "is an individual's personal acceptance of … stigma as a part of her or his own value system and self-concept" (Herek, 2007, p. 910). That said, negative attitudes towards one's own or others' being transgender, as well as an over investment in passing as cisgender individuals, can be a manifestation of internalized stigma (Bockting et al., 2020).

In explaining these types of stigma using the multi-level perspective in stigma theory (Herek, 2007; 2009), the depth of stigma is clearly illustrated. Thus, the theory helps frame narratives provided by transgender participants in a systematic and organized way, which in turn facilitates a comprehensive understanding of stigma faced by transgender people in recreational sport.

3.4.2.3 Gender theory.

Transgender people challenge traditional gender roles and/or transcend the gender boundaries (Green, 2004). For individuals with fluid gender identities, like transgender people, concerns are being raised around the nature of socially defined identities. For instance, being forced to conform to the norms associated with a socially defined identity, with which one does not identify, is a source of oppression. The implication of that

oppression is that one's identity must remain fixed in a given body. This is also what is known as 'essentialism' which, as Delphy (2003) depicts, anyone with male anatomy is expected to be a masculine man, anyone with female anatomy is expected to be a feminine woman, and that sexuality is inherently associated with one's gender identity (Rubin, 1993). Such beliefs are rooted in essentialism, putting all gender roles, gender identity and sexual orientation in a binary system (Kimmel, 1996; Norton, 1997). This essentialist view of sex and gender has clearly proven problematic when applying to transgender identities. Based on Heyes's critiques of essentialism (2003), identity is determined through one's body, ultimately discrediting the existence of female-to-male (FTM) and male-to-female (MTF) transgender people. Specifically, essentialism rules that MTF transgender people are still not considered as 'real women' even after surrendering their male social and other privileges, while FTM transgender people are seen as running from their originally oppressed identity being female to more advantageous male associated privileges. On the other hand, being transgender does not simply or always mean sliding from one gender category to the other, but it can mean transgressing the gender binary. The transgender conceptualization encompasses "both/neither" gender rather than keeping it merely "either/or" – thereby also embracing the fluidity of gender identity (Roen, 2001).

Butler (1990; 1993) attests that all gender is performative and socially constructed. For example, men learn to keep their hair short and aim for a muscular body while women learn that painting their nails and wearing skirts are desirable; all prescriptions that fit into expected gender roles. The more repetitive these performances are, the more deeply gender roles are reinforced. Coupled with time, the result of these repeated performances and expected behaviors led to people conforming to those gendered behaviours given their gender assigned at birth. Thus, gender roles and 'normative' or 'deviant' sexuality-related behaviors

are merely social products, and are open for subversion, challenge, and resistance (Butler, 1990; Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010).

3.5 Ethical considerations and practices in research

Within this present study, data was collected from textual documents and semi-structured interviews. While the former posed little concerns in terms of ethics as it was a method based on existing published materials (Shaw et al., 2004), the latter required thorough ethical considerations for all human participants involved. This is in alignment with the Vancouver Island University's Research Ethics Board (REB). The study's ethical protocol was approved by the REB with the reference number 100696. Following this guiding research ethics body, all steps taken during the research process were transparent and well communicated with the participants. The Consent Form (Appendix D) was the only form that participants were required to read through and agree to prior to confirming their participation in the study. Together with the participants, I went over the consent form (Appendix D) during recruitment, and again just before commencing the interview. It was made clear in this form that participants' participation was completely voluntary. In addition, participants were informed at each stage of the process that they could withdraw from the study without consequence up until two weeks from the day they received their transcript of the interview.

3.5.1 Benefits

Participants may have directly benefited from participating in the research in terms of having had an opportunity to discuss their participation in recreational sports, and that they may have consequently felt empowered to play, or felt informed on ways to participate in making changes to how or if they wanted to participate. It may have also benefited them to know they may have contributed to policy reconsiderations aimed at enhanced inclusion for transgender recreational sport participants. Nevertheless, each participant was offered a $20

Amazon gift card as a token of appreciation for the time spent participating in the study. The gift cards were digitally delivered to participants via their email addresses upon completion of their interview.

3.5.2 Risks

Transgender people experience various forms of discrimination and prejudice in society, but they also experience stigma in sport. Accordingly, being asked to recall the experiences in sport might evoke emotional distress from participants. Given that the researcher was unable to alleviate the discomfort this may cause for some participants, a list of community counselling options (Appendix E) was provided to them along with the consent form (Appendix D) prior to the interview. In addition, I reminded the participants that they had the right to skip any questions they wished not to answer or withdraw from the study at any time up until two weeks after they received their interview transcript. Other than that, the study did not impose any physical invasion of the body, physical distress, or risk of physical distress.

When highlighting the experiences of transgender participants in recreational sport, this particular community might be scrutinized or receive special or unwanted attention from teammates, coaches, or administrators in sports organizations. However, research that supports enhanced inclusion practices can also result in positive impacts, including open-discussion, enhanced team spirit, and policy changes that impact personal experience in sports.

3.5.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Although confidentiality disclaimers were communicated to the participants prior to commencing the data collection process (see Appendix D), it was important to ensure the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of the data collected.

3.5.3.1 Confidentiality.

Interviews with participants were conducted on the Vancouver Island University supported Zoom platform. Upon joining the interview, Zoom might have asked participants to insert their preferred username, which could be any name of their choice. It was confirmed with participants that this name would be carried into the interviewee participant identification for data collection purposes and served also to identify their data in the thesis. There were several participants who did ask me to use a different name than the one they entered the Zoom interview with as part of their identification data. In addition, Zoom may have asked the participant to upload an avatar, which participants had the capacity to skip. Because the participant's chosen name and uploaded avatar would be stored and processed on Zoom's server within Canada, participants were encouraged to not use their real name nor upload a true photograph of themselves. Participants were well informed about all the information above in Appendix D: Consent Form.

All interviews via Zoom were recorded and not stored on Zoom servers but stored locally in my computer based on the setting of VIU's licensed Zoom account. All accounts under VIU's institutional licenses have all of the data related to their meetings and accounts stored and processed within Canada. This means that using Zoom at VIU complied with BC privacy regulations. All Microsoft Word transcript documents and recordings of Zoom interviews were kept in a separate folder in my computer, with a protected password. The computer itself was password protected. To prevent data loss, I made a copy of all Microsoft Word transcript documents and interview video files and placed them in an encrypted separate folder on a USB Flash Drive. This USB Flash Drive was kept in a secured drawer with a physical lock in my room to prevent external access from anyone but me. All signed consent forms and written notes taken during interviews will be stored in the same previously mentioned drawer. Upon completion of the study, which is when the final

submission of my thesis has been officially approved in writing by my MA SLM thesis Supervisory Committee at Vancouver Island University (approximately May 31st, 2021), all data will be destroyed. More specifically, recordings of Zoom interview and transcripts on Microsoft Word shall be deleted and destroyed permanently from my computer and the USB Flash Drive. All signed Consent forms and written notes will be physically shredded so no information can be further extracted.

3.5.3.2 Anonymity.

The consent form (Appendix D) was the only form that requires participants to provide personal identity information. The presentation of the study utilized anonymized information, meaning that directly identifiable information is collected and then irrevocably removed from data so there is no way to re-identify data. That being the case, participants had the option to provide me with a name that they wanted to be used as part of their identification data in my thesis. However, there was a possibility that participants' identities could be breached due to other kinds of information, or the combination of other information, such as age and sports organizations that the participants were associated with. To mitigate these concerns, specific identifying information were not used in the data presentation or its interpretation or discussion in the thesis, including identifying recreational sports organizations in relation to the specific participants that have played in them.

3.5.4 Trustworthiness

Within qualitative research, trustworthiness is evaluated by the systematic rigor of the research design, the validity of the research findings, the credibility of the researcher, and the dependability of the research methods (Johnson & Parry, 2015). In the words of Creswell and Miller (2000), "there is a general consensus that qualitative inquirers need to demonstrate that their studies are credible" (p. 124), trustworthiness is therefore regarded as a crucial means to

secure qualitative research's stance in the academic world (Harrison et al., 2001). Indeed, the more trustworthy the research is, the more likely it may become research that makes a difference (Bochner, 2018), paving the way especially in leisure studies towards positive change (Rose et al., 2018). In the view of Elo et al. (2014), the selection of data collection strategy can be the first step to increase research trustworthiness. As previously mentioned, data in this qualitative study will be collected using two methods: textual document analysis and semi-structured interviews. For the first data collection stage, three documentaries and two biographies were used to make myself become sensitized to main concepts (Bowen, 2019) and gaining insights about transgender people in sport. From life stories narrated by transgender individuals in those textual documents, there was rich data about transgender people and their gender identity development journey along with challenges or accomplishments they have had with sport during this journey. This data was interpreted and analyzed using thematic analysis, classified into codes and themes. The purpose of doing so is to build substantial knowledge about the study topic before entering the interview stage, so that interview questions will be appropriately tailored and informed. Moreover, findings from the semi-structured interviews were strengthened and complemented by textual data analysis findings. That way, the findings produced in this study are likely credible and enhanced as two data sources were utilized to support each other.

Rose and Johnson (2020) suggest numerous other ways to increase research trustworthiness, such as the depth the literature engaged, the application of data collection strategies, or the appropriate theoretical frameworks guiding the research. However, I utilize Lincoln and Guba's framework (1985) due to its practicality. Their framework characterizes research trustworthiness into four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

One of the most useful methods to enhance the credibility of a research is member-checking (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Member-checking refers to the participation of the research participants in terms of validating the data collected at the interview and the transcribed data (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Participants in this present study received a copy of their interview transcript to review and potentially propose changes (e.g. if they would like to withdraw a particular statement they made during an interview) before the data analysis process was conducted. In addition, the approved final thesis will be made available to all participants with the sole purpose of sharing the study findings, as this would constitute the transparency of my data interpretation. Another means endorsed by Lather (1986) to increase the credibility of a research is prolonged engagement. Prolonged engagement implies the time that the researcher spent 'in the field'. Although my knowledge about sport was limited, I spent a significant amount of time working with the Nanaimo Pride Society, where the transgender community was actively engaged through community events and advocacy work. Further, extensively reviewing the literature on sport and transgender people has certainly enhanced the intensity of my engagement in this very topic. Apart from prolonged engagement, Rose and Johnson (2020) also praise the use of peer debriefing in the research process. That said, as a graduate student, during the research process I was extensively and constructively challenged by my two research supervisors regarding methodological practices, analytical frameworks, or the overall clarity of the research design.

Transferability is concerned with "reasoning that findings can be generalized or transferred to other settings or groups …, [referring] to the potential for extrapolation" (Elo et al., 2014, p. 2). Shenton (2004) contests that it would be impossible to transfer the research findings and results to other contexts because qualitative studies are conducted based on certain populations in certain contexts. In stark contrast, Denscombe (2014) argues that albeit the uniqueness of each case, it is still a part of a broader group context, hence its

transferability should not be rejected. In Bassey's view put forward in their early work (1981), it was noted that people could relate the research findings to their situations should they find similarities with the study's context. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Firestone (1993) agree with this argument, asking qualitative researchers to be responsible for providing sufficient contextual information in their studies so such transfer could be made. As such, with the richness that the participants' narratives in this study offered, plus an increased attention that I paid to the details of data, the likelihood of the present study's transferability was strengthened.

Dependability refers to the likelihood of producing similar results if the study was to be repeated by other researchers in the same context, with the same population and methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the work of Shenton (2004), it was advised that processes through which the study is undertaken should be thoroughly described. Assessed in the light of the present study, the first three chapters outlined in detail the context of the study, what has and has not been discussed in the literature, the methodological approach to the study and its specific strategies. Additionally, in these three chapters, justification was provided for every decision made within the study, which confirmed exactly why the research was conducted that way.

Lastly, confirmability is described by Shenton (2004) to be "the qualitative investigator's comparable concern to objectivity" (p. 72). In other words, the concept of confirmability centers around research findings which result from the participants' experiences and perspectives, rather than the logic imposed by the researcher (Shenton, 2004). In addressing this concern, Miles and Huberman (1994) stress the importance of the researcher admitting their own predispositions. Accordingly, a critical reflexivity is deemed as necessary in qualitative research.

3.5.4.1 Reflexivity in research.

The early work of Finlay (2002) describes reflexivity as "thoughtful, conscious self-awareness" (p. 532) in which the research data is rather viewed as subjective co-constructed realities between the researcher and the researched than objective truths. Therefore, considered to be one of the key components in qualitative research, a critical reflexivity requires that the researcher's pre-defined assumptions be critically interrogated, with special attention to the ones that identify with their own subjectivities (Rose & Johnson, 2020). As a result, it is significantly important to look at the underlying predispositions and preconceptions that might influence me during this present study. First, the reason I chose this topic is because of my unpleasant experiences with sport in the past as a gay person. In addition, I have always been fascinated by the complexities that genders offer. Combining the two reasons above, I came into this research wanting justice to be served for transgender people, and partially for me. Therefore, the preconception that was built prior to commencing the research was that transgender people have always been the victims and that the sport system is oppressive. To mitigate this concern, not only were leading questions or negatively worded questions avoided, but also the imposition of my beliefs during the data analysis process was monitored. The research also afforded me the opportunity to question my own assumptions and better understand my experience, and in so doing, added another layer to the analysis process. Indeed, this argument is based on the early work of Lincoln and Guba (1985; 2013), who assert that researchers in the constructivist paradigm sought to celebrate their subjective beliefs along with the participants' beliefs because this paradigm "proposes a relativist world of multiple realities that are constructed and co-constructed by the mind(s) and required to be studied as a whole" (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 88). While the current study was undertaken in the transformative paradigm, which together with the constructivist paradigm shares the similar epistemological tenet of being subjectivist (Lincoln & Guba,

2013), my own subjective beliefs should therefore be acknowledged and valued. Working actively with the Nanaimo Pride Society helped me establish and maintain a respectful and professional relationship with the 2SLGBTQ+ community in general, and the transgender community in particular, thus, participants might be more open in terms of sharing their stories in sport during the interview. Nonetheless, "in every interview, there is a power difference between participant and researcher, because the researcher uses participants' stories to publish and build their career" (Reyes, 2018, p. 16). The same argument was presented previously by Harrison et al. (2001), who stated that by acknowledging this power difference, researchers focus on trying to lessen it and establish some kind of intimate connection with the researched. Hence, by sharing my past experiences in sport with participants during the interviews, I would be able to thin out the wall between us and build rapport, affirming my supportive position as a researcher. This practice echoes the perspective of Harrison et al. (2001) about reciprocity in interviews being "the give and take of social interactions" (p. 323). Elaborating such a perspective, Harrison et al. (2001) believed that rich data could be obtained "through judicious use of self-disclosure" (p. 323), turning interviews into open conversations. They saw a necessity to share in a candid way about what it is that we, as researchers, have given and hope to give the participants. That way, I was no longer 'just' a researcher who worked on the research merely to finish my Master's degree, but a researcher who together with the participants co-created a more emancipatory vision of the world we wanted to live in.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study is to 1) determine how transgender adults' participation in recreational sports in BC, Canada is informed by their experiences with the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport; and 2) inform an enhanced and intentional change in transgender-inclusive policies and practices in terms of the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport in BC, Canada. This fourth chapter is concerned with presenting main findings from the analysis of two data collection phases. The analysis of textual data collected during the first phase served as a first step in the sensitizing process (Bowen, 2019), familiarizing the researcher with the research problem prior to conducting semi-structured interviews with study participants in the second phase of data collection. In addition, together with the literature review, this initial textual data analysis served to complement the findings emerged from the analysis of semi-structured interviews. That said, two sets of findings from textual data and interview data will be reported separately in the following sections, and their complementarity as part of sensitizing concepts will be discussed in the last section of this chapter.

4.2 Textual data analysis findings

Textual data analysis is a systematic procedure that involves reviewing and evaluating documents, including the examination and interpretation of the data (Bowen, 2009). Textual data was collected from three documentaries and two biographies about the lives of transgender people and their experiences with sport. In particular, two biographies from the book of Anderson and Travers in Chapter 2 (Anonymous, 2017) and Chapter 3 (McCormack & Hanold, 2017), which are respectively entitled "My name is Jay, I transitioned and I'm a disabled young athlete" and "Becoming me: Transitioning, training and surgery", provide

personal experiences of two transgender men with sport throughout different stages of their lives. In addition, two documentaries entitled “Man Made” (Cooper, 2018) and “In The Turn” (Tremblay, 2014) talk specifically about transgender people in the sport of bodybuilding, whereas the documentary named “Transgender Journey: The Struggle for Rights and Respect” (Cable Public Affairs Channel [CPAC], 2016) gives insights on transgender people’s lives in general. Through the analysis of these textual data, there were three main themes that emerged: (1) Exclusion, (2) Gender dysphoria and sport, and (3) Safe sporting spaces. The summary of each theme is offered below and themes’ sample quotes are presented in Table 3.

4.2.1 Theme 1: Exclusion

This theme describes how instances of exclusion were formed and in what contexts they occurred in transgender people’s experiences with sport, whether at a structural level or an interpersonal level. The data showed that, at a structural level, the rigid division of sport into sex categories has established barriers to exclude transgender people from participating in sport. The dichotomy of the gender binary gracefully embraced by sport is challenged by transgender sport participants, thus resulting in them having no place in sport. In other words, as a social institution that strongly reflects the embraced binary gender categories, sport spares no room for individuals whose gender is perceived to be difficult to label based on societal norms associated with these categories. Also, transgender sport participants living their true gender often came at the expense of giving up sport engagement. As a result, trans folks are forced to make a decision between ‘Do I transition?’ and ‘Can I play sport?’, since it’s proven to be an arduous route to have both. At an interpersonal level, social exclusion is nurtured by prejudice and discrimination, resulting from “the psychological effects of being isolated from or rejected by others” (Hargie et al., 2017, p. 227). Transgender sport participants continuously suffered from being addressed with incorrect personal pronouns and

dead names, invalidating not only their gender but also themselves as human beings. It is found that these actions can sometimes be unintentional and subtle rather than intentional, as known as microaggressions (Herrick & Duncan, 2018). Additionally, the fear and disengagement with teammates in change rooms led to the absence of opportunities to participate in team bonding activities, which isolated transgender people from others. All in all, either at a structural level or an interpersonal level, exclusion was one strong factor that caused avoidance behaviours in transgender recreational sport participants.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Gender dysphoria and sport

This theme shows how the sex-segregation structure in sport influenced gender dysphoria faced by the majority of transgender sport participants from the textual data. According to Girshick (2008), gender dysphoria refers to "an intense, persistent distress with one's physical sex characteristics or their associated social role" (p. 144). People speculate about one's gender by looking at the sport materials that are clothing the person's body. Thus, transgender sport participants being forced to wear gendered sport clothing contradicting to their self-identified gender served as a constant reminder of the incongruence between certain body parts and their gender identity. That said, gendered sport attire was deemed a powerful vehicle to remind people of the gender binary that privileges cisgender identities. The way transgender people felt towards their bodies is negatively influenced by both their internal sense and external sport gendered spaces. However, sport was also found to be where opportunities for transgender people to powerfully connect to their bodies could occur, especially for those who chose to medically transition. As an example, one transgender man recalled that "with each run I can feel my muscles becoming more defined. I can feel my muscles work harder. I feel my body becoming me with each run" (McCormack & Hanold, 2017). In addition, for trans folks who needed that powerful connection in order to transition, sport was also sought out as a useful means.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Safe and welcoming sporting environments

This theme is about transgender sport participants' positive experiences with queer-only sporting spaces. These were sporting spaces marked by the absence of hetero-cisgender identities and the presence of queer identities. Queer-only sporting spaces were favoured by transgender sport participants due to its potential of inclusiveness. Also, the importance of being respectful, empathetic, and open-minded was stressed towards the creation of positive and inclusive sport spaces. Not only does this theme reflect how safe, welcoming, and inclusive sport spaces can be created for transgender people, but it also facilitates sport policy makers in making more informed decisions.

Table 4

Summary of textual data analysis findings

Theme(s)	Theme descriptions	Sample quotations
Theme 1: Exclusion	• Structural level (Macroaggressions)	➢ **"**I can't play on the girls' team anymore because I started T (testosterone) over a year ago. I can't play on the guys' team because I still have a chest that bounces up and down. So where do I go?" (McCormack & Hanold, 2017). ➢ "[He] recently learned that he has been barred from a local [all-man] bodybuilding competition because he is transgender" (Cooper, 2018). ➢ "She slowly stopped participating in sports because the school couldn't agree which team she should be allowed to play on" (Tremblay, 2014).
	• Interpersonal level (Microaggressions)	➢ "I initially stated that I wanted everyone to be using male pronouns, yet after a few weeks of coming out, it was apparent that this would not be possible. The adult instructors were extremely disrespectful and often made derogatory comments aimed at me, which lead to me insisting to go back in the closet" (Anonymous, 2017). ➢ **"**I struggled to play sport as a transgender athlete – whenever "she" or "birth name" were

		ever accidentally used, I understood, but little by little sport, often a happy space for me, became a frustrating, angry space" (McCormack & Hanold, 2017). ➢ "As I was assumed to be a lesbian, the girls would shy their bodies away from me. Their discomfort always meant that I would wait until the toilet was free to change into my sports clothes" (Anonymous, 2017).
Theme 2: Gender dysphoria and sport	• Sport as a negative influence on gender dysphoria	➢ "Before puberty had hit, I really enjoyed swimming. I did so wearing only shorts. For boarding school, however, I had to shop for a suit with a top. I felt dysphoric towards my body as my mother picked one out and urged me to try it on" (Anonymous, 2017). ➢ "The uniforms were female. They were meant for skinny girls. I was neither skinny nor comfortable in my body. I suffocated between the jersey and the spandex booty shorts" (McCormack & Hanold, 2017).
	• Sport as a positive influence on gender dysphoria	➢ "[W]ith each run I can feel my muscles becoming more defined. I can feel my muscles work harder. I feel my body becoming me with each run" (McCormack & Hanold, 2017). ➢ "Body building has meant a ton for me because it helped me transition and change my body before I could actually get on testosterone. It gave me a lot of confidence which I lack" (Cooper, 2018).
Theme 3: Safe and welcoming sporting environments	• Queer-only or trans-only sporting spaces	➢ "I mean you don't have to worry about being transgender. That's the ultimate goal, right? It's just, you're just a person. So here, you're just people or the family" (CPAC, 2016) ➢ "This competition, you know, I felt like part of something and I felt like I belonged, which I haven't felt in a really long time" (Cooper, 2018).

4.3 Interview data analysis findings

As previously mentioned, semi-structured interviews were carried out in this study and a thematic narrative analysis was performed. All interviewed participants self-identify as transgender and have either medically or socially transitioned at different points in their lives. The majority of participants had extensive sporting experiences, with the exception of one

participant who has limited sporting experiences due to gender-related issues. There were a few participants who had experiences with recreational sports not only as a player but also as a coach or an official. It is necessary to acknowledge that the sports participants had experiences with are all team sports, such as volleyball, soccer, basketball, and ice hockey. In general, sport was recognized by most of participants to be an important aspect in their lives, and a good means to not only exercise, socialize, but also strengthen relationships with family and friends. Throughout the stories shared by participants, there were three main themes that emerged: (1) Stigma, (2) Lack of explicitness about transgender inclusivity, and (3) Heaven for sports.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Stigma

All interviewed participants reported to have experienced stigma at certain points throughout their sporting experiences. In the words of Paetzold et al. (2008), stigma is regarded as "an attribute that produces a social identity that is devalued or derogated by persons within a particular culture at a particular point in time" (p. 186). While Paetzold et al. (2008) explain that stigma is contextual and socially constructed, Herek's framework (2007, 2009) suggests a multi-level perspective on the process of stigmatization, which will facilitate a more holistic approach to understanding this phenomenon. That said, according to Herek (2007, 2009), stigma can be observed and understood at structural level and individual level, which explains the organization of this first theme into three sub-themes: (a) structural stigma, (b) enacted stigma, and (c) felt stigma. The organizing and ordering of these sub-themes serve to illustrate the depth of stigma in recreational sport faced by transgender participants. Despite the efforts to describe each type of stigma separately, it is important to note that one is likely informed by the other(s), which subsequently makes it impossible to establish a clear distinction between them.

4.3.1.1 Structural stigma.

Structural stigma in recreational sport is manifested in the sport system, the regulations, the policies, and the ideology behind the current structure of sport, all of which were built in the best interest of cisgender identities, hence a plethora of challenges for transgender identities. One of the first and foremost challenges that transgender recreational sport participants encountered was the eligibility to play. Eligibility policies and guidance in place are historically designed to serve individuals who subscribe to gender normativity, thus excluding those who do not. Providing an example, M. (transgender woman) recalled how she had to wait for nearly six months in 2013, for a decision to be made in regard to her eligibility to play recreational soccer:

> [S]hortly after I started transitioning, I was having a bit of interest in playing soccer again… I didn't know necessarily how to go about it. And... I just messaged the soccer league around here "Hey, this is my situation. I want to play soccer. How do I play soccer? How do I play, and can I play?"... And the president didn't know so they contacted BC Soccer, "Hey, we have a person who wants to play. This is the situation. What are the rules?". BC soccer didn't know. So, they went to Canadian Soccer Association. They didn't know. So, it actually, it went to FIFA.

Until this day, the discourse surrounding transgender people's eligibility to play sport, even recreationally, remains unsettled and controversial with people asking "Isn't a trans woman in women's sports cheating? And that's a question that a lot of people have very strong feelings about" (Terra, transgender woman). Adding to that, Emily (transgender woman) mentioned what people have said about trans women like herself, "theoretically, like, yes I think that trans women should be able to participate but, like, they should probably have to do all of this stuff first". The "stuff" that Emily mentioned here refers to different approaches taken to balance the hormones level for transgender folks who transition. This concern is directly instilled by the scientifically unproven belief of perceived male athletic superiority and female athletic inferiority, which is the ideology behind the sex-segregation structure in sport (Fink et al., 2016). As such, sport authorities often "have some, like, ideas of, like, what

a trans woman [or a trans person] should look like or what medical interventions should have happened" (Emily, transgender woman). Those in positions of power in sport chose to exercise their power by determining if and how transgender people are eligible to play recreational sport. Facing the same struggle, Tiffany (transgender woman) explained how she has not been able to find a place to play sport:

> [P]eople always say that it's kind of unfair for a man to be competing against a woman… If, for some reason I am strong, which I'm definitely not strong, but stronger than a woman or something, I don't want to, I guess, make the game not fun for them, or anything. So it's hard to find a place [just] to have fun.

As a result, Tiffany shifted her focus to finding gender-neutral teams in an attempt to avoid this stigma around the participation eligibility of transgender people in recreational sport. Gender-neutral teams, as known as co-ed teams, are teams consisting of players of all genders. While this seems to alleviate eligibility concerns, it can in fact be another structural stigma against transgender participants in the guise of balance and fairness. In the soccer co-ed team that Kira (transgender woman) played, "you have to [have] a minimum of three women on the team out of six players at any given time, or else it will be disqualified, and the game would be called off and will be loose". This idea has the capacity to generate more opportunities for women and girls to play sport but, at the same time, reinforces the gender binary because players in these teams must self-identify themselves as either man or woman in order for the game to be carried out. Trans people who have a binary gender identity and are likely to pass seemed to encounter no issues with this co-ed team formation, "there's never been any question issue. I usually don't even tell people" (M., transgender woman). On the contrary, the mentioned co-ed team rule unfortunately posed certain challenges for trans folks who have a binary gender identity but do not pass. Terra (transgender woman) had to wait until she medically and legally transitioned just to be deemed eligible to play as one of the women, "If someone made it a problem, I'd say "Here's my paperwork. Fuck off". I have that pride now to say "This is who I am. The government has my back". Further, this rule is

also problematic for trans folks who do not posit themselves within the gender binary, self-identifying as "both/neither" genders (Roen, 2001). "There's no sort of policy around, where a non-binary person would play", Nicola (transgender woman) talked about her soccer league, "they would need to sort of identify themselves as a gender when they don't necessarily identify with the gender". Once again, transgender participants are constantly gender policed, structurally stigmatizing those individuals who fall outside of the traditional gender framework gracefully embraced by sport.

Sport as a recreation activity is always encouraged to attract and create more opportunities for women and girls (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association [CPRA], 2015). Therefore, in addition to the previously mentioned co-ed team formation, multiple women-only leagues, like the one where Emily (transgender woman) was playing, were founded towards achieving the same goal. Although good intentions behind this kind of leagues are acknowledged, a strict adherence to the gender binary leaves out non-binary people:

> I'm pretty sure there's non-binary people in that league, but you have to, like, click a little box that says, like, "I am a woman" to play in that league. It's kind of a bummer… I'm sure non-binary people just, like, tick that box and they're like, "Well, fuck you. That sucks. I guess I'll just do that because I have to". It seems like an easy first step to let non-binary people fit into a league that's consistent with their hormone profile, without asking them to misgender themselves (Emily, transgender woman).

This practice showcases a structure that favours anyone who fits within the gender binary, as opposed to those who contest the binary like non-binary individuals. Indeed, "a non-binary person would either have to ignore this or just, like, exclude themselves from this league" (Emily).

Transgender people, including non-binary folks, face stigma at structural level that directly impedes their recreational sport participation. While a number of trans people get to play sports without any gender-related issues, many others struggle right from the eligibility

determination stage. After all, “people can only participate if they are included” (Harmon, 2019, p. 255).

4.3.1.2 Enacted stigma.

Dissimilar to structural stigma, enacted stigma is classified as one type of individual stigma (Herek, 2007, 2009) that takes on all forms of discrimination, harassment, prejudice, and bullying (Cunningham et al., 2018). Interestingly, blatant discrimination and outright attacks, such as “I don’t want that transgender playing in any of these, on any of the teams. I don't want them in soccer, or anything” (M., transgender woman), or “Is she even a she?!.. Oh she probably has a penis anyways!” (J.T., transgender man), and “I got pantsed a couple times” (Tiffany, transgender woman), were reported to only happen in the participants’ past experiences. Most of these attacks came from sport authorities or teammates, with one participant deemed responsible for being the victim of discrimination and told, “if you didn’t, you know, look different then people wouldn’t point it out” (Remy, transgender man). Meanwhile, with legal protections currently in place, the absence of blatant discrimination and outright transphobes is replaced by the prevalence of more subtle forms. Kira (transgender woman) pointed out that “even though people suspected, they cannot come around and say because then it becomes a discrimination human rights issue and then, which is against the law”. Yet, either blatant or subtle, either intentional or unintentional, this form of enacted stigma inflicts pervasive consequences on transgender recreational sport participants.

Through verbal or non-verbal means of communication, microaggressions are a subtle form of discrimination that implicitly conveys messages of hostility, insensitivity, disapproval, or animosity towards the target group (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010). Cues like “people not making eye contact in the handshake line” (Emily, transgender woman), and

"never engage in conversation with you, always sit as far away as they can from you, it makes you feel they are telling you something without actually saying it" (L.C., transgender woman). As such, some transgender participants "always felt that there's been some tension [and] there's always been that feeling of, I guess, worry or 'Am I making other people angry?'" (L.C.). Participants wanted to illustrate that, through verbal microaggressions, their gender was invalidated in recreational sport contexts. One transgender woman participant shared in details:

> I think it's like, it's pretty subtle. I don't get, like, a lot of hostility… I guess the fact that I'm kind of, like, the only visibly trans person there, it's understood as like a Women's League and for everyone else, you know, the opposing team's coach would be saying "Mark her!" or like, you know, "Watch her!". They'd be using "she, her" pronouns for everyone else on the field, except me [They'd be saying "Mark them!"]. So, yes, it's not so much that I object to "they, them" pronouns or, like, offended by those but it does reinforce that sense of being singled out and being visibly different. And, yeah, that's a little bit tough. I think if a coach was using "they, them" pronouns for all my teammates and, you know, that would be fine, I would have no issue with that (Emily).

'They/them/their' are considered the most gender-inclusive personal pronouns up to this point as they do not highlight any specific gender (Lee, 2019) as opposed to 'he/him/his' and 'she/her/hers'. The use of 'they/them/their' pronouns is often to avoid making assumptions about one's gender leading to unintentional misgendering or when someone's personal pronouns are yet to be known. The fact that people used 'they/them/their' with Emily instead of neither 'she/her/hers' nor 'he/him/his' is interesting. 'He/him/his' would have been a too blatant and straightforward denial of Emily's gender, whereas if people had used 'she/her/hers' it could have conflicted with their own beliefs about what a woman should look like, given that Emily was "visibly trans". It now raises a question of 'Does being visibly trans equal to not being a woman?'. Apparently in the view of coaches and athletes in Emily's league, it does. It is the socially constructed gender stereotypes that people used to measure Emily's womanhood, leaving no space for her embodied self-identity as a woman to manifest. With Emily considering herself gender non-conforming, "what being a woman

looks a lot differently [for her] than what it does for most". This leads to the fact that she was misgendered by "a lot of people":

> I want to be seen as a woman and I want people to interact with me as a woman. To know that people who don't know me often are not doing that, I think it feels like that brings up insecurities for me because it makes me think like "Okay well, if I'm not having that experience then like, what does that mean for me? Do I still get to be a woman if people think I'm a man?" kind of thing. So, I think … the way that people read me is, like, not always how I would like.

Who gets to decide if one is a woman? It does appear that Emily's gender was, in this scenario, determined by others rather than by Emily herself. For many trans folks who have a binary gender identity like Emily, gendered personal pronouns can serve as a means to confirm their gender identity. Hence, avoiding the use of gendered personal pronouns, in this context, is likely to be seen as a refusal to accept the legitimacy of one's gender identity. As well as verbal microaggressions, non-verbal microaggressions are a highly effective tool to communicate transphobic stigma by subjugating transgender identities. Transgender woman Kira explained the reason she would never again play with men after her experience playing soccer in a co-ed team:

> [P]laying with men… it almost felt like I was treated as a man, as opposed to a woman… I was trying to kick the ball, I missed the ball. I kicked another guy's chin and caused it to bleed… He didn't have a chin pad for soccer. So I caused a bleed and he got really angry, even though I said "Sorry". He did not accept the apology and he kept this anger and then when he had a chance, he went into me and bashed me down onto the ground. Didn't say anything, didn't say sorry, just purposely hit me and [e]ven at the end, when we were shaking hands, I still said "Sorry", he never said anything back to me. You know, so he really kept that grudge, you know, for a long time… I just didn't feel comfortable because I didn't want to be in that competitive violent physical aggression type of environment with men.

The situation clearly upset Kira, "I didn't feel that I was accepted of who I was as a woman. I felt I was treated as a guy, rather than being treated as Kira. So I felt very disappointed and angry, and that this person was not willing to accept who I was". As much possible as the guy was upset given that he was physically hurt, he could have responded differently to Kira's multiple apologies instead of choosing to ignore them, which made the incident look like an

intentional retaliation and potentially transphobia. “I knew right away, having lived part of my life as a male, I knew that was the response that he wanted revenge… I think [it had something to do with me being a trans woman] so. I think so but they’re not gonna say anything… That's the way I felt anyways” (Kira, transgender woman). To further enhance Kira’s claim, it would be interesting to relate this incident to another experience of hers, this time with volleyball:

> So when we rotate, we’re out of position so we have to always go back to position, when the whistle goes.... So when people don’t know the positions, I end up hitting them when I’m trying to go in a position... It became an issue... So then they [other women players] complained to the league, and then they… put me on probation, then… they sent me to a volleyball clinic, to improve my skill. And then, I finished the season without any problems. The next season, they cut me… they w[ouldn’t] let me go to the try-out….They w[ouldn’t] let me go back the following new season because of the girls’ complaining, saying I was a dangerous player when I was bumping into them. So, as you see, physical contact is a really big thing when it comes to women playing recreational sports, not even competitive. Recreational sports.

Kira felt that the incident happened because “maybe they thought I was transgender”. Would the women players have reacted the same way had the same physical contact been initiated by a ciswoman? In fact, the question should be ‘Would they have reacted the same way had the same physical contact been done by another White ciswoman?’. Kira went on explaining in details:

> So it’s all bullshit, I call it that they want to protect themselves and it’s mainly White people. There’s nothing, there’s no Black people, Asian people and it’s all White… That’s why I feel that it was more White because I was bumping into White people. I wasn’t bumping into Asian people… I feel that [I am the minority there…with them being predominantly White and] there was some discrimination there.

There, enacted stigma against Kira, a transgender person of Asian descent, was not only perpetrated based on her gender identity, but also accumulated by her race. Thus, in Kira’s case, there might have been women in the league who were not transphobic, but xenophobic and racist. That is to say the complaint made against Kira might not have been filed if one of Kira’s identities belonged to the dominant groups (e.g. White, cisgender). Alas, that was not

the case since two of Kira's identities (transgender identity and Asian identity) were two identities of minority and disadvantageous in society, hence the heightened oppression.

Microaggressions as a vehicle for enacted stigma are highly nuanced, that means, "the same scenario may be viewed as traumatic or inconsequential by different people" (Herrick & Duncan, 2018, p. 329). When asked about experiences playing in the seven-a-side soccer co-ed team where there must be two women on the field at any given time, Terra (transgender woman) recalled "lighthearted" jokes her teammates made, "Terra. Come on, hurry up and transition so we can just have you as one of the girl count". Albeit Terra's social transition changes and her personal pronouns 'she/her', the belief that gender is inherently associated to sex (Hausman et al., 2001) was deeply rooted in Terra's teammates to such a point where Terra would only be 'considered' a woman if she had a sex change. In other words, similar to the cases of Emily and Kira, people assigned a gender to Terra and decided when the gender could be changed, rather than Terra claiming her own. The fact that Terra was not offended by this joke does not necessarily mean that it would not be an offensive joke to other trans folks, especially those who do not invest in passing and those who contest the gender and sex binary.

Enacted stigma can also be conveyed through unintentional microaggressions. According to transgender woman participant Nicola, the people she plays with in the women's league are "pretty amazing" as they are supportive and inclusive of Nicola being a transgender woman. However, "every time I had to sort of run quickly or switch directions quickly, I would sort of make a grunting sound, and it was sort of a burp sound and the ref ended up giving me a warning because of it. He said I was being too intimidating". The referee was applying gender stereotypes - that is women are fragile and delicate beings while men are aggressive and ruthless - to measure when a grunt was considered "too intimidating". This prejudice against Nicola resulted from the thoughts that all women are the same and all

women subscribe to those gender stereotypes. It is rather a heterogenous than a homogenous group after all, hence, the efforts to treat members of the team as a homogenous group were not appreciated.

Conclusively, microaggressions are an effective means of communicating stigma, discrimination, and transphobia against transgender recreational sport participants. The negation of any identities that contest the gender binary and adherence to traditional assumptions about sex and gender was constant in recreational sport settings, in turn, reinforcing cisnormativity in subtle ways that "if you're not looking for them or aware of them, then you won't understand them especially in this context" (L.C., transgender woman).

4.3.1.3 Felt stigma.

Felt stigma is another type of individual stigma which points to the state of being cognizant and conscious of existing stigma, thus the strategies to avoid it (Herek, 2007, 2009). Participants recounted multiple instances where "having some awareness on what situations I may or may not succeed at or feel comfortable in, and knowing the difference… plays a part of [the decision making process]" (Marisa, transgender woman). Indeed,

> we have less bad experiences because we don't allow ourselves, we don't put ourselves into places that allow us to have bad experiences. So maybe I would have attempted to join sports more. But I didn't even question it because subconsciously, I was like "Oh, there's no point because it might be a problem" (Terra, transgender woman).

Some participants withdrew themselves from playing recreational sport or at least were hesitant to participate, in anticipation of enacted stigma. Take Marisa's decision (transgender woman) for example, "I just felt like, you know what, I don't want to be in an environment where people might see the changes that I'm going through… So I was like, "You know what, I'm just going to take a couple years off, and I'm going to do other stuff. I'll go hiking more often, I won't play hockey". Transgender woman Nicola also revealed that "the worry

about whether I would be accepted or not was the reason why I took a break and didn't play women's soccer right away after transitioning". Similarly, playing on an all-men team would never be something that Remy (transgender man) allowed himself to consider "because even though I transitioned, like, I just feel like I don't fit in with the vast majority of cis-guys, like, they communicate in ways that I don't understand sometimes. Or they're like, unspoken social rules. And I'm just like, visibly smaller and more feminine looking. And all of that put together, you're kind of an outsider, if it's just straight cis-guys". Due to similar concerns, Terra (transgender woman) kept on giving herself false excuses to not come back to playing soccer right after transitioning when "you have that negative feeling that you would love to have the freedom to start a sport, but because you know, it might be a problem for some people, you're a bit afraid to do that".

Some transgender sport participants had to disclose their transgender status resulting from the awareness of stigma against trans people in sport, "I chose to let them know who I was" (L.C., transgender woman) right from the beginning. "[I]f there are some players that are not comfortable with it [having L.C. as a transgender teammate]", L.C. would be willing to "part ways" or "find a different team or just not play". In the spirit of sport, L.C. would not want to "ruin things for other people" with her presence in the team because in the end of the day, "if it came down to things, I could probably go to a men's team and play on their men's team. Whereas if there's a woman that doesn't feel comfortable, where can she go, right? Women's sports are, you know, there's not as many opportunities". This showcases an action prompted by not only the awareness of existing stigma against trans people in sport, but also the quality of being considerate to how different other people's sporting experience might become. It also points to gender inequalities and gender hierarchy in sport sustained by the sex-segregation structure. Similarly, in an attempt to avoid any unexpected events, Terra (transgender woman) also chose to disclose her transgender status to her co-ed soccer team

where there must be two women on the field at any given time, "because I knew it might be a possibility":

> "Hey, I'm trans. If I come out, and I want to play… as one of the two girls, will that be a problem? Or even are you against trans people so much that you're just gonna kick me off the team in the first place?". And that was the biggest fear I had on that team… And it was uncomfortable [because] I was putting myself in a position where I'm giving them the option to either accept me or deny me and I have no idea what they're going to do. And if they deny me, it means I'm losing out on something I care about deeply… And I didn't want to fall in love with the team and fall in love with the sport, and then have to give it up.

Although the response she received was positive, her worries persisted because "with seven-a-side soccer, you're [always] given a different team [because team members rotate]. So it would have been different people and I wasn't ready to go through that again", thus her disengagement in sport. Going through a very similar dilemma, Emily (transgender woman) was not really comfortable with the idea that her gender was up to others' interpretation in instances where the same two-women-rule applied:

> [The] concern that I have about that is… people have to make a… judgment call of like, "Oh so do we put on a woman or a man?", you know. So I think I'm a little bit concerned about having to go out into that space and then, like, advocate for myself and be like, "Oh hey, you put on the wrong player. Can you swap?". You know what I mean?

For trans folks like L.C., Emily, and Terra, the disclosure of transgender status was considered a necessary step to protect them against potential discrimination. On the contrary, felt stigma led to the reluctant concealment of other participants' transgender status. Tiffany (transgender woman) wanted to keep playing basketball, hence the decision not to come out to her teammates. What made Tiffany "scared of them [teammates] knowing" that she was a transgender woman was that "they used slurs a decent amount for, like, on the bus and stuff they would use like "tranny" and stuff… in a harsh tone, I guess. And like, words like "fag" and stuff… [I]t was much easier not being out". In the same fashion, Kira (transgender woman) felt like she would "create unnecessary conflict" in the volleyball coaching environment if she revealed herself being a transgender woman. Although Kira did not see

the need to disclose her transgender status, the problem is that she would be cornered with no choice but to keep it a secret if she ever wanted to make it known. Kira explained:

> When I'm coaching children, who's in charge of the children? The parents, right? I cannot come out to the children that I'm transgender, because then they're gonna go tell the parents. The parents have religious background or whatever then they'll start pulling children out of the class. And then I'm going to not have a job because there's no more children… I myself being a parent as well, I totally understand… I know what's gonna happen if I do so I want to minimize any friction or any negative to the organization, and to the team and to other players... Because it's on [name of region]. [Name of region] is, you know, mainly Persian people, you know, other Caucasian people, and Asian people, so to me it's a very conservative group.

It is necessary to mention that, once again, Kira's experience was informed by her multiple social identities. All those overlapping identities of a coach, a parent, a person of Asian descent, and a person born in the Western culture not only shaped Kira's point of view, but also were sources for oppressions against her, "If I'm White, I probably won't care, I'll tell everyone. You know what I mean? It's totally different attitude. So culture and education belief system of values are totally different". Many traditional beliefs in Asian cultures hold that it is a taboo to have open discussions about sex (Agoramoorthy & Hsu, 2015), that the possession of a transgender identity rebels against the expected gender roles, and the disclosure of this identity is a manifestation of individualism. It is considered a threat to collectivism (Wong, 2011) which is the core value that various Asian cultures uphold tightly. The announcement of one's transgender identity in Asian cultures could be perceived much as a chagrin to their family and a humiliation to the Asian community as a whole (Thompson et al., 2013). As such, people who subscribe to Asian cultures tend to value external societal influences more than internal individual forces in their self-conceptualization, whereas it is the opposite for people subscribing to Western cultures (Inman et al., 2001). As a person who is both a coach and a parent, as a person who has "this understanding from both sides of East and West", Kira was evidently informed about the stigma society has in place and understood exactly what would become of the situation if she decided to not "keep it quiet for now".

There were times participants altered their behaviours to manipulate situations because of felt stigma. For transgender people who have a binary gender identity investing in passing like Marisa (transgender woman), the desire to be accepted by the group of that gender is prominent. Marisa, to her preference, was provided by her league managers with a private change room since she did not feel comfortable letting her body be seen by others while going through transition. Marisa has always been using her private change room separate from other teammates, until

> this one particular time, for whatever reason, a bunch of the dressing rooms were locked, because there was some sort of an event going on. I was changing in my little [private] dressing room and the girls came in, and they all were in the same dressing room. I was like, "Oh, wow. Like, I don't know, like, how this is gonna work" because like, at that time, I still had male genitalia… And then there was this awkward moment of like... "How do I get undressed?"… "What do I do?". So I was, like, trying to be really slow, and I would go outside, I'd like, you know, pretend I was really hot and tired, I'd be like, slowly drying myself off. And you know, all of these things to delay, delay, delay, taking longer to take off my equipments. And then finally, kind of at the end, it was like enough people had left, that I, you know, get a towel around myself and kind of secretly kind of changed the last part.

The fear "that I would be found out and that would potentially taint my relationship with these people going forward" was what caused differences in Marisa's behaviours in comparison to what she would normally do in the change room. As Marisa described, her sporting experiences were predominantly positive with her teammates being very welcoming and friendly. Yet, her vulnerability was triggered by her own thoughts "I'm not the same as you. I'm different", and above all, by her knowing that social isolation or discrimination is what it costs for those who fall outside of the gender normalcy in sport, "I felt very vulnerable. I felt kind of scared. And I was like, "Oh gosh. Do I want to keep doing this?". Like, you know "Should I just wait until I finished my surgery and then I'll feel better about things?". It came to the point where Marisa thought the only way to be accepted in situations like this was to complete the final step in her transition - bottom surgery - so that she would fit neatly into what society defines womanhood is. Marisa's change room situation could

have gone either way, good or bad, had she decided to undress in her private change room the same way she would have done in the absence of her teammates. Instead, Marisa chose to do what she thought would protect herself against the discrimination she had anticipated. Marisa felt the need to accommodate the traditional mentality about the inherent association between sex and gender, as if those who contest that mentality would be subject to being stigmatized. Having exactly the same concern, Terra (transgender woman) "kind of only have allowed myself to look at sports that were co-ed" because "I'm afraid of just any having to prove myself to people for being who I am". In the view of Terra, herself being in woman-only change rooms would only encourage scrutiny to occur, "if I walked into a women's washroom dressed up, and no one would question I'm a woman while I'm in there. If I took off my shirt, no question if I'm in there, I've grown breasts because of estrogen. But if I took off my pants, there's the question now". This perspective of Terra's is indeed a testament to the exact reason why Marisa felt vulnerable in her change room situation with the other girls; that is, stigma is reserved for those who challenge traditional beliefs about the association between sex and gender. Therefore, the step Terra took to avoid felt stigma was to "get changed in the family washroom, because that's the only one where no one can ask me why I'm there".

In summary, felt stigma among participants is all about the present feeling and projection of future possible stigma based on participants' past experiences, and what participants observed happened with their fellows either directly or indirectly through policies, media and other public sources. With that in mind, participants "didn't allow to ever become a problem" (Terra, transgender woman) by taking steps (or not) to avoid stigma and "maybe that's contributed to my lack of negative experiences" (Marisa, transgender woman).

Using Herek's stigma theory (2007; 2009), the study's first theme depicted multi-level stigma against transgender participants in recreational sport. These types of stigma feed

on and build on each other, constituting a cycle of stigma. It was also meant to interrogate not only those blatant and outright stigma practices, but also those that are subtle and sophisticated often underlied in policies, guidelines, and interactions in recreational sport settings. Besides, an indication of the impact multi-level stigma had on participants' experiences with recreational sport was made to showcase how recreational sport remains a robust domain for traditional beliefs about sex and gender to be reinforced.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Lack of explicitness about transgender inclusivity

This study's second theme is focused on reporting a lack of explicitness about transgender inclusivity across sporting contexts where participants were unsure if they would be welcomed. This does not necessarily mean that hostility was communicated in all sporting contexts mentioned in this theme, but it does present how participants' experiences with recreational sport were informed by the absence of explicit trans inclusive policies and practices.

A league's media presentation is critical to the assessment as to whether transgender participants would meet with hostility or inclusivity upon joining the league:

> [W]hen I was looking at… [name of league]… I just got this… not really LGBT friendly vibe from the organization… [b]ecause they don't say anything about being LGBT friendly. It's all like, men and women… [W]hat would happen if there were, like, people who were not LGBT friendly? And [I wonder] even if no one was like, outwardly aggressive, if there would be anyone else like me there or if I would be, like, the only gay dude? … Yeah, I worry about… organizations like that (Remy, transgender man).

Information on a league's website and "Facebook page or other social media" could provide some idea about how 2SLGBTQ+ inclusive that league is, "I don't see a lot of sports teams saying that they're trans friendly, or LGBT friendly. They might, like, throw up a Facebook post on Pride Week, but that's about it" (Remy). Transgender woman participant Terra agreed with this observation stating that "having a little pride flag next to the logo always helps because it's like "Okay, at least someone that sets up the poster understands a little bit

about the LGBTQ community". Additionally, a league's communication strategies is also a domain where there was reportedly a lack of explicitness about transgender inclusivity. As someone who has been extensively involved in her local hockey association not only as a player, but also as a coach and an official, Darrien (transgender woman) was disappointed "about how progressive they could have appeared" in the online news story where she was featured:

> [W]hen I got… invited to play in Wisconsin as part of Team Trans,… I say I'm a coach, I'm a player, I'm an official… I got some publicity… I was refereeing a game in [name of city] where the news or the journalist wanted to come take some pictures of me actually officiating. In the article, I talked about how supportive my local association was, and I just wish they had jumped on the bandwagon. It's not about me, but they could have used that news story and said, "Hey, this is one of our officials. This is great. We support diversity and inclusivity", which they say they do, but they don't do anything to show it. Right?... I gave them a golden opportunity to… say… "Hey, look, as an association, what we are supportive of!". And nobody did. I mean, whether they cared or not, it's important in our sport. It's important in all sports.

One participant's solution was joining a queer-only recreational league in the city. One would think that by using the descriptor "queer-only", these leagues have succeeded in expressing their explicit support to the queer community. Yet, Remy (transgender man) could not help but think that he would be alienated when joining this queer-only recreational league:

> And I reached out to [name of league], but it's mostly for queer women. And they said that it was fine to come if you weren't a straight cisguy, or gay cisguy. But I kind of got the impression that they were making a female-only space and so then I didn't feel super comfortable… She specifically said it was like, female-centered, and that they didn't allow cismen, which is fair, but like, I also looked at the photos of the teams every year and it was like 99% women (Remy).

It is understood that the mentioned league is a queer recreational soccer league which serves as an inclusive soccer community for queer players self-identifying as queer, transgender, or gender diverse. However, there happens to be more woman-identified individuals than man-identified individuals and, of course, this is Remy's perception based on the photos he saw on the league's Facebook account. It might be necessary, though, to point out that Remy himself made assumptions about others' gender solely by looking at their physical characteristics and

the way they present themselves in those photos. This exhibits how the traditional mentality about sex and gender has been deeply embedded and re-inscribed by society, even in those who challenge the naturalization of sex and gender. As a result, this exact mentality has informed Remy's perception of the gender of players in that league, which consequently brought Remy to the conclusion that the league had "99% women". In addition, what Remy was told about the league being basically "female-centered" contradicts the league's spirit, which was to welcome all members of the queer community, including transgender men and those whose sex assigned at birth is male but self-identify as non-binary in terms of gender. A few other participants who played in women's recreational sport leagues also described issues they had with the way their leagues expressed their support for transgender people. As an example, transgender woman participant Nicola mentioned that "[t]he Women's league [where Nicola is playing] is fully accepting of trans people [but before joining], I just didn't know how to get into it [the Women's league] and I felt uncomfortable [so] I started off with a queer league and then people in that league introduced me to the Women's League". Further corroboration included, "I think if I didn't have those connections, I would have an issue, trying to find a team". In another instance, transgender woman participant Emily regarded her teammates as being "quite trans-inclusive or trans-positive", but "sometimes they're really awkward about it and supportive in ways that just feel weird and unhelpful". Emily noticed among her teammates the incapacity of showcasing their transgender inclusivity, "for a lot of people it's like, "Oh, we support trans people" but maybe they're not great at explicitly being, like, "Okay what do you need for support?" or like, "What does that mean to you?". To better illustrate the concern, Emily recalled an "uncomfortable conversation that was really long" between herself and one of her teammates:

> I've had a teammate who…basically, like, pretended to not know that I was trans or like, it would have never occurred to her that I was trans. And I was kinda, like, "Well, no". You know, "Sorry. That's not… I don't believe you basically"... [I]t kind of came out that she was like, "Oh well, you know, I wouldn't make that assumption".

> I was like “No, like, I don’t want you to pretend that you don’t know what’s going on. You know, I would rather you acknowledge like yeah you’re trans” and like, that’s probably hard sometimes because you have to play against other people and like “Are they being nice to you?”... I think that I want my teammates to be able to, like, acknowledge that... “Oh yeah. You’re trans. Your experience of playing in this league is a bit different, and you know there’s other trans women in this league and like, what does it mean to be like supportive of them?” versus like, “Oh yeah like you’re just one of the girls and like, we’re not really gonna acknowledge, like, that your experience might be, like, different”.

How Emily felt when her transgender status was not explicitly acknowledged by her teammates can be related to what Stafford (2015) and Asare (2019) discussed about when people say “I don’t see colour!” followed by “I don’t see race!”. According to these two authors, by professing not to see colour or race, people just ignore racism (if not aggravating it) rather than solving it. The same should be for gender, noting that gender is less visible than racial status (White vs. not White). The gist of what Emily was trying to convey is the importance of acknowledging one’s differences and being explicitly supportive of them, because simply opening the door for everyone to come play is not enough:

> I think acknowledging that I’m trans allows you to be supportive in so many other ways… [W]hen there’s a sign on a washroom that's like “Trans people welcome”, you know, it’s like, “Well nothing about this washroom has changed except that like people are reminded when they walk in that, like, trans people exist”. And, you know, there's this sort of like authority saying like, “Yeah, it’s fine. You’ll be fine”. I think that sort of like explicit acknowledgement is something that actually feels good to me… You know it could just be things like when leagues... have a, like, “Oh it’s pride so we’re gonna like explicitly acknowledge like queer people who play in our league”. And I really think that they should be trying harder to do that for trans people and being like “Yeah it’s a thing. It happens”.

Also, another lacking sign that could otherwise show an explicitness about transgender inclusivity in a league is, said Emily (transgender woman), “it’d be nice if they had a bit more like representation of queer and trans people in staff positions” since “I always felt quite good playing against this other team that had a couple of trans women on their team because… “Okay, well, like, I know that if you’re okay being the teammate of a trans woman, then like you should be okay playing against a trans woman”. But it was usually not the case”.

Not only did this study's second theme highlight that the lack of explicitness about transgender inclusivity was not uncommon across different recreational sport leagues in BC, but also it revealed how transgender participants' experiences were informed by the issue. Its direct impact extended beyond uncertainty of an inclusive space to disengagement in recreational sport as shared by a few participants. For example, "I stopped playing [as] I don't want to really play in a league where I'm not sure whether people want me there" (Emily, transgender woman). Alternatively, an avoidance of social sport environments was also observed, "I also just… kind of switched to solo sports [so] I don't have to worry about things like queer leagues and whether there's going to be an LGBT friendly space" (Remy, transgender man).

4.3.3 Theme 3: Heaven for sports

Despite negative experiences in recreational sports, there was also a great deal of positive experiences, reflected in the third theme that emerged in participants' stories. In addition, this third theme also captures ideal scenarios regarded by participants as ingredients to the creation of a "heaven for sports" where equitable opportunities exist, diversity is embraced, and inclusivity of all people is paramount. The theme is organized into three categories: (a) Education matters, (b) Skill-segregation instead of sex-segregation, and (c) Safe and welcoming sporting environments.

4.3.3.1 Education matters.

Participants asserted the role of education in leveraging the understanding of how to best include transgender people in recreational sport environments. Since "many people don't understand what trans is and are afraid to ask questions" (L.C., transgender woman) because of "fears of the unknown" (Kira, transgender woman), "the team itself was a little bit awkward for those that didn't know what being trans was" (Terra, transgender woman).

While working as a lifeguard at a recreational swimming pool, Terra "proved people's perceptions wrong of transgender people in general":

> I was their first transgender lifeguard… [s]o I wrote a report to every lifeguard in [name of city] saying "This is what being trans is, and this is who I am". And a lot of them had never met someone trans before, never had the perspective of a trans person before. And they're like "Oh, I thought a trans person was this creepy person pretending to be someone else. And this is just you. It's not you being someone else. It's just you".

One suggestion put forward by L.C. (transgender woman) is "they could do a little gender diversity training… when they meet with the team representatives [because] every year they have, like, a league manager meeting". Having a similar thought, Nicola (transgender woman), when referring to the microaggression she once experienced with a referee, agreed that it would be a good idea for recreational sport organizations to incorporate "sensitivity training" sessions into the training agenda for coaches and referees enhancing the "understanding that just because someone looks a certain way or act a certain way doesn't mean that they are more likely to behave a certain way". Alternatively, transgender woman Kira expressed her concerns with the approach currently being taken by recreational sport organizations with efforts to educate their members in transgender-related issues, while also proposing a different approach:

> They sort of teach the coach how to deal with it, but they don't teach the parent part. They don't teach the player part, they just tell the coaches what to do but they leave all the other components that are part of the game, you know? So it's pretty silo-oriented, meaning they only focus on one area, one area. We need a more comprehensive approach for dealing with issues… So if there is a transgender 101 for teammates, transgender 101 for coaches,... [and] if there's youth, then there's transgender 101 for parents… [T]he game keepers, the referees, the people who watch this, they need to be educated too… I guess the ideas would be nice if we can educate everyone involved [in recreational sport]. I know this is my dream state. This is my heaven. Heaven for sports".

Education has the potential to combat with misinformation like "J.K. Rowling and what she said in her blog" (L.C., transgender woman). Back in the year of 2020, the famed British author J.K. Rowling made multiple transphobic remarks on her personal Twitter account,

claiming that the existence of transgender identities is "doing demonstrable harm in seeking to erode 'woman' as a political and biological class and offering cover to predators" (Wallis, 2020, para. 3). While the impact of such information on transgender people is huge, recreational sport organizations should be able to do their part on providing the education that sport participants need about this matter so that they can have the confidence in making judgments as to whether or not such information is worth believing. Education on transgender-related matters would also enhance the use of correct personal pronouns and names, which in turn conveys acceptance and validates transgender people as human beings. Transgender man J.T. was amazed by how positive his teammates' reception was of his coming out. When he introduced his preferred name as J.T.,

> a lot of them were like, "Okay, well, that's easier to remember". And everyone was really, you know, happy about it and then they started making jokes about my life because I chose Jesse Tyler instead of Tyler Jesse… like, "Oh J.T. like Justin Trudeau?". And I was like "No, no no". "More like Justin Timberlake maybe?".

Apart from names, in the view of Kira (transgender woman), "our pronouns are [also] very important,... should be recognized and validates a trans person". Therefore, transgender woman participant Darrien further suggested that people, if unsure, ask what one's personal pronouns are. However, approaching someone to ask for their personal pronouns can at times be considered not appropriate since the person might understand that they are being asked such a question because they did not 'look like a cisgender person'. That said, Emily (transgender woman) shared an approach that would be more subtle in her opinions:

> Like, if it's like, there's new players and we're like introducing each other. It's like if you're a cis, you can say your pronouns. And then that allows an "in" for someone else to introduce their pronouns without being like, "Oh, this is the like weird trans person who's saying their pronouns". So there's kind of ways where you can invite someone to open a bit of a discussion about their gender or like, give you information of their gender, without being like, "Oh, are you trans? What pronoun[s] do you want me to use?".

As illustrated above, participants called attention to the role of education on transgender-related issues among all stakeholders in recreational sport, hence the suggestions

of having education provided to these entities. It is important to recognize that each stakeholder has their own role to play in building inclusive recreational sport environments, which means different educational approaches should be taken into consideration in order to optimize the power each of them wields with the equipped knowledge.

4.3.3.2 Skill-segregation instead of sex-segregation.

Most participants expressed a desire for recreational sport to not be segregated based on sex and gender, but to be categorized by skill levels instead. Transgender people are perceived to have athletic advantages respectively due to their (formerly) male body or the testosterone treatment they take. The above breeds out of the perennial belief that male bodies are naturally stronger and faster than female bodies, despite the fact that “I know a lot of women, they can kick ass on guys hockey” (Darrien, transgender woman). This resonates with what Kane (1995) called ‘the sport continuum’, “in which many women routinely outperform men and, in some cases, women outperform most - if not all - men in a variety of sports and physical skills/activities” (p. 193). As such, to include everyone and optimize everyone’s strength, “it's not about segregating by gender..., just find the [athletic] skill” (Darrien). According to some participants, fairness can be ensured by people “get[ting] tiered into levels” (Darrien) based on their athletic abilities because “if I’m not very good, regardless of my gender, and I play on a team, you know, that will alter the whole team skill” (Marisa, transgender woman). On that note, the rule of co-ed teams having to have at least two women on the field at any given time is preferably abolished, since balance and fairness can still be achieved if people of the same levels play together, regardless of their gender. It is also worth mentioning that this is recreational sport, which is played in the prime interest of leisure, fun and enjoyment, when “most the time people are either so out of shape or so non-competitive that gender doesn't really matter” (Terra, transgender woman). This is not to say

that fairness should be overlooked in recreational sport, but it should rather be looked at with a different approach as to increase the participation of all people, such as "treat[ing] them as human beings, not because they're trans, not because they're gay, not because they're lesbian or whatever. And they just want to play and learn the sport like everyone else" (Kira, transgender woman). However, the reality is "it's much easier to ask someone, "Are you a boy or a girl or other? And where can we put you in here?" (Marisa, transgender woman) than asking "What's your ability?" (Darrien, transgender woman). In addition, measuring recreational sport participants by skills, not by genders, has the capacity to potentially include non-binary folks who have been structurally marginalized due to the violent reinforcement of the gender binary in sport.

On a side note, skill-segregation over sex-segregation will allow there to be various options for players at all levels, given that participants in this study have different athletic identities, with some being experienced players and some having relatively limited sporting experiences. Several participants revealed that they enjoyed being challenged by the competitiveness of the recreational sports that they played. For instance, Kira (transgender woman) explained that the reason she liked playing in her competitive volleyball league was because "it fully challenged me as a volleyball player. I was able to play my position. I was able to show everyone my skills. There were areas that should reflect back to me where my weakness was so I can improve". Similarly, Marisa, who is a transgender woman, preferred playing in a co-ed league to playing in a women's league due to the competitive level because

> it was fast, it was hard. It was lots of training, lots of coaching. That's the caliber that I'm used to and that's the caliber that I enjoy, I feel challenged by… The speed of the game, it's just it's bang, bang, bang, bang. So there is a physical difference in the teams. And like, for me personally, based off the position I play, it's very appealing to want to play at a higher speed.

On the other hand, there were participants who wish there were more opportunities to play sports recreationally at a more intermediate or beginner level:

> It would be nice to have more casual recreational opportunities, like… [name of league], you have to try out for the team and stuff, like it's a little more of an intermediate style game. So I think that there's room for more, maybe like, drop in or like less intense sports teams of various sports for LGBT people (Remy, transgender man).
>
> [I wish there was] a team that wasn't so focused on like, I guess, the competitiveness of the sport. I love basketball. I don't really care if I win or lose. I do enjoy playing the sport but… I want there to be all options, at least for just going and having fun. 'Cause it feels like there's a lot of hoops you got to jump through for one (Tiffany, transgender woman).

Participants wanted to stress the importance of skill-segregation over sex-segregation, recognizing its inclusiveness, for "sports and outdoor activities are pretty important so I think it should be more accessible to everyone" (Tiffany, transgender woman) and "it would be amazing if everybody can be included in a sport" (Marisa, transgender woman).

4.3.3.3 Safe and welcoming sporting environments.

The notion of a safe and welcoming sporting environment for everyone is often corroborated when instances of discrimination in recreational sport were appropriately addressed. Darrien (transgender woman) recalled her experience coaching in the men's league, where she never heard of any discriminatory comments aimed towards her but "a colleague of mine did once… and she kicked him off the ice like and he was suspended for 10 games". In a similar way, J.T. (transgender man) was reassured by the coaches that behaviours communicating discrimination and harassment should never go undisciplined. Having received several derogatory remarks from one of the members of the opposing team, J.T. "went to the coaches [and] they agreed that, like, something had to be done about it [and] I think she got suspended for three games. Because... they don't accept any bullying and harassment, they have, like, a zero tolerance against it". The importance of this responsiveness to discrimination for transgender participants in recreational sport has been continuously stressed because "there's always the question of "Okay, if I'm attacked, who am

I going to talk to?" (Terra, transgender woman). Likewise, Kira (transgender woman) mentioned that

> in this sport world, there's nothing there to compensate, to talk about this. It's recreational, it's not competition… [T]here's no guidelines for trans people to where to take these things to… It'd be nice if there's a body of transgender rules or regulations to oversee all sports in B.C. or Canada. When transgender people play sports so and their issues come up, they can take it to a third party, just like human rights case, right?

Building safe and welcoming sporting environments does not necessarily always have to start with policies and guidelines, because "you can make a policy saying, you know, this league is inclusive to different genders and all that [b]ut it comes down to the actual people… that make up the teams" (L.C., transgender woman). Participants described trans-only or queer-only sporting spaces as places where they had a chance to "come together and celebrate our similarities and differences" (Darrien, transgender woman), and most importantly, experience "a sense of… community" (Emily, transgender woman). Indeed, Kira emphasized (transgender woman), "I'm more accepted more in the queer [sport] community than I am in a non-queer [sport] community… [T]hey all knew that I'm transgender woman, and it's fully accepted. It seems like when I'm out to everyone, it's much more positive". Emily further explained that "I've been on teams with a lot of like queer cis women... and, like, gender non-conforming women and I think generally they get it more and they know how to be more supportive". Nonetheless, non-queer sport spaces were also characterized by a number of participants as safe and welcoming spaces. For example, in Terra's (transgender woman) co-ed seven-a-side soccer team, "not only that was they wanted me on the team, they wanted me to play. I didn't feel like they were like, allowing me to play [but] they wanted me to be there. And… being wanted is a positive feeling". Terra's team captain even assured her that "when you're out, awesome, we will fight with you to say that you are a woman and, like, we'll come to that hill when we have to". Another participant (M., transgender woman) "contemplated quitting" recreational hockey many times due to instances of discrimination,

"but I always had… four or five people on my team or friends that were really "No, keep on playing! Screw them!". Also, a safe and welcoming sporting environment for M. was manifested through "going to the bar afterwards, grabbing food after a Friday night practice or the soccer parties or, like, cupcakes on the field because it's people's birthdays, or the freezing your butt off on, like, terrible cold night, or days and like, it's all of that". Participants recognized that with them being treated as "just another teammate" (Darrien, transgender woman), "just another person, another friend, another player" (Terra, transgender woman), being transgender was no longer an issue. Darrien was overwhelmed when her concern of "Well, I'm not fully female [and s]ometimes it's hard to find a spot when you're goaltender" was met with "No, yes, you are, you are one of us" from people in her league because "it's not about being transgender, they just needed a goaltender that was good and wanted to be part of the team". In the same manner, as someone who plays goalie,

> I would get referred to different teams, because, you know, I've played with one person, they're like, "You're so good. Let me tell everybody I know about you… And you know, like, this year, I had two or three different people call and ask me, you know, "Do you want to play on our team?", which was really nice. It was really awesome to get those calls… And through all of those interactions, nobody has said like, you know, "You're different" (Marisa, transgender woman).

These stories above surely served as a demonstration of safe and welcoming sporting environments where their gender journey was not allowed to hinder their recreational sport participation and enjoyment. Either it was through policies and guidelines or through interactions with people, a safe and welcoming sporting environment definitely is an important contributor to the creation of a "heaven for sports".

4.4 Integration of findings

As mentioned earlier, the analysis of textual data was performed to become sensitized to main concepts (Bowen, 2019), familiarizing the researcher with the topic of transgender experiences in sport prior to conducting the main phase of data collection through semi-

structured interviews. In addition, sensitizing concepts can be changed, supplemented or replaced by concepts emergent after the main data analysis (Padgett, 2004). In this study, sensitizing concepts (textual data analysis findings) complement emergent concepts (interview data findings). All three thematic areas from the textual data analysis findings can be allocated to support only two out of three thematic areas from interview data findings. That means findings from interview data are found to be broader than, while they are at the same time strengthened by, findings from textual data analysis. Thus, findings from interview data replaced findings from textual data analysis and succeeded to be the main findings of the study. Details of the complementarity are offered below and in Table 4.

Interview data theme 1: Stigma presented stigma faced by transgender participants in recreational sport at two fundamental levels: structural and individual, with the latter consisting of enacted stigma and felt stigma. Meanwhile, textual data theme 1 reported the exclusion transgender participants encountered in sport, also manifested at structural level and interpersonal level. Due to the similarities, findings from the textual data theme 1 could entirely support the interview data theme 1. Also, the textual data theme 2 was able to partly complement the sub-theme "Structural stigma" of the interview data's first theme since it condemned the culprit behind gendered clothing: the gender and sex binary.

Interview data theme 2: Lack of explicitness about transgender inclusivity emerged to be a completely new and different finding from the interview data analysis. This theme was not complemented by any findings from textual data analysis.

Interview data theme 3: Heaven for sports was focused on analyzing transgender sport participants' positive experiences in recreational sport, serving to inform the creation of a 'heaven for sports'. Given that a part of the textual data's theme 2 spoke about the potential of sport to connect transgender participants with their bodies if the sport clothing was not gendered or at least corresponded to participants' self-identified gender, it added an

additional aspect to the second sub-theme of the interview data's third theme. In other words, if sport was to be segregated based on skills instead of sex, sport clothing should also be changed to gender-neutral, which in turn would act as a means for transgender participants to powerfully connect with their bodies. In addition, the textual data's third theme fit perfectly as equal with the sub-theme "Safe and welcoming sporting environments" within the interview data's third theme since they are of the same thematic areas.

Table 5

The complementarity of textual data analysis findings with interview data analysis findings

Interview data themes	Interview data sub-themes	Complemented by
Theme 1: Stigma	Structural stigma	Textual data theme 1: Exclusion Textual data theme 2: Sport and gender dysphoria (negative)
	Enacted stigma	Textual data theme 1: Exclusion
	Felt stigma	
Theme 2: Lack of explicitness about transgender inclusivity		
Theme 3: Heaven for sports	Education matters	
	Skill-segregation instead of sex-segregation	Textual data theme 2: Sport and gender dysphoria (positive)
	Safe and welcoming sporting environments	Textual data theme 3: Safe and welcoming sporting environments

In summary, textual data analysis findings are integrated entirely with the findings from interview data analysis. Findings from both analyses demonstrated the depth of stigma against transgender people in recreational sport. Whether it is manifested at structural level or individual level, this stigma greatly contributes to the exclusion of transgender people, making recreational sport remain a hostile site for this particular population. Although many recreational sport organizations have attempts to adjust their practices to reflect greater

inclusivity of transgender participants, a lack of explicitness in this reflection was identified. In addition, positive experiences were also shared by participants as to inform an intentional change in transgender-inclusive policies and practices could be made. A further discussion around these findings will be offered in the next chapter, where connections with previous research are illustrated and applied considerations are introduced.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research is to: 1) determine how transgender adults' participation in recreational sports in BC, Canada is informed by their experiences with the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport; and 2) inform an enhanced and intentional change in transgender-inclusive policies and practices in terms of the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport in BC, Canada. This fifth chapter presents a discussion on key findings presented in Chapter 4, including identification of applied considerations for recreational sport practices and policies. This chapter ends with a presentation of the study's limitations and recommendations for future research, followed by a conclusion.

5.2 Discussion of the study's key findings

This study was guided by a primary research question: "Do sex-segregation policies and practices in recreational sports in BC, Canada influence if and how transgender adults participate in recreational sports?". Three main themes emerged from data analysis and represent three key findings. They are: 1) Stigma; 2) Lack of explicitness about transgender inclusivity; and 3) Heaven for sports.

5.2.1 Key finding 1

The study reveals that stigma against transgender participants persists in sex-segregated recreational sports. In the present study, a multi-level perspective was used to interrogate stigma at structural and individual levels, consisting of four types of stigma: structural stigma, enacted stigma, felt stigma, and internalized stigma (Herek, 2007; 2009). All of these stigma types, except for internalized stigma, were found in the study's first finding, with each type feeding and building on each other. Specifically, structural stigma is

manifested through the implementation of recreational sport policies, rules, infrastructure, or team formation, all of which are designed based on the gender binary in the best interests of cisgender people. Subsequently, this kind of stigma naturalizes the gender binary while still being informed by it, leading to individually enacted stigma (e.g. discrimination, harassment, etc.) in recreational sport against transgender people who do not fit the gender binary. As a result, transgender participants who play recreational sport have to take steps to protect themselves for fear that they will be subject to this kind of stigma when they participate in sport. This, in turn, ultimately supports the gender binary and reinforces the idea that the domain of sport is not compatible with the presence of transgender people, hence the transgender-exclusive structure. Stigma against transgender people in sport is a participation constraint commonly discussed in past studies (e.g. Symons et al., 2010; Elling-Machartzki, 2017; Hargie et al., 2017; Stewart et al., 2018) and particularly those that examined lived experiences of transgender people with sex-segregated recreational sports (Semerjian & Cohen, 2006; Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2012). However, the impact of stigma on transgender participants' engagement with recreational sports is well illustrated in this finding through a multi-level interrogation of stigma. Examples from the finding include disengagement in sport (Emily, Nicola), investment in passing (Marisa), reluctant disclosure of transgender status (L.C., Tiffany), concealment of transgender status (Kira), and avoidance of sport gendered facilities (Terra).

In addition, not only does discrimination against trans people in recreational sport persist, but they also become more sophisticated and nuanced through microaggressions. Microaggressions against transgender people are well documented across sport settings, such as lesbian softball league (Travers & Deri, 2011), public recreation facilities (Oakleaf & Richmond, 2017), broad physical activity contexts (Elling-Machartzki, 2017; Herrick & Duncan, 2018), educational institutions and other spaces of organized sports (Kulick et al.,

2018). The study's first key finding supports the growing body of research by adding recreational sports into the previously mentioned list of sport settings where microaggressions against trans people are not uncommon.

5.2.2 Key finding 2

The second finding of the study describes a lack of explicitness about transgender inclusivity across recreational sport organizations. Transgender participants either reported feelings of uncertainty as to whether or not they would be welcome, or were under the impression that they would not be welcome, to play recreational sports. The finding emerged solely from the interview data, and was not supported by any of the textual data findings. Furthermore, in the previous two studies that explored transgender people's lived experiences exclusively with recreational sport (Semerjian & Cohen, 2006; Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2012), there were not similar findings either. This finding is then considered a contribution of the current study to the existing literature around transgender people's experiences in sport. The reason why the finding emerged in the present study is assumed to be related to transgender-inclusive policies and practices carried out by recreational sport organizations. That is, recreational sport organizations might have rushed to have their policies and practices geared towards being more inclusive of transgender participants without understanding exactly what being transgender-inclusive meant. For example, in a recent seminar about barriers in engaging/retaining girls, women and non-binary people in recreation, the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association ([CPRA], 2020,) admits that they themselves had erred in understanding inclusive practices. In their own words,

> there was a notion that if we offered a girls' program, or if we offered a Muslim ladies' swim program [or a trans people's program], [all the boxes were] checked. We've done our part. We didn't dive deeper. If we had a program, we were doing our part. It wasn't until lawsuits started to come about, where folks started to have to

> really truly examine and go deeper into policies, and go into practices, and go into really your culture. That work is being done. We are not there yet. That is why we are here (29:30).

This misdirection leads to transgender-inclusive policies and practices being implemented, yet in ways that are not clear and often confusing or misleading to some transgender recreational sport participants. Although this finding was not identified in previous research, it adds values to what has been previously included in recommended practices by the Trans and Gender Variant Inclusion Working Group ([TGVIWG], 2014) and the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport ([CCES], 2016). Both these organizations suggest that policies, practices and staff of recreational sport organizations need to be explicitly and actively supportive of transgender participants.

The failure to exert an explicitness about transgender inclusivity in policies and practices as mentioned above equals the failure to subvert a sport system that favours anyone who does not conform to conventional gender norms. It affects transgender recreational sport participation. Due to feelings of uncertainty as to whether a recreational sport organization is transgender-inclusive, transgender recreational sport participants chose not to play sport (Remy), joined other leagues first to facilitate the access (Nicola), developed discontent with the organization (Darrien) or frictions with teammates (Emily). Therefore, the study's second finding reveals that a lack of explicitness in transgender-inclusive policies, practices and staff attitudes is a barrier to transgender recreational sport participation.

5.2.3 Key finding 3

The third study finding emerged out of ideal scenarios offered by transgender recreational sport participants based on their own positive experiences to build a so-called "heaven for sports". These are to be sent to recreational sport organizations (Appendix A) to influence change in policies and practices. The finding was organized in three main

categories: education matters, skill-segregation instead of sex-segregation, and safe and welcoming sporting environments. These categories are associated with each other as they each inform the other.

Participants recommended a far-reaching provision of education on transgender-related issues to all people involved in recreational sports. The role of education on transgender-related issues in sport has been stressed by the CCES (2016) to be "essential to creating an inclusive verbal and emotional environment in which everyone can be authentic" (p. 26). The TGVIWG (2014) also states that strategies to create transgender-inclusive practices and policies can be born from information sharing and education sessions. Participants further discussed how incorporating education as one of the policies could help combat negative stereotypes and tackle misgendering, which are believed to cause significant impacts to the sport participation of transgender people (Travers & Deri, 2011; Elling-Machartzki, 2017; Herrick & Duncan, 2018; Pérez-Samaniego et al., 2019).

Further, participants suggested a sport structure of skill-segregation instead of sex-segregation. This recommendation resonates with what Kane (1995) called 'the sport continuum', "in which many women routinely outperform men and, in some cases, women outperform most - if not all - men in a variety of sports and physical skills/activities" (p. 193). Foddy and Savulescu (2011) added that adopting the sport continuum structure has the potential of transcending the gender binary and eradicating artificial assumptions about gender and sex. Indeed, in the view of Zirin (2013), "male and female bodies are more similar than they are distinguishable from each other. And when training and nutrition are equal, it is increasingly difficult to tell the difference" (p. 140). If recreational sport is organized solely based on athletic skills, not only will it create more opportunities for participants of all athletic levels to play, but it also can pave a way to greater inclusivity of transgender participants.

In addition, participants emphasized the positive impact that safe and welcoming sporting environments could have on participants' participation. The preceding statement is supported by past studies across different sport settings (e.g. Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2012; Jones et al., 2017a; Herrick & Duncan, 2018). Safe and welcoming sporting environments, in participants' notion, refer to sporting spaces free of stigma where transgender-inclusive policies are in place and participants are supported by teammates and coaches, particularly in instances of discrimination. A complementarity was found between this notion and the study's first finding about the multi-level stigma which negatively affects participants' participation in recreational sport. That means, safe and welcoming recreational sporting environments encourage the participation of transgender participants.

In summary, all three findings of the study managed to showcase how the participation of transgender participants is informed by policies and guidelines in recreational sex-segregated sports. Not only does the study support findings from past studies about stigma being a constraint to transgender people's participation in recreational sports, but it also identifies a newly emergent barrier to the participation in recreational sports of this population - the lack of explicitness in transgender-inclusive policies and practices and staff. In addition, the study introduces best practices in recreational sports recommended by transgender participants themselves, while validating similar policy practices previously endorsed by sport advocacy organizations like the TGVIWG and CCES.

5.3 Applied considerations

One of the study's objectives is to inform an enhanced and intentional change in transgender-inclusive policies and practices in terms of the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport in BC, Canada. Applied considerations are found in the study's third theme "Heaven for sports", where ideal scenarios were made by transgender participants themselves based on their own experiences. A desire to have safe and welcoming recreational sport

environments full of awareness, free of stigma, and not dependent upon traditional beliefs about sex and gender was emphasized throughout the theme.

The first consideration that can be applied towards the increased awareness and reduced stigma is widespread provision of education on transgender-related topics. Although incorporating training or knowledge sharing sessions for coaches, officials, staff and players is imperative, it needs to be implemented in such a way as to not further marginalize the transgender community or hurt other identities (persons of colour, sexual minorities, etc.). To achieve that, the training language must not reflect the gender binary, training information must be ensured to be accurate, training facilitators should be members of the transgender community, and the influence of each recreational sport stakeholders (player, coach, official, player's family, etc.) in enhancing greater transgender inclusivity should be made clear. While many individuals, especially those who have the privilege of already being included in the sport system, may not find themselves interested in these training and knowledge sharing sessions, recreation providers must understand that it is certainly not a matter of interest, but it is a matter of human rights (Voyles, 2019). According to the United Nations, "[a]ll human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (Article 1) and the Government of Canada (2020) adds that "[e]veryone should enjoy the same fundamental human rights, regardless of their sexual orientation and their gender identity and expression" (para. 2). Furthermore, both the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (2017) and the *BC Human Rights Code* (2021) were amended respectively by the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia to include gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds for discrimination of any kind. That said, recreation providers should come up with more creative and interactive knowledge sharing sessions to attract as more attendees as possible, optimizing the educational impact. It might be beneficial for recreation providers to build training materials with real-life scenarios taken from the study's first theme "Stigma",

helping people reflect on their daily actions and the implication of their actions on transgender people being stigmatized. Examples include the use of pronouns, gender identification on registration forms, stereotypical gender assumptions, or the unconscious bias against racialized individuals, and many more.

Another ideal scenario made by participants was to organize recreational sports based on athletic skills instead of sex categories. As presented in the discussion section (section 5.2.3), structural change has the potential to subvert the traditional beliefs about sex and gender, enhancing the inclusivity of people from all backgrounds. No matter what gender they identify with, no matter what category their biological characteristics fall into, no matter what abilities they are of, there will always be a place for them to engage in recreational sport based on their athletic skills. This change can take place in eligibility policy, registration forms, team formation, team names, tournaments, and uniforms. Given that this is a system change, recreation providers may consider having a test run with this proposition or a tournament of teams with this structure before deciding to widely implement it. As explained by Green (2016), "[c]hange in complex systems occurs in slow steady processes such as demographic shifts and in sudden, unforeseeable jumps" (p. 16). An exemplar for this statement was illustrated in the work of Sherry (2010) who used sport to re-engage marginalized people with the community through the Community Street Soccer program and the Homeless World Cup. When social change happens through small and incremental changes in people's lives (Hartmann, 2003), people can realize what will work and what will not work in order to change the system with a better alternative as opposed to changing everything at once.

The third applied consideration is to create safe and welcoming recreational sport environments. The CCES (2016) identifies education as one of the crucial means to create safe and welcoming recreational sport environments, which is consistent with what was

recommended as the first applied consideration. On the other hand, the idea of safe and welcoming can be corroborated with recreation providers offering points of contact where transgender participants can take their complaints. Although there is no need to establish a separate complaint filing point of contacts for transgender participants, recreation providers ought to ensure that the established points of contact are accessible, approachable, and knowledgeable to the extent that transgender participants will be comfortable enough to report an issue. For instance, inviting a trans person to be one of the points of contact is a good place to start. Also, excursions or team building activities, of which transgender participants are a part, can serve as a means not only to reiterate that transgender participants are welcome, but also to explore transgender participants' opinions about what is and what is not working in the league/organization in an informal and intimate way.

The practices recommended above were made by this study's participants themselves based on their own positive experiences and, therefore, are somewhat indicative of what has been working for them in terms of policy practice. However, alternatively "if you look at what doesn't work, then you can come up with… what does work" (CPRA, 2020, 31:02). Plenty of room for improvement was identified in relation to how explicit transgender-inclusive recreation organizations should be. Recreation providers can start with social media where they publicly express the organizations/leagues' vision that embraces the participation of transgender people. Monitoring and celebrating a calendar with days of significance of all people, including those of transgender people (e.g. Transgender Day of Remembrance, Trans Day of Visibility, Trans Awareness Month, etc.) helps showcase the organization's efforts to make every recreational sport participant matter. Likewise, having staff and personnel wear name tags with their pronouns or introducing everyone's pronouns to a new league member would certainly nurture a culture of pronouns, thus discouraging misgendering and ratifying a safe sporting environment. Also, regularly participating in Pride-related events in the

community can bring about a positive image of an organization, facilitating access for transgender people especially those who are hesitating to join sport. Moreover, another way recreation providers can do to increase the explicitness in transgender inclusivity is simply checking in with transgender participants to find out how the organization/league can be supportive of them instead of making assumptions. Good intentions are not always good if not executed properly. This is consistent with Kerpen (2017) who explained "[j]ust because you thought you were helping the situation doesn't mean you were. In fact, you ruined everything!... With that in mind, I came up with the Platinum Rule: Do unto others as *they* would want done to *them*" (p. 95 - 96, emphasis original). Fundamentally, the rule encourages people to see things from others' perspective, refraining from imposing their own world view onto others for everyone is different. Recreation providers can surely incorporate this mentality into their strategic planning when it comes to designing policies and practices geared towards greater inclusivity of transgender participants.

Recreational sport policy makers and recreation organization managers should consider adopting some (or all) scenarios presented above depending on their own situations. It is imperative that one realizes how impactful change will be if everyone understands and fulfills their role in recreational sports. In addition, the value of having a two-way dialogue between recreation providers and transgender participants needs to be realized so that more evidence-based recommendations can be introduced.

5.3.1 Knowledge mobilization plan

The purpose of the present study is to 1) determine how transgender adults' participation in recreational sports in BC, Canada is informed by their experiences with the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sports; and 2) inform an enhanced and intentional change in transgender-inclusive policies and practices in terms of the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport in BC, Canada. That said, it is crucial that the

study's findings and applied considerations be communicated to relevant entities in an effective manner towards optimizing the knowledge mobilization plan.

First, the final approved thesis will be made available to those who participated in the study and relevant or interested organizations. Next, study participants will be consulted and invited to work with me on developing the executive summary report, which describes the study's findings and applied considerations in the form of an infographic. This executive summary report will also be distributed by email to organizations listed in Appendix A. These organizations, from which study participants were recruited, may be interested in learning about the study's outcomes in a compelling and concise form of presentation like an infographic rather than the full thesis. In addition, the study's key findings will be presented during a presentation at the Canadian Congress for Leisure Research 2021, and potentially other similar scholarly events (e.g., WLCE VIU Points), and in a scholarly publication (e.g., WLCE Case Studies Volume). In addition, events with general audiences (e.g. community events), can be venues for the study's key findings and applied considerations to be communicated in lay language. Details of my knowledge mobilization plan for this study are provided below in Table 6.

Table 6

Knowledge mobilization plan outline

Audience	Coommunication channel	Communication tool	Purpose	Timeline
Study participants	• Email	• Full thesis • Infographic executive summary of findings and applied considerations	• Increase awareness • Encourage participants themselves to take action	June, 2021
Recreational sport organizations (e.g. Out For	• Email • Facebook page	• Infographic executive summary of findings and	• Influence change in recreational sport policies and practices	June, 2021

Kicks, Queer Van Soccer, PacificSport Okanagan, etc.).		applied considerations	• Encourage recreation leaders/allies to take action	
2SLGBTQ+ organizations and their memberships (e.g. Nanaimo Pride Society, Trans Alliance Society, Transgender Vancouver, etc.).	• Email • Facebook page • Transgender-related community events and community-sponsored events)	• Infographic executive summary of findings and applied considerations • Presentation	• Increase awareness • Encourage recreation leaders/allies to take action	June, 2021
Academic audience	• Canadian Congress for Leisure Research (May 30th, 2021) • WLCE VIU Points • Journal article	• Study presentation • Infographic executive summary of findings and applied considerations • Scholarly publication	• Increase awareness • Encourage recreation leaders/allies to take action • Inform/encourage future research	May, 2021 onward
General audience	• Community events	• Study presentation (lay language) • Infographic executive summary of findings and applied considerations	• Increase awareness • Encourage allies to take action	June, 2021 onward

5.4 Study limitations and recommendations for future research

5.4.1 Study limitations

No research is perfect for "all research is flawed" (Kiesler, 1981, p. 213), and this present research is certainly not an exception. The study seeks to determine how transgender adults' participation in recreational sports in BC, Canada is informed by their experiences with the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport. Another objective of the study

is to inform an enhanced and intentional transgender-inclusive change in policies and practices. Although the study was successful in addressing the primary research question meeting the investigation's objectives, there is a necessity to acknowledge the study limitations to better understand the context of the study's findings. In the view of Price and Murnan (2004), limitations of a study refer to those characteristics of the study design or methodology, which the researcher fails to control, impacting the study results.

The biggest limitation of the study is related to the study population. There was a lack of gender diversity in participants' profiles since all participants have a binary gender identity, having either socially or medically transitioned, with most self-identifying as transgender women. This gender diversity limitation in the study population might have occurred because of two reasons: participant recruitment poster's content and where participants were recruited. In the participant recruitment poster, the term 'transgender' was used as an umbrella term referring to those who self-identify as transgender both opting to and not opting to undergo medical intervention(s) with their body, and those who do not posit themselves within the gender binary (as known as 'non-binary'). However, it was the researcher's assumption that everyone would understand this implicit intention, which resulted in the unintentional exclusion of non-binary people and people who do not undergo medical interventions in the study population. In addition, participants were recruited from recreational sport leagues and 2SLGBTQ+ related organizations without the consideration that many transgender people, who are of different backgrounds, might not associate themselves with these entities for certain reasons. Thus, a participant recruitment plan that is more thoughtful and reflective of the study's intention should have been developed for a more diverse study population.

Another limitation is the channel through which interviews were conducted with participants. Interviews took place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation. As a

result, the ability to establish rapport with participants was limited compared to that of in-person interviews (Lo Iacono et al., 2016). It is possible that the online platform deterred participants from sharing certain experiences which subsequently might have affected the data's completeness.

A final limitation of the study is related to the researcher's English language proficiency level. As a non-native speaker of the English language, the researcher at times was not able to process participants' answers immediately during interviews; thus the failure to grasp a complete understanding of what participants wanted to explain at those moments. It then led to an incapacity to ask proper follow-up questions in the interviews, which the researcher only realized in hindsight when transcribing the interviews. A second round of interviews with participants to address clarifications could have been useful, but it was not possible due to timeliness concerns given that there was a strict timeline for the researcher to work with in order to finish the thesis on time for graduation.

5.4.2 Recommendations for future research

The discussion around transgender people and the sex-segregation structure in sport generally has received much attention from scholars of different study fields. However, it is far from being settled. The present study 1) illustrates how transgender adults' participation in recreational sports is informed by their experiences with the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport; and 2) inform an enhanced and intentional change in transgender-inclusive policies and practices in terms of the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport in BC, Canada. Yet, there is still a plethora of avenues which future research shall explore. One example is to further examine how the particular populations of non-binary folks, transgender people throughout different stages of transition, transgender people who do not transition, or transgender youth and seniors, participate in sex-segregated sports given current policies and guidelines in place. Alternatively, while participants of the

current study engaged in multiple recreational sports, future research can contemplate looking at transgender people in a specific recreational sport given that not all sports are the same. Also, it might be worth considering building a case study by delving into a specific set of sex-segregation policies or guidelines presently adopted at a recreation organization in order to contextualize the use of polices and its implications on transgender recreational sport participants. For instance, Vancouver Ultimate League (2021) has recently developed a set of practices and rules for the recreational sport of ultimate in Metro Vancouver. Not only does this set of practices and rules explicitly recognize the participation of transgender self-identified individuals as well as non-binary folks, but it also addresses the gender balance rule to better include all people. That way, a case study opens opportunities for critiques and ideas for a development of a toolkit tailored to help recreational sport organizations create more transgender-inclusive policies and practices. On another trajectory, future research ought to perhaps include sport authorities, sport policy makers, or recreation organization managers as study participants to better understand the process of, and challenges in, creating more transgender-inclusive recreational sport policies and practices. Given the lack of explicitness in transgender inclusivity in recreational sport organizations identified as one of the findings, there is a possibility for future research to further examine barriers and facilitators for transgender people in approaching recreational sport organizations. Building on the above, it might be useful to do a comparative study between the experiences of transgender people in their first time joining a recreational sport league/organization, versus transgender people who are recurring participants of the league/organization. All in all, the above recommendations represent only a few of the possible relevant topics considering the findings of this study.

5.5 Conclusion

Powered by the transformative paradigm, this qualitative study aimed to 1) determine how transgender adults' participation in recreational sports in BC, Canada is informed by their experiences with the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport; and 2) inform an enhanced and intentional change in transgender-inclusive policies and practices in terms of the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport in BC, Canada.

Findings showed a persistence of stigma at both structural and individual levels against transgender participants across recreational sport settings, heavily affecting this population's participation in recreational sport. In addition, the awareness of existing stigma played a critical role in shaping transgender recreational sport participants' experiences, leading to avoidance behaviours, transgender status concealment, or frictions with teammates. Although there is a recognition of attempts from recreational sport organizations to bolster the inclusivity of transgender participants, the study found a lack of explicitness about this transgender inclusivity, which reduced the effectiveness of their efforts. That said, ideal scenarios were made based on participants' experiences with the sex-segregation structure in recreational sports, helping concretize the idea of transgender-inclusive policies and guidelines for recreation providers.

The study served as a platform for transgender individuals to share their experiences, express their concerns and most importantly, present their own ideal scenarios towards the creation of greater inclusivity of the transgender community in recreational sports. The study emphasized the importance of recreation providers engaging with transgender people themselves to develop policies and practices, and staff attitudes because who better than the people affected to know what is best for them? Moreover, the need for the organization of recreational sports to detach from the gender binary and all the traditional beliefs that come with it was continuously stressed throughout the study. Transgender people will continue to

find the domain of recreational sport unfriendly if recreation providers' views are grounded in the gender binary when designing policies and guidelines. Instead of applying bandages here and there to cover policy imperfections, existing policies and guidelines need to be shifted systematically at their core to transform the status quo with real change. After all, it should not be up to transgender people to find safe and welcoming recreational sporting environments, but it is indeed the recreation providers' responsibility to create safe and welcoming recreational sporting environments for everyone.

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Appendix A: Examples of organizations/groups

Research Project Title:
Sex Segregation and the Participation of Transgender Adults in Recreational Sport

2SLGBTQ+ Organizations:

- Urban Native Youth Association: https://unya.bc.ca/about/#find-us
- Kelowna Pride: https://www.kelownapride.com/
- Vancouver Pride Society: https://vancouverpride.ca/about-us/contact-us/
- Victoria Pride Society: https://victoriapridesociety.org/contact/
- Kamloops Pride: info@kamloopspride.com
- Powell River Pride Society: https://prpride.ca/contact-us/
- Burnaby Pride Society: https://www.burnabypride.com/contact-us
- QMUNITY: https://qmunity.ca/contact/
- 2SLGBTQ+ Advisory Committee, City of Vancouver: https://vancouver.ca/your-government/lgbtq-advisory-committee.aspx
- Sher Vancouver: https://www.shervancouver.com/contact.html
- Trans Alliance Society: https://www.facebook.com/groups/8852098443
- Out Vancouver: https://www.facebook.com/groups/Out.Vancouver/
- Surrey Pride Society: https://www.surreypride.ca/contact-us
- Out on Campus (SFU): https://sfss.ca/ooc/
- LGBT Everything Group Vancouver BC Lower Mainland+Vancouver Island BC Only: https://www.facebook.com/groups/366556703704863/
- Transgender Vancouver: https://www.facebook.com/groups/Tgvancouver/
- Trans Rights BC: https://www.transrightsbc.ca/take-action/contact/
- Trans, Gender Diverse, and Two-Spirit community (City of Vancouver): TGD2S@vancouver.ca.
- Pflag British Columbia: https://pflagcanada.ca/pflag-chapters/british-columbia/

Sport-related organizations:

- Community-Based Research Centre (CBRC): https://www.cbrc.net/contact_us
- EAST VANCOUVER QUEER FASTPITCH SOFTBALL LEAGUE (The Mabel League): https://www.mabelleague.com/about-us/
- Sisters in Sync: https://www.sistersinsync.ca/
- Canadian Aviation Pride: http://www.aviationpride.ca/contact
- The West End Slo-pitch Association (WESA): https://www.facebook.com/groups/CommissionWESA/
- Routes and Fruits Vancouver: https://www.facebook.com/routesandfruits/?hc_location=ufi
- Double Rainbow Dodgeball: http://www.doublerainbowdodgeball.ca/
- Frisbee - Rain City Ultimate Club: https://www.raincityultimateclub.ca/contact.html
- Out For Kicks: http://www.outforkicks.ca/leagues/3196/pages/95525
- Queer Van Soccer: https://www.facebook.com/vansoccer/

- Vancouver Tennis Association (VTA): http://vtatennis.ca/
- English Bay Swim Club: https://www.englishbay.org/
- Vancouver Gay Volley Ball Association: https://www.facebook.com/vangayvball/
- Out In Sports: http://www.outinsports.ca/contact-us/
- Queer Van Hoops: https://www.facebook.com/vanhoops?fref=ts
- Pacific Rim Curling League: https://prcl.ca/contact/
- The Cutting Edges: https://www.thecuttingedges.com/pages/contact-us
- Feral Strength: https://www.facebook.com/feralstrength.oc/
- Vancouver Ultimate League Society: https://www.vul.ca/content/contact-us
- Canadian Women and Sport: https://womenandsport.ca/about/contact-us/
- Metro Women's Soccer League: https://mwsl.com/webapps/contentmgr/contact_form_list

Appendix B: Declaration to the Nanaimo Pride Society

Research Project Title:
Sex Segregation and the Participation of Transgender Adults in Recreational Sport

Date: June 30th, 2020
To: Nanaimo Pride Society
RE: Master's research project titled: *Sex Segregation and the Participation of Transgender Adults in Recreational Sport*

My name is Tung Nguyen and I am a member on the Board of Directors of the Nanaimo Pride Society (NPS). I am also undertaking a research project as part of my graduate studies in the Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management program at Vancouver Island University (VIU). As it is my intention to recruit research participants through NPS networks, I am writing this letter to provide you some information about my research.

First, I would like to underline how my research is **not** conducted on behalf of NPS or any other organization, but is based on my personal interest and is related to the pursuit of my independent study for my Master's degree in this program. The study is titled "Sex Segregation and the Participation of Transgender Adults in Recreational Sport".

The purpose of this research is to: 1) determine how transgender adults' participation in recreational sports in BC, Canada is informed by their experiences with the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport; and 2) inform an enhanced and intentional change in transgender-inclusive policies and practices in terms of the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sport in BC, Canada. I will conduct individual interviews with up to 15 people, and ask question regarding their gender identity and their participation in recreational sports.

Transgender people are often wary about outsiders. Therefore, I would like to seek your assistance to connect me with several transgender people who are active in the transgender community on Vancouver Island and across BC. That way, I reach out to key informants, expressing my research's interest and purpose so they can assist with conveying this information to find potential participants. Please feel free to also share the research's poster that I have prepared to provide interested participants with basic information of the research. Interested participants are welcome to contact me at the contact details mentioned in the poster. After they agree to participate in the research, participants will be requested to sign a Consent Form prior to commencing the interview.

I will be sharing my findings through my thesis and also academic conferences (e.g. World Leisure Congress) and in scholarly publications. Moreover, I would like to also share the research findings with NPS and other recreational sports leagues and organizations, and policymakers. Please let me know if you would be interested to either participate in my study

or know people who would like to. Likewise, please reach out to me should you wish to receive a copy of my approved thesis, or be invited to a presentation on my research findings.

If you would like to know more about the research process or have any concerns or questions, please feel free to contact me or my research supervisor directly. Please find our information at the bottom of this letter.

Best regards,
Tung Nguyen

Contact information:

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Appendix C: Participant Recruitment Poster

Appendix D: Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title:
Sex Segregation and the Participation of Transgender Adults in Recreational Sport

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My name is Tung Nguyen and I am a student in the Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management (MA SLM) program at Vancouver Island University (VIU). This research is not conducted on behalf of the Nanaimo Pride Society or any other organization, but related to the pursuit of my independent study for my Master's degree in this program. I am interested in understanding the experience of transgender adults, 19 years of age or above, living in British Columbia (BC), Canada in recreational sex-segregated team sports. The majority of sports are sex-segregated and pose significant challenges for transgender people, who often do not conform to the traditional gender binary conceptualization that sport embraces. Sport policies and guidelines both fail to lay out the means to reach the goal of inclusion even though they identify it as an imperative goal. Thus, the purpose of this research is to inform an enhanced and intentional change in transgender-inclusive policies and practices in terms of the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sports organizations in BC.

In this study, I will conduct one individual interview with you. It is because of the current pandemic outbreak, all interviews will be done via an online video platform called Zoom. You are encouraged to choose a place where you will be as undisturbed as possible, and where you feel comfortable to do the interview. Based on your preference, you will have the option to do either a video interview or an audio interview. Prior to joining the interview, Zoom might ask you to insert your name and upload your photograph. Because the participant's chosen name and uploaded photograph will be stored and processed within Canada, please do not insert your real name or your true self photograph. You can also choose not to upload any photo and use an avatar instead. The name chosen by yourself to enter the interview will be carried into the interviewee participant identification for data collection purposes, as well as for identification of your data in the thesis (or another name may be negotiated with you for use in the official thesis). Additionally, you will need to have access to an electronic device (e.g. computer, tablet, laptop, etc.) that has a front camera and is connected to the Internet. Your participation is voluntary and would require an estimated 60 minutes of your time. However, I would like to offer a $20 Amazon gift card as a token of

appreciation for your time spent for the interview. The gift card will be digitally delivered to you via your email address after finishing the interview.

During your interview, you have the right to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. At your request, I will send you a copy of the interview transcript and you are invited to make changes or remove any parts of the transcript. You may send back to me this version of transcript no later than two weeks from the time of being provided a copy of the original transcript. You may withdraw from the study, for any reason and without explanation, up to two weeks from when you receive the transcript. You may officially announce your withdrawal from the study by sending me an email. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all information you provided during the interview would be withdrawn from the study and destroyed.

The research poses no invasive physical harm, and potentially a small risk of mental harm to participants. Accordingly, being asked to recall the experiences in sport might evoke emotional distress from participants. Given that interviews are conducted through an online platform, I would not be able to physically interfere or alleviate the discomfort brought to you, thus a list of Community Counselling Options where you could seek assistance is provided along with this Consent Form. With your participation in the study, there is a possibility that you might be scrutinized or receive special or unwanted attention from teammates, coaches, or administrators in sports organizations. However, research that supports enhanced inclusion practices can also result in positive impacts, including open-discussion, enhanced team spirit, and policy changes that impact personal experience in sports.

It is an ethical concern that I, as a researcher, must safeguard the participants' confidentiality. Your identity will not be disclosed, all records or your participation will be confidential. That said, your real name will not be used in the study, instead, it will be replaced with a pseudonym or a name chosen by yourself. Specific identifying information will not be used in the data presentation or its interpretation or discussion in the thesis, including identifying recreational sports organizations that you have played with. With your permission, the interview will be video recorded or audio recorded, and later transcribed into writing for clarity and readability. Although the recording of the interview will be locally stored in my computer, data about the meeting will be stored and processed in Canada, thus subject to BC Privacy Laws. At your request, you will be provided a copy of the transcript to review and to make changes to the transcript as you wish (e.g. if you would like to withdraw a particular statement you made during an interview). A copy of the transcript will be sent to you from my Microsoft Outlook email address, which is subject to Microsoft's Privacy policy at https://privacy.microsoft.com/en-ca. The Zoom recorded interview and the interview transcript will be kept secured in a password-protected folder in my computer. To prevent data loss, I will make a copy of all Microsoft Word transcript documents and interview video files and place them in an encrypted separate folder on a USB Flash Drive. This USB Flash Drive shall be kept in a secured drawer, along with this signed Consent form and written notes taken during the interview, with a physical lock in my room to prevent external access from anyone but me. All information, including recorded interviews, transcripts, written notes, will be destroyed when my thesis has been officially approved in writing by my MA SLM thesis Supervisory Committee at VIU, approximately May 31st, 2021.

The final thesis will be made available to those who participated in the study and relevant or interested organizations. The results of the study may also be presented at an academic

conference (e.g. World Leisure Congress), and in scholarly publications (e.g., World Leisure Centre of Excellence Case Studies Volume). It is my expectation that the study results could be shared outside of the academic world (e.g., Nanaimo Pride Society and other recreational sports leagues and organizations, policymakers).

You have read and understand the information provided above, and hereby consent to

participate in this research under the following conditions:

I consent to the interview being video recorded	☐ *Yes*	☐ *No*
I consent to the interview being audio recorded only	☐ *Yes*	☐ *No*
I consent to the interview transcript being sent to me electronically	☐ *Yes*	☐ *No*
I consent to being quoted in an anonymized manner in the products of the research	☐ *Yes*	☐ *No*

In addition, please indicate if you would like to receive an electronic copy of the approved master's thesis or be invited to presentations on the research findings.

☐ *Yes*

☐ *No*

If yes, please provide your email address:

Email to: _____

Participant Name _____ Participant Signature _____

I, Tung Nguyen, promise to adhere to the procedures described in this consent form.

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

If you have any concerns about your treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Board by telephone at 250-740-6631 or by email at reb@viu.ca.

Appendix E: Community Counselling Options

Research Project Title:
Sex Segregation and the Participation of Transgender Adults in Recreational Sport

Organization	Contact details	Description
PFLAG Canada	1-888-530-6777 operations@pflagcanada.ca	A safe, supportive and confidential peer support group for family and friends of the 2SLGBTQ+ community and for community members themselves. Support is also available by phone or email.
The Vancouver Island Crisis Society	1-888-494-3888 1-250-754-4447	The Vancouver Island Crisis Society is committed to providing accessible voice, text/chat crisis intervention and suicide prevention services, including postvention programs.
Island Health Crisis Access	1-250-739-5710 203-2000 Island Highway North (Brooks Landing Mall) Nanaimo, BC V9S 5W3	Crisis counselling walk-in 10 a.m. to 6:15 p.m., Monday to Friday. No appointment necessary.
Bodhi Thompson Gardner	1-250-857-2035 bodhi.carol@gmail.com https://www.bodhithompsongardner.com/contact.html	Bodhi Thompson Gardner has been an advocate for marginalized populations as a professional Mental Health and Addictions Counsellor for 30 yrs. Educating, advocating, facilitating, encouraging and being an ally for and with families, children and youth while playing a vital role in suicide prevention.

Appendix F: Interview Protocol

Research Project Title:
Sex Segregation and the Participation of Transgender Adults in Recreational Sport

Introduction
My name is Tung Nguyen and I am a student in the Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management program at Vancouver Island University.

The research's focus is to examine the experience of transgender adults, 19 years old or older, living in British Columbia (BC), Canada in recreational sex-segregated team sports. Results from the study serve to inform an enhanced and intentional change in transgender-inclusive policies and practices in terms of the sex-based segregation structure in recreational sports organizations in BC.

I would like to remind you that you have previously signed the consent form understanding about this study's procedures. However, please do remember that you can skip any questions in this interview if you do not wish to answer. You can also stop the interview anytime if you would like, or withdraw completely from the study.

I also want to let you know that I will be taking notes while you are answering my questions as this will help me recall what you are saying and help me recall any important thoughts I might have that won't be included in the recording.

You have indicated in the consent form that you agree with this interview being video recorded, is that correct? I will now start to video record the interview.

Interview Questions/Thematic Areas

Part 1: Social intersectional identities

1) What is your ethnic and nationality background?
   a) Have you always lived in Canada?
2) Do you have a religion?
   a) If yes, what is your religion?
3) How do you identify yourself in terms of gender?
   a) What are your pronouns?
   b) Since when did you come to realize your gender identity?
   c) Are you having/Have you had medical interventions of any sort (taking hormones, surgery, etc.)? Why/Why not?

Part 2: Recreational Sport Participation

1) Is there any recreational sport that you play or have played?
   a) When did you start playing?

   b) Do you still play?
   c) How often do you play/have you played these sports?
2) Is there a sport you would have liked to play in and don't because of issues related to your gender?
3) Can you tell me the reasons you chose to participate in those recreational sports?
4) Did/Do you have to choose to be in a men's team or a women's team in order to play?
   a) Did/Do you have the option to play in co-ed teams?
   b) If yes, did/do you have to choose to identify as male or female to play in co-ed teams?

Part 3: Experiences in Sport

1) How is your relationship with your teammates/coaches?
   a) Do your teammates/coaches know about your gender identity?
   b) Did you tell them about your gender identities? Why/Why not?
2) Can you tell me a story about any positive experiences you have encountered in those sports as a transgender person?
   a) Why do you think it is positive?
3) Can you tell me a story about any challenges you have encountered in those sports as a transgender person?
   a) How have you coped with or overcome them?
   b) Why do you think this challenge happened?
4) Recreational sports often have guidelines in the participation aspect, for example separate sports programs only for men and women, or the requirement of a certain number of males and females in co-ed teams.
   a) If you could change a policy about transgender people and their participation in recreational sports organizations, what would be your suggestion?

Conclusion

Is there anything else you'd like to talk about that I have not asked you?

Thank you very much for taking the time to share with me all of this information. Please note that I will have our conversation transcribed into a text format on Microsoft Word and I will send it to you. You will receive the transcript of your interview via email for review. Should you want to review the transcript, you should send back the transcript with your proposed revision(s) no later than two weeks from the time of being provided a copy of the transcript. You may withdraw from the study, for any reason and without explanation, up to two weeks from the day you receive the transcript.