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## Queering the NCAA : how athletic administrators at National Collegiate Athletic Association institutions include transgender athletes

Lisa Margaret Brookens  
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Li Brookens  
Queering the NCAA: How Athletic  
Administrators at National  
Collegiate Athletic Association  
Institutions Include Transgender  
Athletes

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how Athletic Administrators (AA) at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) institutions include transgender identities in their policies and practices. The main hypothesis presumes that people in positions of power within the NCAA membership have less inclusive opinions regarding transgender student-athletes (TSA). A mixed methods design was used, and an anonymous web-based survey tool was employed to address AA perceptions. Inferential statistics along with queer-feminist theory were utilized to document and deconstruct dominant themes generated during data collection. The participant pool included 511 AA's recruited by use of an exhaustive email list of the two top AA's at 1,099 NCAA membership institutions.

Major findings in this study document that AA's opinions on transgender-inclusion (T-I) are generally positive; however, Athletic Programs lack T-I policies that could serve to protect, retain, and recruit qualified TSA's. Comparison analyses were found to support the hypothesis that positions of power within NCAA institutions (men, athletic directors, and heterosexuals) are significantly less supportive of T-I. Additionally, AA strategies for T-I were examined, including identifying resistances to T-I. Conclusions and implications are drawn regarding the powerful identities in sporting institutions that maintain transphobic gender binaries in sport.

QUEERING THE NCAA: HOW ATHLETIC ADMINISTRATORS  
AT NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION INSTITUTIONS  
INCLUDE TRANSGENDER ATHLETES

A project based upon an independent investigation,  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2011

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Billie Jean King writes, “The locker rooms and playing fields of sport are laboratories in which we develop and practice values” (Griffin, Perrotti, Priest, & Muska, 2002, p. v). Similarly, sports associated with educational institutions in the United States have a responsibility to reflect policies and values supporting equal opportunity for all people (Griffin & Carroll, 2010). Historically, men have controlled sporting domains, and this mirrors the way men have dominated society. In order to move toward a level playing field for all people in sport and in life, we must work to create inclusive cultures within sports so the benefits can be realized by all (Barber & Krane, 2007).

With the spirit of inclusion in mind, athletes who do not fit into societal definitions of male or female (otherwise known as transgender identities) are being excluded from sporting institutions that have been historically sex-segregated. This thesis will use a broad definition of “transgender” identity to encompass anyone who falls outside of societal expectations for males or females:

Transgender— An umbrella term encompassing a wide range of identities, appearances, and/or behaviors that fall outside stereotypical gender norms of either male or female.

The transgender umbrella includes, but is not limited to, individuals who behave and/or dress differently from their birth gender (for example a female who wears men’s clothing); individuals who do not identify as either male or female; and individuals who identify as a gender different from their biological gender (for example, a person born

male, and now identifies as female [MtF] or vice versa [FtM]) (Beemyn, 2005, p. 12; Gender Spectrum, 2010, p. 1).

In the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), no formal policy exists for transgender student-athletes, and yet increasing numbers of students are identifying themselves with these labels (Beemyn, 2005; Griffin & Carroll, 2010). A small contingency of Queer-Feminist theorists (Kauer, 2009; Lucas, 2009; Ravel & Rail, 2007; Sykes, 1998; Travers, 2008) write from a social justice approach in working to deconstruct the sex/gender binary of solely male and female to include people who identify outside the gender binary in today's sporting world. This thesis will be examining how Athletic Administrators (AA) in NCAA institutions include transgender identities in their policies and practices.



## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

Look around the majority of society in the United States, and you will see depictions of people who are perceived as either male or female. We tend to categorize each other using an outdated, essentialist assumption that gender exists on a binary, that people are either male or female. This is representative of what is known as the gender binary, and it infiltrates all facets of society. What this binary does not allow for are representations of people who transgress societal norms, such as transgender student-athletes (TSA). This literature review will begin with exploring assumptions about gender binaries as it relates to gender equality with transgender identities, then transition to examining TSA in schools in relation to medical advantages versus disadvantages, and finally review current policies that address transgender athletes in our society.

#### **Transgender Identities, A Growing Phenomenon**

Gender identity is a social construction that all people develop and represents “one’s concept of self as male or female or both or neither...[that is] same or different than the gender assigned at birth” (Griffin & Carroll, 2010, p. 47). A growing number of people are identifying outside the gender binary, and policies are needed to protect and include their participation in schools and activities aimed at development and growth (Griffin & Carroll, 2010).

In many ways it remains difficult to estimate the number of people whose gender identity is different from their gender assigned at birth (Olyslager & Conway, 2008; Reed, Rhodes, Schofield, & Wylie, 2009). The American Psychiatric Association, which is frequently referenced in U.S. media, currently utilizes data generated in the 1960’s suggesting that 1:30,000

adult males and 1:100,000 adult females seek genital reassignment surgery (GRS) (American Psychiatric Association [DSM-IV-TR], 2000). This may leave the reader with an impression that transsexualism (or people seeking GRS) is obsolete and rationalize, therefore, not an important consideration in processes influencing the larger culture, such as policy-making. However, a recent study critiques authors of the DSM-IV-TR for severely underreporting these numbers in their usage of outdated information, and failing to account for a vast majority of people who may identify with transsexualism and do not elect for GRS because of choice or income barriers or many other reasons (Olyslager & Conway, 2008).

Reed et al. (2009) have studied gender variance and its prevalence and growth in the United Kingdom, and concluded that incidence of gender variance (in adult and youth populations) is growing at a rate of “15% per annum; hence the number is doubling every five years” (p. 4). Additionally, Reed et al. (2009) utilize transgender as “a broader term that includes all those who experience some degree of gender variance which, in most cases, requires no medical intervention” (p. 6). Olyslager and Conway (2008) counter the DSM-IV-TR statistics by estimating the prevalence of transsexualism in the U.S. using simple population calculations. Olyslager and Conway (2008) get a rough adult male population of 100,000,000. Now, multiplying the 40,000 known postoperative MtF transsexuals by five (conservatively) to include people who do not elect for GRS due to reasons listed above, the ratio changes from 1:30,000 cited by the DSM-IV-TR to 1:500 (Olyslager & Conway, 2008). “We must raise questions about why the psychiatric establishment (which has largely seized control of information provided about transsexualism to the media in the U.S.) has been so persistent in promulgating vastly understated values of the prevalence” (Olyslager & Conway, 2008, para. 4). With the power the American Psychiatric Association holds in their DSM-IV-TR publication, vastly underreporting

the occurrence of transsexualism may be assisting to maintain the assumption people have about gender identity needing to be congruent with the gender one is assigned to at birth. In this light, it is no mystery why the majority of athletic programs in our nation's schools have no policy to govern the inclusion of TSA (Griffin & Carroll, 2010); they are a highly invisible population.

### **Transgender Identities in Schools**

“GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students” (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, 2010). For the past ten years GLSEN has conducted a yearly national survey targeting LGBT youth (13-18 years old) in United States schools, and is the only national study published to include the experiences of transgender youth (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010). Researchers of this national study identified specific transgender youth experiences that pertain specifically to challenges that transgender identities navigate in the college world. These issues included concern about the lack of gender identity or expression in a school's nondiscrimination policies, access to appropriate bathrooms and locker rooms, the ability or inability to change school records and documents reflecting desired gender identity, and the presence or lack of knowledgeable administrators and school faculty who can advocate for students (Beemyn, 2005; Greytak, Kosciw, & Diaz, 2009; Taylor, 2005).

One of GLSEN's reports entitled, *Harsh Realities: The Experiences of Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools*, focuses solely on 295 transgender students' experiences between 13-20 years old, from 47 states (Greytak et al., 2009). Using a similar definition for “transgender” as used in the current thesis, participants who self identified with transgender identities included students who checked off MtF, FtM, or both female and male, or multigender in GLSEN's national survey conducted in 2006 and 2007 (Greytak et al., 2009). In their sample,

54% identified as gay or lesbian, underscoring an important distinction between gender and sexuality; transgender identities do not implicate a person's sexuality (Greytak et al., 2009; Griffin & Carroll, 2010). Key findings that researchers generated in the *Harsh Realities* report included 90% of transgender students reported hearing derogatory remarks about gender expression often or frequently at school, including 39% hearing negative remarks about gender expression from school staff (Greytak et al., 2009). Cumulative findings in the Greytak et al. (2009) study indicated that transgender students were more likely to miss school related to safety concerns, have a lower grade point average, and were less likely to have future plans for attending college when compared to LGB students in their surveys. Overall, Greytak et al. (2009) labeled high school environments as “hostile” for our transgender youth that continues to be complicated by a lack of school policies and practices that promote gender equality (p. 2).

In another report, Taylor (2005) conducted a transgender needs assessment at North Carolina State University (NCSU), through qualitative interviews with five transgendered individuals and multiple other staff and professors at the university. In this report, Taylor (2005) also included a review of a 2004 survey to NCSU political science research students that addressed student's attitudes toward the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) community. Findings from this report indicated that transsexual (MtF or FtM) students were significantly less accepted in comparison to gay or lesbian individuals with 25-30% of respondents answering that they disapprove of transsexual identities (Taylor, 2005). Also, at the time of the study, no policies existed to uniformly address transgender students' needs (Taylor, 2005). Taylor (2005) argued that without these standardized policies, transgender students are addressed solely on an ad hoc basis where administrative bias is likely to ensue (Griffin & Carroll, 2010). Leaving policy decisions in the hands of administrators who may not fully

understand transgender issues, leaves one concerned about consistency issues, at the very least. More importantly, the lack of policies directly and indirectly supports ongoing discrimination that discourages and prevents transgender students from accessing equal opportunities in higher education.

Some schools have progressive policies that include transgender identities. The Transgender Law and Policy Institute (TLPI) is a non-profit organization dedicated to engaging in effective advocacy for transgender people in our society...[and] brings experts and advocates together to work on law and policy initiatives designed to advance transgender equality” (2011). TLPI has been keeping tabs on Colleges and Universities who have non-discrimination policies encompassing gender identity and expression. As of 2011, “391 Colleges and Universities Have Nondiscrimination Policies that Include Gender Identity/Expression” (TLPI, 2011). One study conducted by Beemyn and Pettitt (2006) examined colleges or universities who had added gender identity and expression into their school’s non-discrimination policy since 1996. The research was done for the purposes of noticing institutional progression of inclusion among transgender college students. One factor the authors focused on included areas where transgender students frequently report discrimination: access to gender neutral bathrooms and locker rooms, access to appropriate medical care and hormone therapies, gender-inclusive institutional forms, and ability for students to change their gender on school records (Beemyn & Pettitt, 2006). The authors cited that in 2005 more than 55 collegiate institutions had added gender identity and expression into their non-discrimination policy, and the researchers recruited 25 of the institutions to participate (Beemyn & Pettitt, 2006).

Results indicated that few institutions had made progress in the areas identified above; for example, only seven of the institutions had created private showers or locker rooms in their

recreational facilities that could enable use from transgender students. Furthermore, none of the surveyed schools had an option for students to label themselves outside of male or female categories on institutional forms, and only six of the institutions allowed for students to change their school records from male to female or vice versa without requiring gender reassignment surgery (Beemyn & Pettitt, 2006). The cost of having sex-reassignment surgery is extremely high, and many feel is an unnecessary step in designating a gender identity (Beemyn, 2005; Beemyn & Pettitt, 2006). Beemyn and Pettitt (2006) concluded that the majority of campuses surveyed continued to not recognize or serve the needs of transgender students, and possibly fear being a progressive leader in this field due to controversial risks associated with this complicated issue. Examining the logistics involved in adopting transgender-inclusive policies in collegiate institutions is likely complicated by a lack of knowledge among administrators.

### **A Queer Look at Transgender Student-Athletes**

From a Queer-Feminist perspective, this thesis explores issues of power and control in athletics. Using queer-feminism ideology to build equality means maintaining support for the most marginalized populations while deconstructing political and legal barriers that prevent these populations from having the same rights and resources from those in power. For instance, Travers (2008) writes about a network of highly powerful and visible institutions (such as the NCAA) that have a monopoly on the institution of sport in maintaining a hegemonic discourse that defines sport norms. This discourse is representative of gender injustice as it reinforces a gender binary for sports, which have historically been sex-segregated and leaves no safe place for the TSA to play. Consequently, the practice of gender injustice contributes to transphobia (i.e., “Fear or hatred of transgender people”) by promoting binary ideology in policy and structure (Travers, 2008; Gender Spectrum, 2010, p. 2).

An important point of consideration is examining who leads the institutions that define our sport cultures (white, heterosexual males), and who gets to sit at the table when policy is enacted (Travers, 2008). Travers makes the recommendation to eliminate the gender binary in men's sports while at the same time protecting women and transgender segregated sporting spaces as necessary (2008). Travers argues this kind of elimination may be a step toward a more democratic and equitable system, comparable to (although distinct from) the fight for civil rights legislation and significant institutional social change (Travers, 2008). These propositions address the active powers behind sport policy and participation of TSA, and clarify how keeping sports in a male or female participation binary decreases access to sports by people who may not identify within this binary. Transgender student-athletes are an example of students who do not meet typical gender norms that athletic institutions like the NCAA have historically subscribed to from a policy perspective.

### **Sex-Segregation in Sport and Transgender Athlete Policies**

Sport has historically been and continues to be primarily sex-segregated. Prior to women being allowed to compete in formal sporting spaces, ancient Greece mandated Olympic competitors to compete in the nude to prove they were not female (Cavanagh & Sykes, 2006). In the nineteenth century U.S., industrialization and urbanization led to more men needing to leave their homes and travel to the city to financially support their families (Burnstyn, 1999). The absence of the father in the home led to a social anxiety that boys would not grow up to be the "men" they needed to be if they were solely raised by women (Burnstyn, 1999). To address this growing concern, local organizations, such as schools, churches and businesses organized sport to "provide a mass form of surrogate fatherhood and male socialization" (Burnstyn, 1999). This is not to say that women did not compete in sport; however, their roles in sport differed greatly.

Consider women's softball as opposed to baseball or the larger size of a men's basketball versus women's. The key point here is that the institution of sport has reinforced sex segregation and also the gender binary to which society currently subscribes.

Which sex-segregated sport is most appropriate for transgender athletes to play? Today, the sporting world has only begun to introduce policies that would allow for transgender athletes to participate, beginning with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 2004. This policy, known as the Stockholm Consensus, allows transgender individuals to play as long as they fulfill the following requirements: athletes who complete GRS before puberty should be recognized as that new gender, and athletes who complete GRS after puberty must also take two years of hormone therapy to be eligible to compete (IOC, 2003). Some critique the IOC policy because the cost of having sex-reassignment surgery is extremely high (Beemyn, 2005; Beemyn & Pettitt, 2006), and many feel GRS is an unnecessary step in designating a gender identity (Buzuvis, 2011; Griffin & Carroll, 2010; Sykes, 2006). Nevertheless, this policy is often used as a model for international sport policy-makers considering adding transgender-inclusive policies (Buzuvis, 2011; Sykes, 2006). Examples of sport organizations who have adopted transgender-inclusive policies following the Stockholm Consensus are USA Track and Field, Ladies Golf Union (Great Britain), the Ladies European Golf Tour, Women's Golf Australia, and the Gay and Lesbian International Sports Association (NCAA, 2009), as well as four interscholastic associations (Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, and Washington) (Buzuvis, 2011).

The NCAA, which governs approximately 1,100 intercollegiate athletic programs in the U.S., has two key "Core Values" (2011) related to transgender inclusion. They state:

The Association – through its member institutions, conferences and national office staff – shares a belief in and commitment to: [1] The supporting role that intercollegiate athletics



plays in the higher education mission...and [2] An inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes and career opportunities for coaches and administrators from diverse backgrounds.

Despite the inclusive ideals set forth in the core values, the NCAA has no formal policy for the inclusion of TSA's. However, there is a NCAA Position Regarding Transgender Student-Athlete and Resource List (NCAA, 2009) informing its membership and the public that steps are being taken to create transgender-inclusive policies that do not impose unnecessary roadblocks for TSA, but also uphold equitable competition among competitors. In the NCAA Position (2009), the organization states, "Development of a formal NCAA policy would have to come through the normal governance structure involving our member colleges and universities, who establish NCAA rules" (p. 1). Yet, "No statistics are kept on the number of transgender student-athletes competing in the NCAA – gender is calculated based on the data supplied by NCAA member institutions" (NCAA, 2009, p. 1). In a phone interview with Karen Morrison, NCAA Director of Gender Initiatives and NCAA Spokesperson, she stated in regard to policies for TSA, "We [NCAA] want student athletes to have an opportunity for fair participation, and we want to maintain a competitive equity...we are looking to gather research and build a foundation for whatever policy the NCAA eventually adopts" (personal communication, October 19, 2010). It remains difficult to ascertain the NCAA's position when no statistics are being kept as to the participation of transgender student-athletes.

### **Educational Values Leveraging the Transgender Student-Athlete**

Educational values need to be considered in policy-making, which means AA's must both adopt policies that provide opportunities for all students and policies that maintain a level

playing field for all participants (Buzuvis, 2011; Griffin & Carroll, 2010). Factors that play into policy-making in this realm include the educational value of sport, medical science, and laws governing the school's jurisdiction (Buzuvis, 2011). For starters, it means adopting non-discrimination policies that include gender identity and expression. Secondly, including TSA on sports teams means adopting specific policies addressing student-athletes who may transition to the opposite gender (for example FtM or MtF student-athletes).

Buzuvis (2011) is a law professor at Western New England College School of Law, and writes about TSA policy using three key factors AA's must take into account—education, medical science, and law. Buzuvis (2011) argues that while medical and legal factors contribute to policy development for TSA, they both miss the point of “the educational purpose” behind interscholastic athletics (Buzuvis, 2011, p. 29). Moreover, as an increasing number of schools are adding gender identity and expression to non-discrimination policies, Buzuvis (2011) argues that there is judicial momentum for TSA's who may choose to cite this policy in order to get access to playing on the sports team congruent with their bona fide gender identity. In making these points, Buzuvis (2011) is urging her readers to consider a proactive approach to adopting TSA policy.

Complimentary to Buzuvis (2011), Griffin and Carroll (2010) authored a comprehensive report entitled “On the Team: Equal Opportunity for Transgender Student Athletes” which was put together from a wide array of experts from the medical, legal, advocacy, and athletic disciplines committed to transgender-inclusion in athletics. Included in the development of this report are leaders in the NCAA who are focused on diversity and inclusion within their membership, and interested in educating within their institution about including TSA with effective policies and practices. Griffin and Carroll (2010) make specific policy

recommendations in their report to help collegiate institutions create transgender-inclusive policies. The recommendations are guided by “core values of inclusion, fairness, and equal opportunity in sport,” with the goal “to provide leaders in education and athletics with the information they need to make effective policy decisions about the participation of transgender student athletes” (Griffin & Carroll, 2010, p. 7). One example of a policy recommendation Griffin and Carroll (2010) make, includes allowing MtF transgender students to play on a women’s team as long as they have been on hormone therapy for at least one year (p. 28). Other policy recommendations are based on attempting to be inclusive of all athletes in a way that maintains a level playing field.

The current thesis is intended to document the perceptions AA’s in NCAA membership institutions have regarding TSA policy. In the next section, elements of the research design and process of the research will be illuminated.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

This study was designed to understand how Athletic Administrators (AA's) at NCAA institutions include Transgender-Student-Athletes (TSA's) in their policies and practices. By receiving direct input from AA's surrounding their policy-making perceptions for the TSA, this study examines three previously unexplored aspects of TSA participation in college sports. The study asked AA's to disclose any TSA inclusive policies their Athletic Program may already have (i.e., non-discrimination policies related to gender identity and expression plus specific policies addressing the TSA who may be physically transitioning their gender), to express their personal perceptions of the TSA and their perception of how welcoming their Athletic Program would be toward a TSA, and to report whether or not they would like to see a national policy for TSA's adopted by the NCAA.

A mixed methods, anonymous, web-based survey was designed to answer the following questions: 1) What is the general climate for TSA's playing NCAA college sports; 2) How prepared, policy-wise, are NCAA institutions to accommodate a potential influx of transgender identified students; 3) What thoughts and feelings do AA's have regarding transgender people; 4) How much of a priority is it for NCAA athletic institutions to create inclusive policies for transgender people; 5) Are any schools proactively developing policy prior to having TSA's in their program; and 6) Do AA's want the NCAA to develop a national policy that includes TSA's. A mixed methods design was used to capture the diversity of perceptions that were presumed to

exist between AA's and to collect policy and practice differences between the varying institutions that are affiliated with the NCAA.

### **Sample**

I used a purposive sampling method that selected potential participants based on their "expertise" in the field of AA (Rubin & Babbie, 2009). Eligible participants were employed administrators in an NCAA Athletic Program who were responsible for implementing, changing, or creating policy. In order to reach this population, I created an exhaustive list of publicly available emails for all Athletic Directors and Senior Woman Administrators in the NCAA. An Athletic Director is the head position at each NCAA institutions' Athletic Program, and has the most authority to implement, change, or create policy. Based on feedback I received from the professionals reviewing my survey draft, I chose to also contact the Senior Woman Administrators at NCAA institutions. I hypothesized that Senior Woman Administrators may be more sensitive to and interested in completing a survey that relates to gender in athletics in addition to having a powerful administrative role implementing, changing, and creating policies. In the interest of gaining more participation, and clearly stated in my email contacts with potential participants, I permitted a different AA to take the survey for the Athletic Director or Senior Woman Administrator at the discretion of that individual.

A total of 511 people participated in this study (56.6% completed and 43.4% partially completed the survey), 135 abandoned the survey without answering questions, 24 were disqualified from the survey, and 6 people requested to be removed from the email contact list.

Demographic questions for this survey addressed NCAA Division, AA title, AA years experience, age, gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and religious/spiritual practice. The majority of demographic questions requested participants to type answers into a textbox according to how

they identify. The textbox answers required categorical interpretations, which are described in the following paragraphs. Any words misspelled were counted for the category of closest affiliation. In cases where I had any confusion, I did not include the data in demographic reporting (i.e.- Question: How do you identify your sexuality? Answer: “male”). The following paragraphs report aggregate participant responses to each of the demographic questions.

Participants reported on what NCAA Division their Athletic Program participates in (N=289): 33.3% indicated Division I athletics (22.8% have a football team and 10.4% are non-football team schools), 28.9% indicated Division II athletics, and 37.0% indicated Division III athletics. The demographic section also asked participants to report on their AA title (N=278). Athletic Directors (AD) represented 41.0% of the total sample, Senior Woman Administrators (SWA) represented 25.5%, and Non-AD/SWA administrators (Assistant or Associate Athletic Directors, Compliance Coordinators, Athletic Trainers, Sports Information Directors, Deans, and Life Skills Coordinators) represented 33.4%.

Two hundred seventy-seven participants reported how many years of experience they have as an AA. I created a new category for every 10 years participants reported experience as an AA: 39.7% have 0-10 years, 35.7% have 11-20 years, 24.6% have 21+ years experience. The mean age of respondents was 45 years (N=273, min=24 years, max=71 years, median=44 years, mode=40 years, SD= 10.4 years).

Participants identified their gender (N=273): 65.9% identified as female, and 34.1% identified as male. One participant in the female group identified herself as a “cisgendered woman.” The term “cisgendered” “refers to people whose sex assignment at birth corresponds to their gender identity and expression” (Gender Spectrum, 2010, p. 2).

For sexuality responses (N=202), 74.3% of participants identified as heterosexual, and 25.7% identified as non-heterosexual (lesbian, 15.3%; homosexual, 3.9%; gay, 3.5%; bisexual, 2.5%; or queer, 0.5%). No participants who identified as “non-heterosexual” were male gendered.

For race/ethnicity I followed the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau guidelines for categorizing open-ended responses to the question, “How do you identify your race or ethnicity?” For example, the following answers were categorized as “White”: “European American,” “Anglo,” and “Caucasian”. For race responses (N=258), 92.2% of participants identified as White, 6.6% as Black/African American, 0.4% as Asian, 0.4% as Native American, and 0.4% as Multi-racial.

For religion/spirituality responses (N=239), multiple belief systems were represented to various degrees. Christian or Catholic affiliations represented 80.8% of the total sample (30.9% Christian but no denomination specified, 26.0% Catholic, 4.6% Lutheran, 4.1% Methodist, 3.7% Baptist, 3.7% Episcopalian, 3.3% Roman Catholic, 1.6% Presbyterian, 0.8% Unitarian, 0.4% Evangelical, 0.4% Fundamentalist, 0.4% Latter Day Saints, and 0.4% United Church of Christ). Non-Christian/Catholic affiliations represented 19.2% of the total sample (15.9% No affiliation determined [i.e.- “Agnostic,” “None...be a good person,” “None,” “Science of the Mind,” “nothing very strong,” “no affiliate,” “open,” “God,” and “Higher Power”], 1.7% Jewish, 0.8% Quaker, 0.4% Buddhist, and 0.4% Spiritual Humanist).

## **Recruitment**

Recruitment for the survey was done by accessing an online NCAA membership list (<http://web1.ncaa.org/memberLinks/links.jsp?div=1>) that includes 1,099 schools and their Athletic Program home pages. Using the NCAA list, I navigated to individual NCAA institutions

to compile my exhaustive list of AA's. My search yielded 2,188 AA contact email addresses. Recruitment took place between January 13, 2011, and March 23, 2011.

I sent an email once every three weeks over the lifetime of the survey, for nine weeks total. For each email contact I edited the subject line to reflect how many participants I had been collecting information from in an effort to recruit more participation. The initial email contact with AA's (See Appendix A) included general information on my research, informed the AA that the survey would be active for a limited time, and provided a link to the web-based survey tool utilized through SurveyGizmo.com (<http://TransStuAthlete.survey1.sgizmo.com/s3/>). Three and six weeks following the initial email contact, I sent second and third follow up emails, respectively (See Appendix B and C), serving as a reminder to take the survey. Beginning with the second reminder email, I set an automatic survey close date on March 23, 2011, 11:59:59 pm Eastern Standard Time.

### **Data Collection**

The thesis proposal was submitted and approved by the Human Subjects Review (HSR) board at Smith School for Social Work, to ensure all research methods proposed were in accordance with Smith College School for Social Work and Federal research guidelines (Appendix D). The HSR further reviewed the proposal to certify that all efforts were taken to consider and minimize the risks of participating in the research.

The issue of including TSA's in Athletic Programs had the potential to raise strong, diverse opinions. No other risks were identified as related to participating in the study. I addressed the complicated nature of the study in the informed consent (Appendix E), and at the end of the survey I provided links to resources that guided my research. Also, the web-based survey was set up to be anonymous; participant's identifying information including names or



addresses were not collected nor stored by SurveyGizmo. I clearly noted the anonymous nature of the survey in all email contacts with potential participants and in the informed consent. I removed any information that the participant may have disclosed in open-ended sections of the survey that may have identified individuals or their institutions for the data analysis.

At the close of the survey, all data received were downloaded and stored electronically in a password-protected system in compliance with research standards. Also, the web-based survey is password-protected in order to further safeguard the data collected. My research advisor and I were the only individuals to review data collected for this research.

In order to participate, people who received my email contacts and clicked on the link to the survey had to answer positively to two eligibility questions: 1) Is your Athletic Program a member of the NCAA and 2) Are you an employed administrator in your Athletic Program who may be responsible for implementing, changing, or creating policy. If the individual answered “no” to either of these two questions, the web-based survey used internal computer logic that directed the individual to a new page stating they do not qualify for my research. Once a person was deemed “eligible” for the survey, they were taken to the informed consent page.

The informed consent outlined the study, including the potential risks and benefits of participation, the ethical standards and measures to protect confidentiality and the researcher's contact information for questions and comments. All participants reported on in this study agreed to the informed consent and are included in the data analysis.

## **Measure**

Although no reliability or validity tests were run on the survey instrument, it was reviewed to ensure the language would be appropriate and the questions were clear. The first draft of the survey was submitted to three professionals in college athletics: one with expertise in

research design, another with expertise in LGBT sporting politics, and a third with expertise in college sports administration. These professionals reviewed the survey and offered revisions that were included in the final version of the survey.

I programmed the web-based survey (Appendix F) to send each participant through a particular set of questions based on their responses. For example, participants who selected that their school does not have a gender identity and expression non-discrimination policy were directed to a question that asked if their school is of a private or religious affiliation that may exclude them from adopting such a policy. Participants who selected that their school does have a gender identity and expression non-discrimination policy were directed to a question intended to distinguish whether or not the school was located in a jurisdiction (state, county, or city) requiring the school to also adopt a non-discrimination policy that includes gender identity and expression. Private schools or schools with religious affiliation may be an exception to this law. Institutions that are not required to do so, but have one anyway may indicate the Athletic Program has a proactive approach to adopting transgender-inclusive policies.

Beyond specific policy questions, I asked participants, to the best of their knowledge, if they have utilized or needed to utilize any transgender-inclusive policies in their work. If so, I asked them to explain the situation. The survey also included two scaled questions that allowed each participant to rate how important adopting transgender-inclusive policies is in comparison to other policies. “Please indicate how strongly you agree with the following 2 statements: Adopting transgender-inclusive policies is important for equal opportunity of all students”; and “Creating transgender-inclusive policies is important in your Athletic Program.” Responses ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). Additionally, I asked each participant if they would like to see the NCAA develop national transgender-inclusive policies as a standard

guideline for Athletic Programs to follow. Participants were asked to respond to this question with Yes, No, or Not Sure.

Participants were also asked to type in open-ended responses to two scenario questions. Each scenario included a situation where a student-athlete presents to the AA as transgender and wanting to participate in sports. Scenario one stated, “You are approached by a student-athlete in your Athletic Program who was born female, but informs you of the desire to be identified as male gendered. The student is interested in continuing to play for the women’s team, but wants to know what support will be provided by administration in this pursuit.” Scenario two stated, “A prospective student-athlete who was born male, but transitioned to the female gender using hormones for the past two years has contacted you to see if your Athletic Program would permit play on a women’s volleyball team. The student currently plays volleyball with a High School National Championship team and would typically be a student-athlete your program recruits.”

After each scenario, the participants were asked the following questions: How would you respond to this student-athlete; In what ways can your Athletic Program's administration be supportive of this student-athlete; and How welcoming and inclusive do you feel your Athletic Program would be towards this student-athlete.

The final set of questions in the survey asked participants to provide general demographic information (Division each AA’s Athletic Program plays in, title of position as AA, years in the field, age, gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and religious/spiritual views).

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data analyses were conducted based on the hypotheses generated from the literature review prior to administering the survey to participants. Aggregate data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version XX), and results were

interpreted based on significance testing where  $p$ -levels less than .05 were considered significant. Analysis of skewness and kurtosis indicated that the data were not normally distributed; therefore, nonparametric tests were conducted for all analyses. Mann-Whitney U tests were used when examining differences between two independent variables against nominal and ordinal dependent variables; Kruskal-Wallis tests were used when examining differences between more than two independent variables against a null hypothesis (Anastas, 1999).

The qualitative data were coded into themes from the narrative text responses utilizing a Queer-Feminist theory content analysis. Responses were reviewed at least three times, and until all apparent themes were accounted for in the coding. Primary techniques included coding text responses to document how an AA includes, is ambivalent, is neutral or evasive, or is not inclusive toward TSA inclusion. Additionally, the text responses were coded by content that reflected how transphobia may be “expressed, justified, or rendered invisible” by AA’s (Lyons & Coyle, 2007, p. 104).

## **Chapter IV**

### **Findings**

This study was designed to understand how Athletic Administrators (AA's) at NCAA institutions include Transgender-Student-Athletes (TSA's) in their policies and practices. AA's were asked to answer anonymous web-based survey questions (Appendix F) intended to answer the following questions using both quantitative and qualitative analyses: 1) What is the general climate for TSA's playing NCAA college sports; 2) How prepared, policy-wise, are NCAA institutions to accommodate a potential influx of transgender identified students; 3) What thoughts and feelings do AA's have regarding the TSA; 4) How much of a priority is it for NCAA athletic institutions to create inclusive policies for transgender people; 5) Are any schools proactively developing policy prior to having TSA's in their program; 6) Do AA's want the NCAA to develop a national policy that includes TSA's. A mixed methods design was used to capture the diversity of perceptions that were presumed to exist between AA's and to collect policy and practice differences between the varying institutions that are affiliated with the NCAA.

This chapter will present the major findings from this study surrounding the central thesis queries and hypotheses generated. The findings are presented below, first describing how the quantitative survey data address the thesis queries and hypotheses, and second describing how the qualitative survey data address the thesis queries and hypotheses. The quantitative and qualitative data collected were compared with the thesis queries and hypotheses that influenced

the creation and implementation of this research. Some of the data show support for the hypotheses generated, while other data do not support the hypotheses.

## **Quantitative Findings**

### **Policies supporting transgender student-athletes.**

One hypothesis generated for this thesis was that AP's and their parent college or university (C/U) lack a policy that supports gender identity and expression (gender id/exp) non-discrimination. The quantitative data show support for this hypothesis.

AA's were asked to report on their parent C/U non-discrimination policy that includes gender id/exp with the following question, "Does the College or University your Athletic Program is affiliated with have a non-discrimination policy that includes gender identity and expression?" AA's were instructed to respond with Yes, No, or I don't know. Four hundred twenty-four (N=424) participants responded to this question: 43.6% reported Yes, 26.7% reported No, and 29.7% reported I don't know. For respondents reporting Yes to the above question, 117 answered a follow up question asking if their city, county, or state jurisdiction required their school to have a non-discrimination policy for gender id/exp. Just over half of those respondents reported Yes (51.3%) to this question and 48.7% reported No. Respondents answering No or I don't know to the C/U non-discrimination policy question were asked a follow up question to determine if their institution has a private or religious affiliation that may exempt them from adopting a gender id/exp non-discrimination policy. The total respondents who answered this question was 238, and 25.6% reported Yes, while 74.4% reported No.

In line with the C/U non-discrimination policy question, I wanted to see if AP's have the same gender id/exp non-discrimination policy as their Parent C/U. Of the total sample responding to this question (N=171), 6.4% reported Yes, 79.5% reported No, and 14% reported I

don't know. In order to further analyze the general climate for TSA in each AP, the web-based survey asked each participant, to the best of their knowledge, whether or not their AP encountered a situation/s that relates to gender id/exp discrimination. Of the total sample (N=345), 9.6% reported Yes and 90.4% reported No. Results expanding on AA's answering Yes to this question are reviewed in the qualitative section of the Findings below.

More specific policy questions were asked to determine if AP's address inclusion of transsexual identities: "Does your Athletic Program have any specific policies that address Male to Female transgendered student-athletes (MtF) or Female to Male transgendered student-athletes (FtM)?" Of the total sample (N=333), 2.4% (N=8) reported Yes, 94.6% reported No, and 3.0% reported I don't know. In order to assess the general climate for TSA in each AP, the web-based survey asked each participant, to the best of their knowledge, whether or not their AP had a situation with past, current, or prospective TSA's in which an existing policy would have helped to resolve the issue. Of the total sample (N=331), 2.7% (N=9) reported Yes and 97.3% reported No. Results expanding on AA's answering Yes to this question are reviewed in the qualitative section of the Findings below.

### **Priority of TSA Policy Creation in Athletic Programs.**

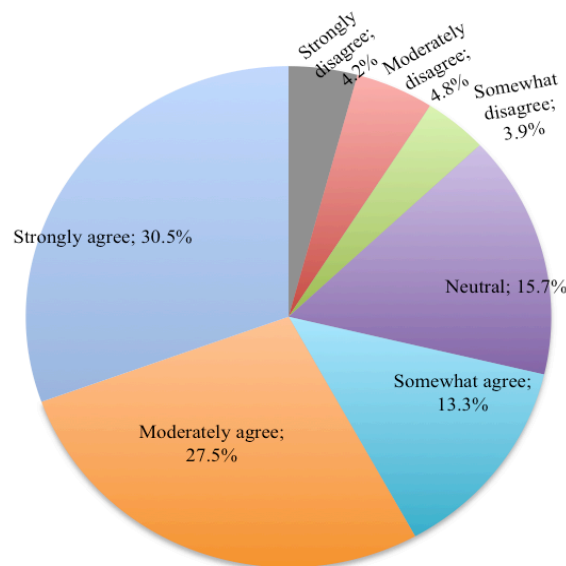
This thesis explores AA's opinions about prioritizing transgender-inclusive (T-I) policy adoption and creation. The hypothesis generated in this thesis regarding T-I policy prioritization posits that AA's in positions of greater power are less likely to prioritize T-I policies. Based on opinions, the quantitative data collected showed mixed results.

To gather quantifiable data on AA's opinions on T-I policies, the web-based survey asked AA's to report opinions on a scale from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (7) how much they agree with the following two statements: "Adopting transgender-inclusive policies is

important for equal opportunity of all student athletes”; and “Creating transgender-inclusive policies is important in your Athletic Program”. For each statement, the quantitative data show the largest percentage of AA’s reporting they “Strongly agree” with both the equal opportunity and athletic program statements 30.5% and 24.1%, respectively. For the equal opportunity statement, 331 participants responded: 4.2% Strongly disagree, 4.8% Moderately disagree, 3.9% Somewhat disagree, 15.7% Neutral, 13.3% Somewhat agree, 27.5% Moderately agree, and 30.5% Strongly agree. For the athletic program statement, 332 participants responded: 4.5% Strongly disagree, 8.1% Moderately disagree, 4.5% Somewhat disagree, 17.8% Neutral, 19.0% Somewhat agree, 22.0% Moderately agree, and 24.1% Strongly agree (See Figures 1, 2).

**Figure 1**

**AA Opinion of Statement: "Adopting transgender-inclusive policies is important for equal opportunity of all student athletes"**

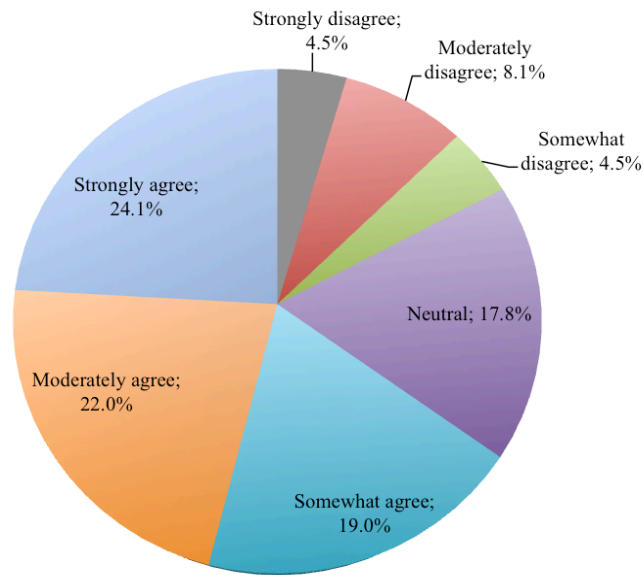


N=331



Figure 2

**AA Opinion of Statement: "Creating transgender-inclusive policies is important in your Athletic Program"**



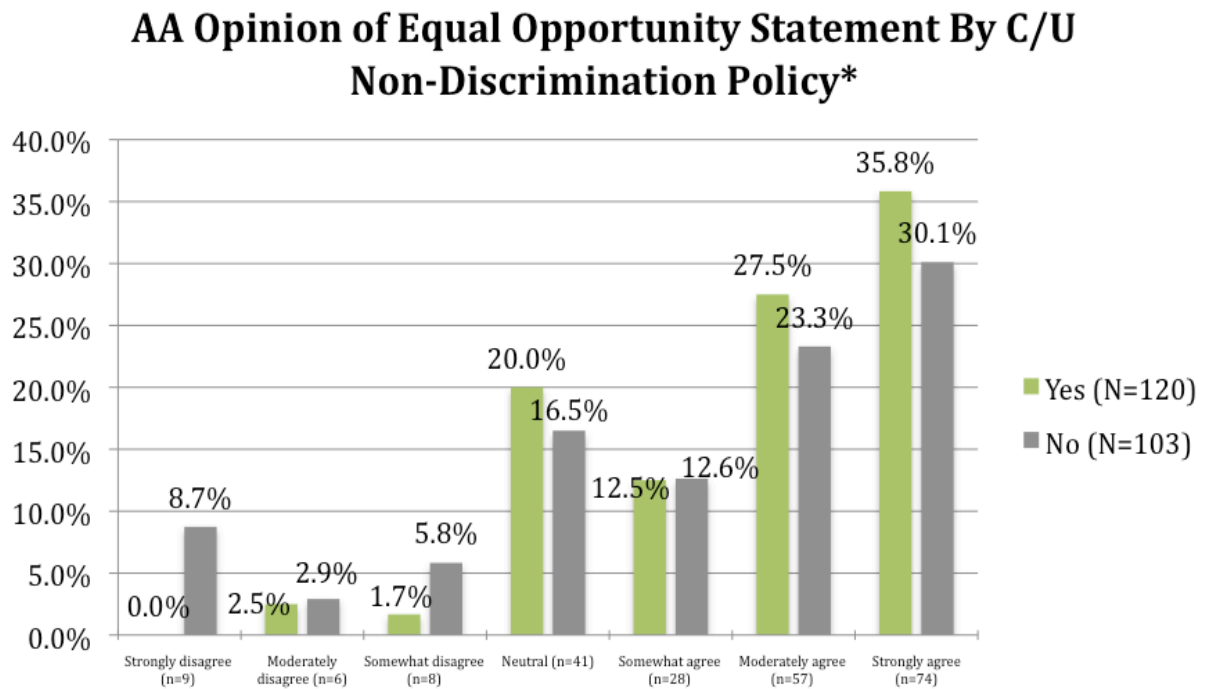
N=332

The quantitative data showing AA opinions on the equal opportunity statement were compared by different independent variables (i.e., existence of C/U non-discrimination policy, gender, title, religion, and jurisdiction requirement). The results of each comparison are described below. While collectively 71.3% (N=331) of AA's reported they agree (i.e., somewhat, moderately, or strongly) that T-I policies are important for equal opportunity of all student-athletes, only 43.6% (N=424) reported that their C/U has a non-discrimination policy for gender id/exp.

AA opinions on the equal opportunity statement were compared by AA's report on the existence of a C/U non-discrimination policy for gender id/exp against a null hypothesis. The null hypothesis was rejected: the mean rank for AA's reporting Yes or No to the web-based survey question, "Does the College or University your Athletic Program is affiliated with have a

non-discrimination policy that includes gender identity and expression,” were 119.35 and 103.43, respectively. The distribution of opinions differed significantly between the two groups (Mann-Whitney  $U = 5297.5$ ,  $n_{Yes} = 120$ ,  $n_{No} = 103$ ,  $p = .06$ , 2-tailed); AA’s who responded Yes to this question were more likely to agree with the statement, “Adopting transgender-inclusive policies is important for equal opportunity of all student athletes” (See Figure 3).

Figure 3



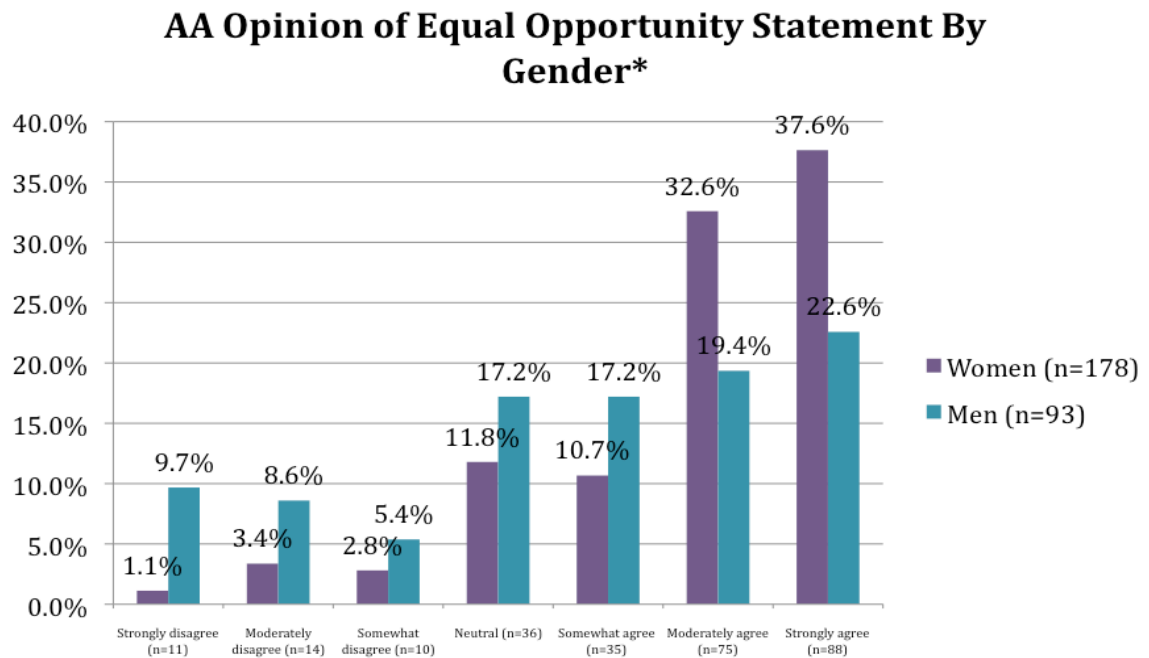
N=223, \*  $p = .06$

AA opinions on adopting T-I policies were also compared by AA’s identified gender, title, and religion. The web-based survey collected demographic information, and it was hypothesized that people in positions of greater power in NCAA institutions according to title rank, gender, or religious affiliation would be less likely to support T-I policies. A statistically significant difference was found between men and women; the mean ranks were 108.12 and

150.57, respectively (Mann-Whitney  $U = 5684$ ,  $n_{Men} = 93$ ,  $n_{Women} = 178$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 2-tailed).

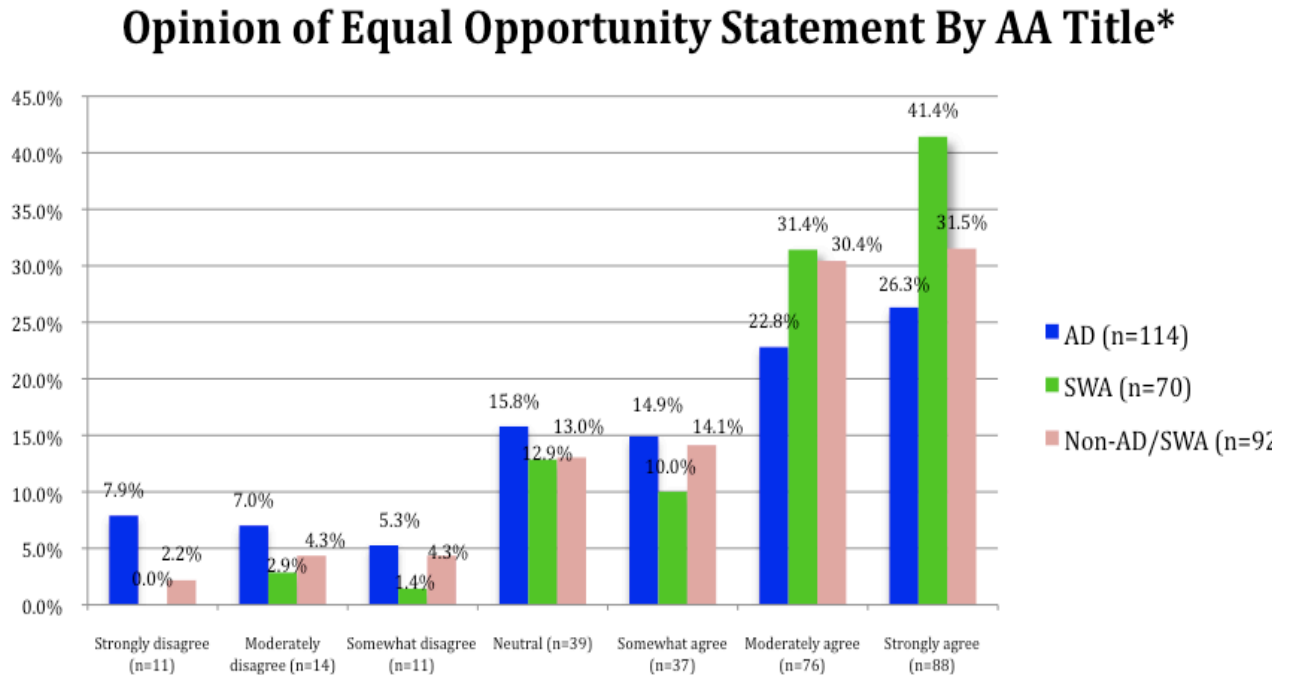
Men were less likely to report an opinion of agreement (See Figure 4). A statistically significant difference was found between AA titles (Athletic Director [AD], Senior Woman Administrator [SWA], and Non-AD/SWA Administrators) ( $\chi^2 = 11.52$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p = .003$ ). Post hoc tests revealed that the significant difference was accounted for by differences in opinion between AD's and SWA's only ( $p=.001$ ), with AD's being significantly less likely to agree with the statement, "Adopting transgender-inclusive policies is important for equal opportunity of all student-athletes" (See Figure 5). No significant differences were found between AA opinions on adopting T-I policies by religion: the mean ranks for Christian/Catholic identities and Non-Christian/Catholic identities were 116.11 and 131.01, respectively (Mann-Whitney  $U = 3840.5$ ,  $n_{Christian} = 191$ ,  $n_{Non-Christian} = 46$ ,  $p = .172$ , 2-tailed).

Figure 4



N=223, \*  $p < .001$

Figure 5



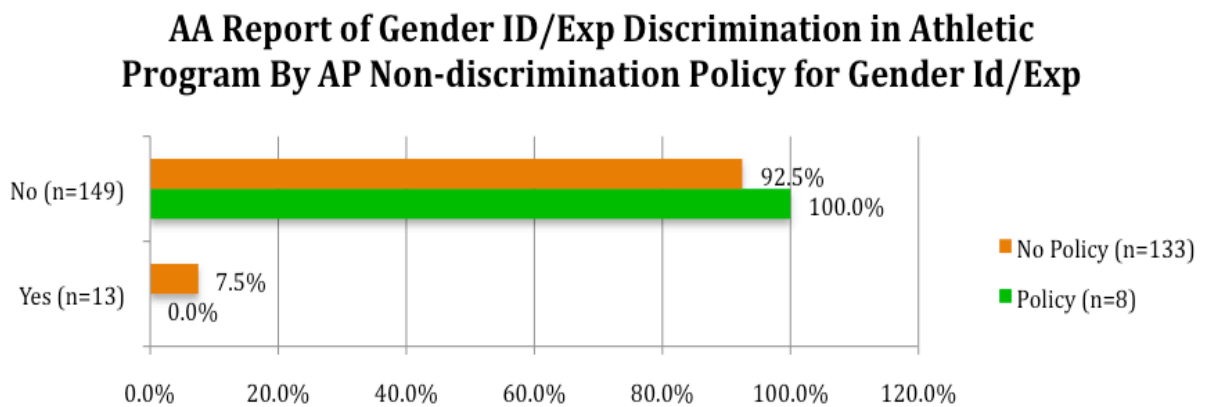
N=276, \*  $p = .001$

#### **Transgender students-athletes and ad hoc policy-making.**

A question was raised in this thesis as to whether or not AA's were taking an active policy stance in regard to the TSA. It was hypothesized that the TSA is dealt with on an ad hoc basis in policy-making. The quantitative data collected did not support this hypothesis. Data were examined to determine if AP's who have encountered gender id/exp discrimination issues were more likely to have a non-discrimination policy for gender id/exp. Two questions from the web-based survey were compared to examine this relationship: "Does your Athletic Program have a non-discrimination policy that includes gender identity and expression?" and "To the best of your knowledge has your Athletic Program encountered a situation/s that relates to gender identity or expression discrimination?" One hundred sixty-two participants responded to both

questions; of participants responding, 4.9% responded Yes, 82.1% responded No, and 13.0% responded I don't know for having an AP policy for gender id/exp non-discrimination. Of AA's reporting they have an AP policy for gender id/exp non-discrimination (n=8), 100.0% reported their AP had no situations relating to gender id/exp discrimination. Of AA's reporting they have no AP policy for gender id/exp (n=133), 7.5% reported their AP did have a situation related to gender id/exp discrimination. The mean rank comparing AP's with a policy to AP's without a policy were 92.77 and 80.52, respectively. The reporting of gender id/exp discrimination differed between the two groups, with AP's who have a policy reporting no instances of gender id/exp discrimination, however the result was not significant (Mann-Whitney  $U = 822.0$ ,  $n_{Policy} = 13$ ,  $n_{No\ policy} = 149$ ,  $p = .175$ , 2-tailed) (See figure 6).

Figure 6



N=162

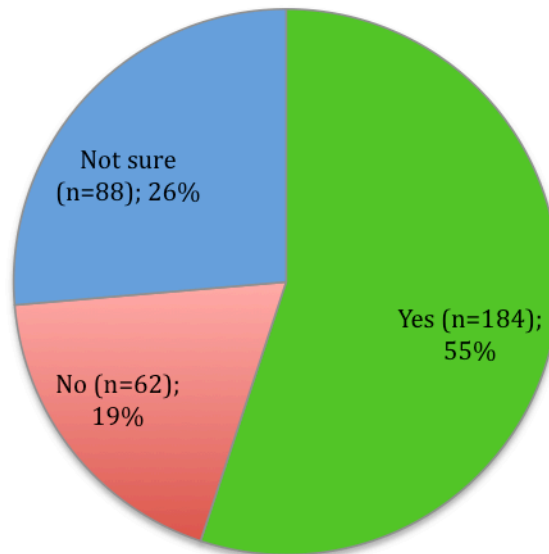
**NCAA Policy for transgender-inclusion.**

AA opinions on having a national NCAA policy for T-I were collected based on the web-based survey question: “Would you like to see the NCAA adopt a policy that includes transgender student-athletes?” Three hundred and thirty-four participants responded to this

question with a Yes, No, or Not sure. More than half of participants reported a Yes response (55.1%), 18.6% responded No, and 26.3% responded Not sure (See Figure 7). Qualitative responses for participants reporting Not sure were collected and are reviewed in the Qualitative Findings section below. Participant responses to the NCAA policy question were compared with participant responses to the scaled statement, “Adopting transgender-inclusive policies is important for equal opportunity of all student-athletes,” using inferential statistics. Participants who answered in agreement (Strongly, Moderately, or Somewhat) of this statement were significantly more likely to also support a national NCAA policy for T-I ( $\chi^2 = 57.75$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (See Figure 8).

Figure 7

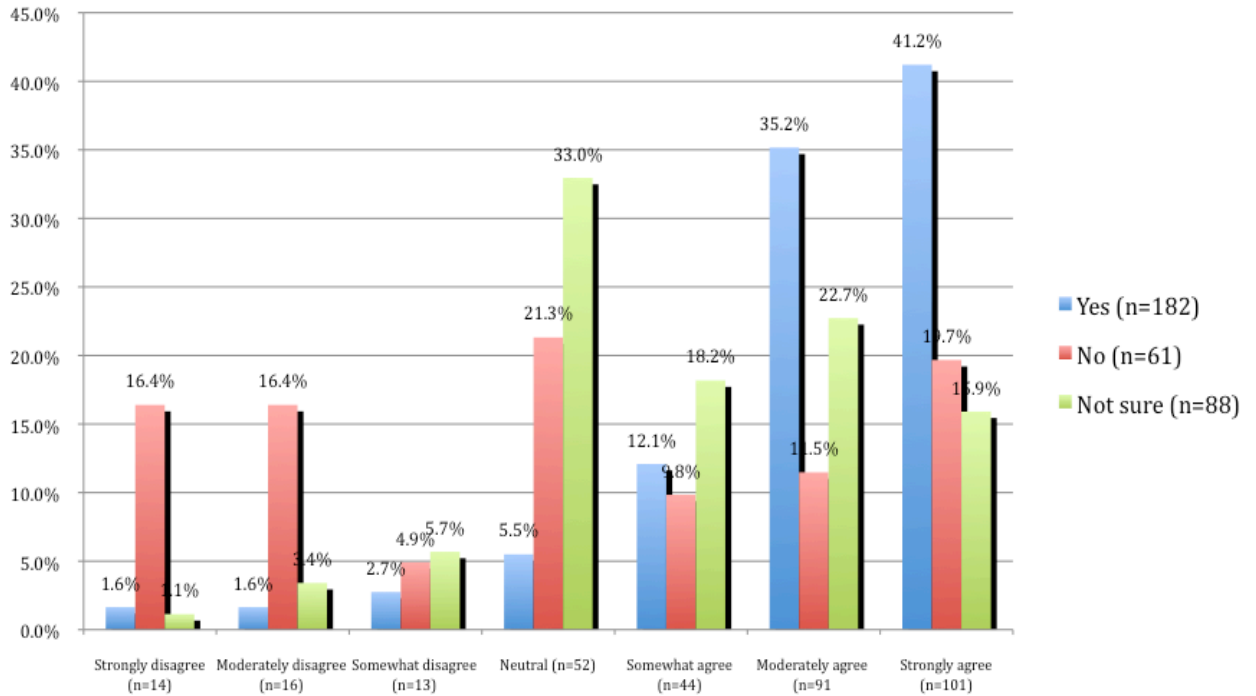
### NCAA Policy for Transgender Inclusion?



N=334

Figure 8

### NCAA Policy for T-I By AA Opinion of Equal Opportunity Statement\*

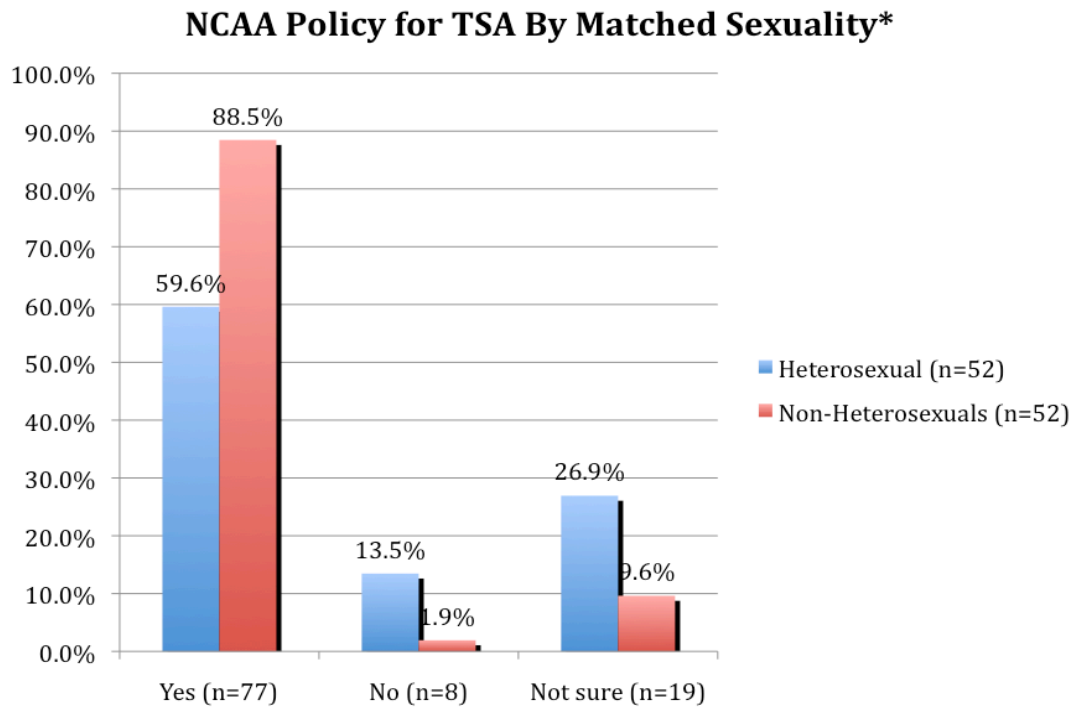


N=331, \*  $p < .001$

This thesis maintains a hypothesis that people in positions of greater power in NCAA institutions will be less likely to support T-I policies. Inferential statistics were conducted based on AA demographic information that may demonstrate power relationships (gender, matched sexuality, religion, title, and division). This hypothesis was supported with significant differences in opinion regarding the NCAA policy question by gender. Mean ranks for men and women were 158.13 and 126.08 respectively. The difference of opinions differed significantly between the two groups, men were less likely to support a NCAA policy for T-I (Mann-Whitney  $U = 6404.5$ ,  $n_{Men} = 93$ ,  $n_{Women} = 180$ ,  $p < .001$ , 2-tailed). This hypothesis was also supported with

significant differences in opinion regarding the NCAA policy question by matched sexuality (participants who identified as non-heterosexual were matched on demographic information [i.e., division, title, gender, and religion] in a case controlled manner with participants who identified as heterosexual) (N=104). Of Non-Heterosexual participants, 88.5% said they were in favor of adopting such a policy, 1.9% said they were not, and 9.6% said they were Not sure. Of Heterosexual participants, 59.6% said they were in favor of adopting such a policy, 13.5% said they were not, and 26.9% said they were not sure. When this pattern of responding was compared with the matched heterosexual group, significant differences were found ( $\chi^2 = 22.66$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p < .001$ , 2-tailed) supporting the hypothesis that people in positions of greater power in NCAA institutions (Heterosexuals) will be less likely to support T-I policies (See Figure 9).

Figure 9



N=104, \*  $p < .001$



No significant differences were found when comparing the NCAA policy question by AA religion (N=239). Of Christian/Catholic participants, 54.4% said they were in favor of the NCAA adopting T-I policy, 20.7% said they were not, and 24.9% said they were Not sure. Of Non-Christian/Catholic participants, 67.4% said Yes, 6.5% said No, and 26.1% said Not sure (Mann-Whitney  $U = 4030.5$ ,  $n_{\text{Christian}} = 193$ ,  $n_{\text{Non-Christian}} = 46$ ,  $p = .277$ , *ns*). Comparing the NCAA policy question by AA title approached significance (N=278). Of AD's, 51.8% responded Yes to this question, 19.3% responded No, and 28.9% responded Not sure. Of SWA's, 67.6% responded Yes, 14.1% responded No, and 18.3% responded Not sure. Of Non-AD/SWA's, 57.0% responded Yes, 18.3% responded No, and 24.7% responded Not sure ( $\chi^2 = 4.486$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p = .106$ , *ns*). The largest difference existed between the SWA and AD groups, with SWA's favoring a NCAA policy for T-I. Comparing the NCAA policy question by AP Division also approached significance (N=289). Of Division I AP's, 50.0% said Yes, 21.9% said No, and 28.1% said Not sure; in Division II AP's, 52.3% said Yes, 20.9% said No, and 26.7% said Not sure; and in Division III AP's, 65.4% said Yes, 12.1% said No, and 22.4% said Not sure ( $\chi^2 = 4.263$ ,  $p = .119$ , *ns*). The largest difference existed between Division III and Division I, with Division III favoring a NCAA policy for T-I.

### **Qualitative Findings**

The qualitative findings are organized to address the relative questions and hypotheses that are raised in this thesis; in particular, the qualitative data expand on qualitative themes that surround AA's thoughts and feelings regarding the TSA. All the qualitative data coded in this section are based on results gathered fifteen days prior to the survey closing. After that time, 65 additional responses were received. While results may change somewhat when these remaining

responses are included in later data analyses, preliminary analyses indicate no significant changes of the current findings are to be expected.

### **Policies supporting transgender student-athletes.**

How prepared are Athletic Administrators to accommodate transgender student-athletes? The qualitative data were coded into themes to address the hypothesis that AP's and their parent C/U lack policies that support the TSA. The qualitative data show support for this hypothesis. Participants were asked, "Does the College or University your Athletic Program is affiliated with have a non-discrimination policy that includes gender identity and expression?" One hundred eighty-five participants responded Yes, and they were directed to the following textbox prompt: "Please describe or cut and paste the policy here, being careful to delete any identifying information." The textbox answers were read through and coded into three themes documenting any "reference to both gender identity and expression" in the response, "absence of either gender identity or expression", or "no gender identity and no gender expression reference" in the textbox answer. Five responses fell into an outlier category that was subsequently thrown out of the analysis due to response ambiguity to varying degrees (i.e.- "The," "Please describe or cut and paste the policy here, being careful to delete any identifying information," "No.," and "I don't know the details of the policy." The largest percentage of participant responses (47.0%) were coded into the "no gender id and no gender exp reference" theme; while 16.9% were coded as "absence of either gender id or exp" in the textbox, and 34.9% were coded as having "reference to both gender id and exp" (N=83).

Selected quotes from participant responses were chosen to illustrate the coded themes. The theme, "no gender identity and no gender expression reference," reflects textbox answers where the participant was unable to demonstrate a non-discrimination policy that is inclusive of

gender id/exp: “We do not discrim[in]ate participation based on race, color creed or sex.” The theme, “absence of either gender identity or expression” is reflected in the statement, “[the] University is committed to a policy of equal educational and employment opportunity without regard to race, color, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, disability, sex, marital or parental status, genetic information, or sexual orientation/gender identity.” Lastly, the “reference to both gender identity and expression” theme is represented by AA’s clearly confirming policy that includes gender identity and expression: “Protected statuses include age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran's status.”

Additional outlier data were discovered while coding for the C/U textbox prompt. Of the “no gender identity and no gender expression reference” themed responses (n=39), 7.7% represented specific AP policy rather than parent C/U policy: “[the] Department of Athletics holds as paramount a diverse culture and provides equitable opportunities for all student-athletes; regardless of gender, ethnic background or sexual orientation to participate in intercollegiate competition.” Also, 30.1% (N=83) of all documented textbox answers indicated that the C/U policy is applicable to AP’s specifically and/or is applicable to all C/U “programs”: “All university policies, programs, and activities shall conform to [name of college] policies on non-discrimination, and to applicable federal and state laws on non-discrimination regarding race, color, religion, age, national origin, sex and disability.”

Additional qualitative data were inconclusive in response to the hypothesis that AP’s lack policy citing gender id/exp non-discrimination. Participants were asked, “Does your Athletic Program have a non-discrimination policy that includes gender identity and expression?” Of participants responding (N=171), eleven participants reported Yes (6.4%), and were then

directed to the following textbox prompt: “Please describe or cut and paste the policy here, being careful to delete any identifying information.” Only one participant filled in the textbox answer:

The Athletics program will protect and enhance the physical, emotional, social and educational welfare of student-athletes. Fair and equitable opportunity will be provided for all student-athletes and staff participating in intercollegiate athletics activities, regardless of race, ethnicity, creed, color, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity.

In consideration of the previous two outliers, the AP question regarding gender id/exp non-discrimination may have been redundant and potentially confusing for participants; therefore, the AP policy question and qualitative data collected may be considered obsolete, and was therefore omitted.

In further support of the hypothesis that AP’s and their parent C/U’s lack policies that support the TSA, 333 participants responded to a specific policy question addressing the transsexual student-athlete: “Does your Athletic Program have any specific policies that address Male to Female transgendered student-athletes (MtF) or Female to Male transgendered student-athletes (FtM)?” Eight participants (2.4%) responded Yes, and were then directed to the following textbox prompt: “Please describe or cut and paste the policy here, being careful to delete any identifying information.” The textbox answers (N=7) were coded into three themes: “policy reference to transsexual student-athletes,” “not available yet, but will be soon,” or “absence of policy for transsexual student-athletes” (AA had responded that they do have a TSA specific policy, but then the policy they cited in the textbox was not TSA specific).

No outliers existed in the qualitative data for this question. Three participants' wrote responses incorporated into the "policy reference to transsexual student-athletes" theme, which is encompassed by the response,

The Athletics Department will strive to identify ways to ensure fair competition for all intercollegiate athletics participants and avoid discrimination against transgender student-athletes. This policy is based on recommendations in the report *On the Team: Equal Opportunities for Transgender Student-Athletes*, compiled by the Women's Sports Foundation and the National Center for Lesbian Rights...

Two respondents were included with the "not available yet, but will be soon" theme: "Again, that policy is not available yet, but will be soon. It has been unveiled at several meetings, including to our Intercollegiate Athletic Board, which defines policies for the department." The remaining two respondents were included into the "absence of policy for transsexual student-athletes" theme: "do not discriminate based on EEOC, race, creed, gender, religious affiliation."

### **Sport institutions and gender binaries.**

Another hypothesis introduced in this thesis assumes that people working in the context of sex-segregated sports are more likely to consider transgender identities on a gender binary instead of a continuum of gender identity and expression. The qualitative data support this hypothesis through an absence of discussing gender presentations on a continuum. Participants were asked, "To the best of your knowledge has your Athletic Program encountered a situation/s that relates to gender identity or expression discrimination?" Thirty-three participants responded Yes, and were directed to the following textbox prompt: "Please explain the gender identity or expression related discrimination/s here using as much detail as possible, being careful to

exclude any identifying information.” Of participants responding (N=23), two (8.7%) reported gender id/exp discrimination that occurred on a continuum of gender id/exp, which was directed at androgynous student-athletes: “student athlete interactions on campus... inappropriate comments made toward another androgenous [sic] student.” Other AA’s specifically referenced binary definitions of transgender identities only (56.5%): “A female golfer that had a sex change operation shortly after graduation.” Most of the respondents who responded Yes to AP gender id/exp discrimination did not specify any discrimination in the textbox answers collected (60.9%).

Only nine respondents of the original twenty-three wrote about discrimination occurring in AP’s; the other textbox answers were considered not applicable to the textbox prompt and were omitted from the analysis. Of the nine reporting discrimination, two themes were identified that document “locker room issues” (66.7%) and “inappropriate remarks” (33.3%)(N=9). AA’s documenting “locker room issues” in the textbox wrote comments such as, “Student-athlete who was exploring medical transgendering [sic] and impact on participation. Student felt the athletics facilities did not support this situation due to bathroom and locker room issues.” AA’s documenting “inappropriate remarks” in the textbox wrote comments such as:

Our Head Football Coach made inappropriate remarks at a press conference. We used that unfortunate event to educate all of our staff, coaches and student athletes -- on several occasions -- regarding LGBTI policies & rights (and frankly explained that all individuals have a right to live a life free of discrimination and/or harassment.).

### **NCAA policy for transgender-inclusion.**

The qualitative data were designed to elicit AA's thoughts and feelings regarding TSA policies and inclusion. One of the question sequences that brought out AA's thoughts and feelings includes, "Would you like to see the NCAA adopt a national policy that includes transgender student-athletes?" A total of 334 participants answered the question, and 26.3% reported they were Not sure. Of participants responding Not sure (n=88), 53 responded to the follow-up textbox prompt: "Please expand on why you are not sure you would like to see the NCAA adopt a national policy that includes transgender student-athletes." The qualitative data were coded into five distinctive themes after omitting three outliers (final N=50) ("Need to know more," "states rights vs federal rights issue," "isolated issue," "level playing field," or "guidelines rather than policies" ).

The largest percentage of responses (32.0%) reported a "Need to know more" theme, which is exemplified by the following:

I do not have enough background to make an informed decision to say yes at this point.

I'm comfortable with saying no or keeping the status quo until I am more familiar/understand all the issues and challenges of creating such a policy.

For the theme, "states rights vs federal rights issue" (28.0%), AA's tended to emphasize a preference for individual institutions maintaining the power to create and regulate their own policies: "Although I agree that the NCAA is a good place to educate and advise member institutions; I am not sure how I feel about them adopting a policy that I will have to follow without input."

The theme “isolated issue” (14.0%) labeled responses where AA’s associated TSA’s to special interest groups, “a group of people or an organization seeking or receiving special advantages” (“spe·cial in·ter·est n,” 2010). The responses likened to this theme include: “It seems to be a rather isolated issue from what I've heard or seen that to make it NCAA wide at this point is not purposeful.” Participants categorized in the “level playing field” theme included participants who identified concerns related to fairness of including specific transsexual identities (14.0%):

I have no problem with what most would think of transgender student-athletes and them being able to compete but wonder about the long range impact on a national level. As Americans we tend to be more civil but is this something that other countries will take note of and then start to "create" these transgender athletes for the sake of winning a competition?

The theme, “guidelines rather than policies” (12.0%) included responses similar to this statement:

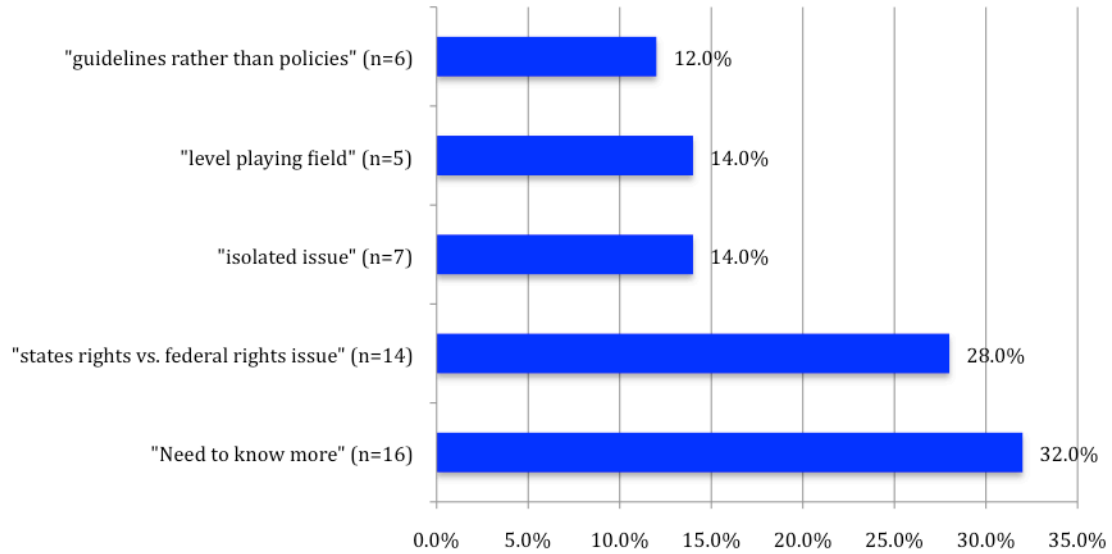
I would be a little uneasy about an NCAA policy that mandates certain things in this area. Guidelines are better for the individual needs, and, changing needs of each institution. i.e. if a policy mandated something regarding facilities, it could be crippling for some institutions.

Three outliers existed within the qualitative data and were not placed into any theme. These data were omitted from the analysis. Two participants wrote “N/A” and one participant wrote, “At this time I have no opinion on this matter.” (See Figure 10).



Figure 10

### Why Administrators Are Not Sure They Want an NCAA Policy



N=50

#### Responding to the transgender student-athlete.

Within the web-based survey, two scenarios were created to prompt AA's thoughts and feelings with regard to responding to a TSA who may approach them seeking support. Both scenarios produced similar findings. The difference between scenarios will be described below reporting aggregate qualitative data. The first scenario prompt read:

You are approached by a student-athlete in your Athletic Program who was born female, but informs you of the desire to be identified as male gendered. The student is interested in continuing to play for the women's team, but wants to know what support will be provided by administration in this pursuit. How would you respond to this student-athlete? In what ways can your Athletic Program's administration be supportive of this

student-athlete? How welcoming and inclusive do you feel your Athletic Program would be towards this student-athlete?

Textbox responses (N=206) were coded into four separate themes, after omitting two outliers (inclusive, ambivalent, neutral/evasive, and not inclusive); additionally, they were coded into seven categories that identified specific support and resources AA's referenced in their typed response (education, consultation, resource TSA out, develop policy, would follow guidelines/policy, support TSA, and no TSA support).

Beginning with the four themes, inclusion (38.8%) is encompassed by the following: "We have locker room facilities for transgender students should he choose to use them. We have worked with two students in the past who fit the above profile and I think both felt supported to be open." Written descriptions of ambivalence (14.6%) depicted thoughts and feelings of both inclusive and non-inclusive subject matter:

While i believe our administration would be very supportive personally, i am afraid that the athlete would need more protective support from other students and their cruel actions. Providing emotional resources, leadership from the coaching staff in teaching respect for all would be provided by our athletic department - but without directive policy from the NCAA, i do not believe a transgendered athlete would be permitted to participate at our university or in our conference.

Textbox answers in the third theme, neutral/evasive (28.6%), are portrayed similar to:

We would seek guidance from the NCAA and our league on this issue. While the interests of this particular student are important, so are the interest of others involved in

the competition. We would follow the direction of our governing bodies to help us decide what to do.

Lastly, in the fourth theme, not inclusive (18.0%), typed responses resembled:

we would be supportive, but bring forth some facts. this brings in Title IX issues, but also the choice of you want to be male, then participate male, or do you just want to be male when it benefits you personally. definately [sic] brings in some major issues.

Only two outliers existed from the qualitative data set, both indicating “n/a” within the textbox answer space and were omitted from data analysis (See Figure 11).

Specific support and resources were documented in the textbox answers and arranged into the seven themes mentioned above. Participants were categorized into the consultation theme (31.3%) when they indicated that they would have meetings or consultation with various experts, school administration, and/or Athletic Program specific people. The answers reported resembled the following:

I would consult the University Provost and the University Counsel to determine the insitution's [sic] position on this. If given the go ahead, I would convene a committee of our NCAA Faculty Rep, the SWA, and the University coussel [sic] to determine how to proceed.

The theme, would follow guidelines/policy (15.9%), references participant responses that indicated interest in following a policy or guideline. An example of this response includes, “Would be willing to help but would also have to be concerned about the other athletes on the team. A policy before hand would be helpful.” The support TSA theme (14.9%) was created to encompass responses that cited general support for the TSA only, “allow her to continue playing

for women's team; support her interest; supportive.” The no TSA support theme (11.5%) was indicative of participant responses in which no support would be given to the TSA: “We would not support nor welcome that request. If you wish to be considered "a male", then it would not be fair to include you with the other female student-athletes in their activities & team-life.” For the education theme (11.1%) participants indicated that educating themselves or their AP was important in order to address the student-athlete. Textbox answers categorized in this manner are resembled by:

First I would inform that s/a that we will respect her privacy and only bring people into the loop with her permission. Second, we would discuss that if she is interested in taking testosterone through this process that she would have to receive a waiver from CSMAS. Third, we would encourage counseling and education for all parties involved in this process. I believe initially there would be some concern from our upper level administrators, but I do believe that they would work through this scenario with us.

The theme, Resource TSA out (5.3%), refers to AA’s indicating they would send the TSA to an organization outside the Athletic Program; this could mean that the TSA was referred to the school gay-straight alliance organization, or to an office for diversity and inclusion. This does not include responses that reported the TSA would be referred to psychological counseling in a way that may not have been supportive of the TSA playing in the AP. Here is an example of the resource TSA out theme:

I would counsel the student as to the issues and concerns with NCAA rules regarding drug testing. I would then ask the student if they have had a conversation with their coach. If not would offer to assist in facilitating that conversation. Our administration is

a mixed-bag - some people would be very supportive and others would not. I would also assist the student in making connections with our LGBT Resource center for some additional support.

Some AA's suggested they would create policy, or they are currently creating policy that could address the TSA, and were documented into the develop policy theme (3.8%):

We are currently working on a policy that will include answers to all of the above questions including who the student can reach out to and how our athletics department will respond. I feel our Athletic Program would be welcoming to this student.

Outliers (6.3%) for this theme included responses where no supports or resources were offered to the TSA. This may have been in a neutral way, "unsure at this time," or it may have been in a non-inclusive way, "At this point it would be ground breaking and many would be uncomfortable dealing with the issue."

Qualitative differences were assessed between the two scenario questions and are discussed. The textbox prompt for scenario two stated:

A prospective student-athlete who was born male, but transitioned to the female gender using hormones for the past 2 years has contacted you to see if your Athletic Program would permit play on a women's volleyball team. The student currently plays volleyball with a High School National Championship team and would typically be a student-athlete your program recruits. How would you respond to this student-athlete? In what ways can your Athletic Program's administration be supportive of this student-athlete? How welcoming and inclusive do you feel your Athletic Program would be towards this student-athlete?

The major differences between the two scenario questions were participants citing “unfair advantage” in relationship to hormones as a concern affecting inclusion. Participants citing “unfair advantage” concerns (15.0%) included:

Due to the differences in male and female athleticism in sports, I would struggle with this scenario more than the first. For a former male to participate with women would create an unfair advantage, I believe. In other words, i could see our Athletics Program supporting upward moving competitiveness but not downward moving competitiveness. I believe there would be a degree of hostility about this particular scenario. Fairness would be the source of negativity.

#### **Overall Athletic Program Attitudes.**

The last question from the web-based survey that collected qualitative data was generated to understand how each AA viewed their overall AP’s attitude toward TSA’s: “To the best of your opinion, how would you (or do you) describe your Athletic Program's overall attitude toward transgender student-athletes participating in your program?” Results yielded 226 responses and were coded into the four themes: inclusive (25.4%), ambivalent (29.9%), neutral/evasive (26.8%), or not inclusive (17.9%). Two outliers existed in the data as well (0.9%).

An example of participant responses being coded for the inclusive theme is, “I believe the attitude would be welcoming if a student decided to come out as transgendered.” The ambivalent theme registered responses similar to:

We try as best we can to celebrate and support EVERY student-athlete who wants to participate. It is difficult for some coaches to do so but we are working on it. NCAA policy has to address this in order for its members to actively administer it.

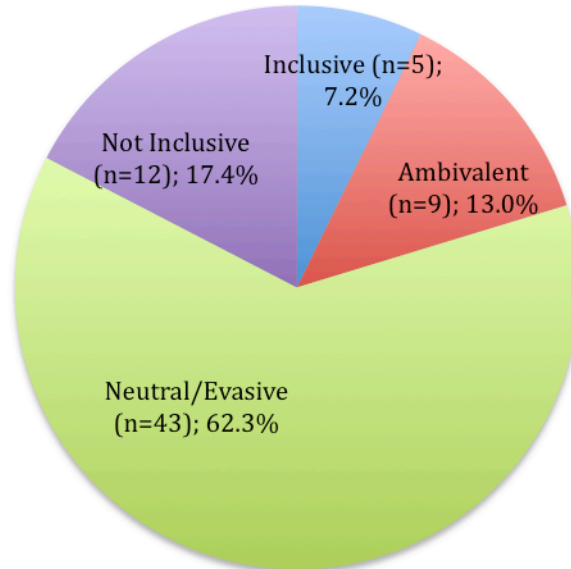
Neutral/evasive coding (n=71) occurred similar to, “I cannot answer for the department & at this time would rather not answer this question.” Finally, not inclusive coding occurred with textbox answers relative to, “Has not been an issue--I would think this department would avoid this issue as long as possible by not recruiting student-athletes who fit this category.”

***Transgender student-athletes and ad hoc policy-making.***

Qualitative data in the web-based anonymous survey addressed the hypothesis that assumes TSA’s are dealt with on an ad hoc basis in policy-making. The data support the hypothesis. A queer-feminism content analysis provided a closer examination of textbox answers for the question, “To the best of your opinion, how would you (or do you) describe your Athletic Program's overall attitude toward transgender student-athletes participating in your program.” Results yielded 226 responses, and 30.5% of the time AA cited ad hoc policy-making rationale in their textbox answer. An example of AA’s using ad hoc policy-making strategies in their AP is, “I do not feel that we have developed an opinion or attitude because it is not an issue that we have faced directly.” As the ad hoc rationale (n= 69) fit into the larger inclusivity themes, 7.2% were inclusive responses, 13.0% were ambivalent responses, 62.3% were neutral/evasive responses, and 17.4% were not-inclusive responses (See Figure 11).

Figure 11

**Administrators Citing Ad Hoc Rationalization  
By Athletic Program Overall Inclusiveness**



N=69

Additionally, all participants were asked, “To the best of your knowledge, has your Athletic Program had a situation with past, current, or prospective transgender student-athletes in which an existing policy would have helped to resolve the issue?” Nine participants (2.7% of N=331) reported Yes and were directed to the following textbox prompt: “Please describe the situation/s using as much detail as possible, being careful to exclude any identifying information.” Eight participants responded to the textbox prompt. Three of the participants acknowledged AP history of TSA’s wanting to play with no formal policy (37.5%), and they were coded into the theme, “there was not a direct answer”:

More than once, a student who was planning on transitioning from female to male came to check in about how that would impact his eligibility. There was not a direct answer, so



we researched the impact of taking testosterone within banned drug regulations. This was prior to and during the NCAA working with Helen Carroll and Pat Griffin on trans policy. What we figured out was that a trans (FtM) athlete could participate on a women's team unless they were taking testosterone. The likelihood of a medical waiver being accepted for this was very low. Our institution does not have any men's teams, so if an FtM student who is taking testosterone would not have the opportunity to participate in athletics at our institution.

Four responses were coded into the theme, "same as gender id/exp situation," (50.0%) as they each indicated that they had already answered the question: "Previously described: ['Male student wanted to be called by a female name and play the role typically for female on cheer squad (being lifted rather than lifting).'" The third and final theme for this category included one participant (12.5%) who cited, "locker room privacy issues."

## **Chapter V**

### **Discussion**

This study was designed to understand how Athletic Administrators (AA's) at NCAA institutions include Transgender-Student-Athletes (TSA's) in their policies and practices. AA perceptions on TSA's were documented via an anonymous web-based survey that collected 511 participants from a pool of almost 1,100 NCAA membership institutions. The survey contained policy and opinion-based questions regarding transgender inclusion (T-I) in Athletic Programs (AP's) designed to assess the NCAA sports climate for TSA's. Questions were designed to elicit information regarding the kind of policies NCAA institutions have in place to accommodate TSA's, the thoughts and feelings AA's have regarding the TSA, how AA's prioritize T-I policy, and what opinions AA's have regarding a national NCAA policy for T-I. Additionally, this thesis collected AA opinions of varying strategies that could support TSA's in AP's.

The results of this research study document that 1) AA's opinions on T-I are generally positive; however, 2) AP's lack T-I policies that would serve to protect, retain, and recruit qualified TSA's; 3) AA's lack educational information regarding the TSA and T-I that could assist to support current and prospective transgender identities in collegiate sports; and 4) comparison analyses support the hypothesis that positions of power within NCAA institutions (people who identify as male gendered, as an athletic director (AD), and as heterosexual) are significantly less supportive of T-I. This chapter will further summarize and synthesize these four core findings. This will be accomplished by comparing observable patterns and themes present in the findings of this study to previous writing and research highlighted in the literature

review. This chapter will also emphasize the limitations of this study, the strengths and insight gained, as well as the macro research implications inferred from this study.

### **Talking the Talk: Collective Opinion Shows Transgender Support**

This research expands on our understanding of previous studies examining T-I in sport by directly addressing the opinions of policy-makers in sport. Overall, 71.3% of AA participants expressed agreement (Somewhat, Moderately, or Strongly) to the statement, “Adopting transgender-inclusive policies is important for equal opportunity of all student athletes.” Seeing transgender student-athletes (TSA’s) as people and deserving of equal opportunity as student-athletes is an important starting point. Moreover, 55.1% of AA’s reported they are in favor of the NCAA adopting a national T-I policy in comparison to 18.6% of AA’s who were not in favor of such policy.

This research collected 185 (43.6%) responses indicating their C/U’s have a gender id/exp non-discrimination policy. The Transgender Law and Policy Institute documents that 391 schools include gender id/exp in non-discrimination policies (2011). Past research by Beemyn and Pettitt (2006) found, in 2005, more than 55 C/U’s in the U.S. had non-discrimination policies for gender id/exp. It appears that more and more schools are considering transgender identities in their policies and practices.

Additionally, qualitative data show AA support of the TSA overall. AA’s who answered the scenario textbox prompts (N=416) were coded into themes based on the overall emotion expressed in the textbox answer. The largest percentage of responses was labeled “inclusive” (38.8%) in contrast to 18.0% of responses that were coded as “not inclusive.”

While no studies were found directly in relation to transgender inclusion in sports with AA’s, the generally positive results differ from previous research done by Taylor (2005), where

25-30% of college student respondents in his study disapproved of transsexual identities. Based on the anonymous web-based data collected, it appears that AA opinions of the TSA are more favorable than not when taken at face value.

### **Walking the Walk: Transgender Inclusive Policy and Practice Among Athletic Programs**

While AA opinion is valuable, actions speak louder than words. Key qualitative findings that pertain to quantitative data in this study show some AA's multiple-choice answers (i.e.- on policy) contradict their follow-up textbox answers. The contradiction weakens the support for T-I described above. One explanation is that AA's may not have reported accurately on the existence of their C/U gender id/exp non-discrimination policy and/or in the textbox answer. Almost half of AA's who initially responded that Yes (N=185) their C/U has gender id/exp in its non-discrimination policy also filled in the textbox prompt requesting the AA to cut and paste or describe the C/U policy. In many instances, the textbox answers contradicted their Yes response, stating they have a C/U policy for gender id/exp non-discrimination. In other words, of the 83 AA's responding to the textbox prompt, "Please describe or cut and paste the policy here, being careful to delete any identifying information," 47.0% provided a non-discrimination policy that was shown to reflect neither gender identity nor gender expression in the textbox answer.

Analyses that used a combination of quantitative and qualitative data puts into question the accuracy of answers received. A deduction could be made from these results that a number of AA's who thought their school covered gender id/exp in their non-discrimination policy, did not actually know, and blindly cut and pasted a policy in the textbox answer. Another inference could be made that many AA's are not informed regarding the significance of spelling out "gender identity and expression" in non-discrimination policy. According to the literature in support of T-I, having a non-discrimination policy that specifically spells out "gender identity

and expression” as a protected class is one recommended way to show support for transgender people (Beemyn, 2005; Greytak, Kosciw, & Diaz, 2009; Taylor, 2005). Without important non-discrimination policies to protect transgender identities and/or people who are perceived to have gender id/exp that transgresses societal norms, the population remains invisible and left to fend potential emotional, verbal, and/or physical abuse. Whatever the reason one aligns with in regard to AA’s not accurately reporting on gender id/exp non-discrimination policy, the inaccuracy in itself renders the TSA invisible.

On a more inclusive note, quantitative analyses show that AA’s who reported having a gender id/exp non-discrimination policy at their C/U were significantly more likely to be in support of the statement: “Adopting transgender-inclusive policies is important for equal opportunity of all student athletes” ( $p = .06$ ). With this finding, prospective TSA’s may reason that C/U’s with gender id/exp non-discrimination policies also employ AA’s that are more in favor of including the TSA.

#### **Educating athletic administrators.**

An original key finding in this study documented AA’s opinions for adopting an NCAA national policy for T-I. Of AA’s responding “Not sure” to the follow-up textbox prompt, “Please expand on why you are not sure you would like to see the NCAA adopt a national policy that includes transgender student-athletes,” three outliers were omitted, and 50 responses were categorized into six themes: “Need to know more,” “states rights vs federal rights issue,” “isolated issue,” “guidelines rather than policies,” “level playing field,” or “either male or female.” These themes resemble concerns and resistances AA’s have regarding T-I. The largest percentage of responses was categorized into the “Need to know more” theme (32.0%). AA’s who had responses placed in this theme described concerns that they did not have enough

information to express an opinion regarding T-I: “I really am not educated on the issues and I would hesitate on advocating an association wide policy before knowing the specifics of transgender issues.” While this finding does not address willingness to be educated on transgender issues in sport, this result could have sociopolitical value to transgender researchers, advocates and educators in assessing and implementing programming that addresses transgender identities in sport.

### **Athletic administrator resistances to transgender-inclusive policy.**

Resistances were found regarding adopting NCAA national policy for T-I by examining the second, third, and fourth largest themes for this question, together accounting for 56% of responses (N=50): “states rights vs federal rights issue,” “isolated issue,” and “equal playing field.” These themes were surmised to represent AA resistances to T-I.

For “states rights vs federal rights” (28.0% of N) it is inferred that AA’s are describing a preference for keeping the power to implement policy at the institutional level instead of nationally: “Might better be served as a campus policy rather than NCAA mandate.” In the third theme, “isolated issue” (14.0% of N) it is inferred that AA’s are making reference to a common political position that is used to resist and/or deny benefits to “special interest groups” that may seek legal and social equalities. An example of an AA using this rationale includes, “It seems to be a rather isolated issue from what I’ve heard or seen that to make it NCAA wide at this point is not purposeful.”

Inherently, in statements like “states rights vs federal rights issue” and “isolated issue,” the justification involves a dominant viewpoint (binary gender norms) against non-dominant (transgender) identities. AA’s who make this argument, in other words, are sending a message to TSA’s that they need to conform to a dominant perspective; gender identity and expression

diversity are not honored. Continuing to rely on individual institutions to regulate trans-inclusion is problematic for sports associated within the U.S. educational system. The effect can be detrimental to individuals and team cohesion, leaving TSA's invisible and vulnerable to discrimination at competitor institutions that may not have the same T-I policy. According to the NCAA, sports are closely tied to education and the membership organizations strive to adhere to core values: "[The NCAA]...shares a belief in and commitment to: [1] The supporting role that intercollegiate athletics plays in the higher education mission...and [2] An inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes and career opportunities for coaches and administrators from diverse backgrounds." Using "states rights vs federal rights" and "isolated issue" rationalizations will work to maintain the hegemonic discourse or status quo that limits and excludes TSA's from access to the benefit collegiate sports has to offer all student-athletes around the nation.

In the fourth theme, "equal playing field" (14.0% of N), AA's imparted concern that other Athletic Programs who have TSA's may have unfair advantages: "Could someone use this policy for their own good & not the good of all Transgender Student-Athletes. This is an extremely emotional situation for all involved." It appears that AA's expressing this concern perceive the TSA as altering the "level playing field" that is highly valued within sex-segregated sports. The literature reviewed addresses TSA inclusion by advocating for policy adoption that honors medical science among other factors (i.e.- educational values and laws) to ensure a level playing field is maintained (Buzuvis, 2011; Griffin & Carroll, 2010). At the same time, medical and scientific research is lagging to legitimize the reality of the AA's documented concern. More research using medical and scientific methods showing the level playing field is not disrupted by the TSA may be valued by AA's in the NCAA.

### **Overall athletic program attitudes and ad hoc policy-making.**

An original finding in this research documents AA's perceptions of T-I policy-making in an ad hoc fashion. The qualitative results (N=226) for the textbox question, "To the best of your opinion, how would you (or do you) describe your Athletic Program's overall attitude toward transgender student-athletes participating in your program" document an ad-hoc policy-making rationale 30.5% of the time. Even in the case of AA's reporting inclusivity within their AP, there are implications to using ad hoc rationale similar to, "this is not a topic that we have widely discussed, but we are a welcoming community that advocates inclusion. I would hope everyone would accept a trans athlete for whoever he or she is." The implication remains that AA's are denying an existence of the TSA that could already be playing in their athletic program as well as prospective, qualified TSA's that seek to play collegiate sports.

Many AA's expressed they were waiting until a TSA came out in their program before adopting a policy:

As this situation is currently being managed at another institution with which we are extremely familiar, I would say that this administration is hopeful that it's a situation with which they will not have to address. However, if the need arises, they would more forward with what is in the best interests of the student.

The idea of ad hoc policy-making is discouraged among experts in the field of LGBT issues in sports. Buzuvis (2011) as well as Griffin and Carroll (2010) have explicitly encouraged schools to take a proactive approach to policy-making, and not impede access to the benefits sports has to offer to transgender identities. It is possible that AP's who adopt policy that is T-I, may be preventing discrimination by the presence of the policy alone. This study shows eight AA's who



report having a specific AP non-discrimination policy that is inclusive of gender id/exp. Of those reporting a policy, none reported instances of gender id/exp discrimination in their AP when compared to schools that do not have this same policy. Schools that do not have this policy (N=133) reported gender id/exp discrimination 7.5% of the time.

### **Reading Between the Lines: Comparing Intersections of Power in Athletic Programs**

Within the NCAA, Athletic Administrators (AA's) are powerful policy gatekeepers for student-athlete inclusion in collegiate sports. While the overall impression is that data show relatively positive opinions, by using a queer-feminist theory framework, this study deconstructs how people in positions of power in athletics may control inclusion for the TSA. Maintaining the hypothesis that people in positions of power in NCAA institutions are less likely to support T-I, inferential statistics helped to differentiate where power intersects with non-inclusive behavior. In regard to the equal opportunity statement ("Adopting transgender-inclusive policies is important for equal opportunity of all student athletes"), men were significantly less likely to "Strongly agree" with the statement when compared to women, 22.6% compared to 37.6%, respectively ( $p < .001$ ). Similarly, AD's reported, "Strongly agree" 26.3% of the time versus Senior Woman Administrators (SWA's) responding, "Strongly agree" 41.4% of the time ( $p < .001$ ). An analysis of the power dynamics in relation to religion yielded non-significant results.

In relation to the NCAA policy for T-I, a significant difference was found between men and women. The largest difference occurred in how men answered (66.1% negatively) to how women answered (39.8% negatively) to the question about whether the NCAA should create a national policy ( $p < .001$ ). Additionally, a significant difference was found between heterosexuals in support of national policy (59.6%) when compared to non-heterosexuals in support of national policy (88.5%) ( $p < .001$ ). Findings approached significance with power

relations regarding division (Division I schools were less supporting of a national policy,  $p = .119$ ) and title (AD's were less supporting of a national policy,  $p = .106$ ), and findings were not significant with regard to religion. These quantitative findings show support for Travers' (2008) theoretical argument citing certain dominant discourses (men, AD's, and heterosexuals) within powerful sporting institutions as the power that maintains a transphobic gender binary in sports.

### **Assessment of the Research**

This research provided empirical data documenting how athletic administrators (AA's) include transgender student-athletes (TSA's) within their NCAA institutions. No other research was found in this regard; although, many writers have articulated theory and cite powerful institutions lacking inclusive policy for transgender identities (Beemyn, 2005; Beemyn and Pettitt, 2006; Buzuvis, 2011; Cavanagh and Sykes, 2006; Greytak, Kosciw, & Diaz, 2009; Griffin and Carroll, 2010; Lucas, 2009; Olyslager & Conway, 2008; Sykes, 2006; and Travers, 2008). This research gives a more in depth description of how the TSA may be left out of collegiate play.

In this research, using the web-based anonymous survey and making direct email contact with the two top administrators (AD's and SWA's) at each NCAA school may have assisted the recruitment and participation in the research topic. Transgender identity in sport is a controversial issue as sports have historically been sex-segregated (Cavanagh & Sykes, 2006). The anonymous nature of the survey allowed ideal conditions for participants to answer survey questions honestly and in a way that would not exploit their own name or institution. This may have increased the reliability and validity of the data collected.

One factor that potentially decreased the validity of the study was the design of the survey instrument. The way some questions were constructed in the survey (i.e.- "Does the

College or University your Athletic Program is affiliated with have a non-discrimination policy that includes gender identity and expression?” followed by, “Does your Athletic Program have a non-discrimination policy that includes gender identity and expression?”) may have been confusing or redundant for participants.

The purposive sampling method (going directly to the experts in the field of sports and policy) along with the anonymous survey may have assisted in the collection of data from such a large number of participants and may have increased the internal validity of the research results. The participant pool appeared to be diverse (i.e.- division, title, age, experience) and may be representative of top administrators in NCAA institutions. At the same time, however, there were no contingencies set up through the web-based survey logistics to ensure that only one person per institution completed the survey only one time. It is possible that some participants could have directed more than one administrative staff member to take the survey, although the findings did not indicate multiple people from the same school were taking this survey. Moreover, the participants may have been self-selecting for the survey based on prior interest and/or support for transgender inclusion in sports, thereby decreasing the reliability of findings. This means that people who took the survey may reflect more positive perceptions of TSA’s than what is truly out there, as it’s possible that people who do not value this research topic and/or transgender inclusion may have chose to not participate in the survey at all.

The findings may not generalize to sport institutions outside the United States as education systems and sports differ widely across the world. The findings could, however, generalize loosely to other U.S. educational contexts (i.e.- high school, middle school, elementary school) that also support athletic institutions within them.

Other factors that pertain to reliability involve data analyses for both quantitative and qualitative data. Analyzing the data required this researcher to make decisions about categorizing demographics for inferential statistics, and textbox answers as they related to qualitative themes. Reliability may be increased if the coding were done using triangulation techniques as is recommended in qualitative data analysis (Anastas, 1999). As a result, researcher bias may exist as the questions were created in a subjective context by the principal investigator who is an advocate for transgender inclusion in sports. The subjective data from AA's, therefore, may expose this researcher's biases as well and impact negatively on reliability.

### **Implications for the Research and Closing Remarks**

As a consequence of conducting this research, a few implications exist. With 511 participants taking the web-based survey, more awareness to transgender identities by athletic administrators may be a result. Even if the administrator chose to not take the survey, they may have been affected just by seeing the email that was sent to each potential participant three different times. Awareness could have an effect in multiple ways. For one, it may impact more people in the NCAA to consider transgender identities in sports policy and practice. More schools may adopt T-I policy or consider adopting T-I policy after taking the survey. More policy for TSA's could impact TSA recruits who may look for schools with non-discrimination policies, and choose to play in spaces where they are protected. Additionally, current TSA's in collegiate programs may be better retained in sports with protective non-discrimination policies that specify gender identity and expression.

No matter how people align with this topic personally, U.S. educational and NCAA core values pertaining to social justice and inclusion for all people need to be continually strived for in the context of NCAA sporting institutions. Transgender identities are not new to society, and

research has shown growth among people who identify outside of gender binaries (Olyslager & Conway, 2008; Reed et al., 2009), but they remain invisible to most dominant perspectives among sporting institutions. A non-discrimination policy is a good place to start. While creating policy does not eradicate transphobia, it may be the first step to decreasing the invisibility of transgender student-athletes and creating a larger space in athletics for various gender presentations that do not exist on a binary.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Initial Email Contact to Potential Participants**

Subject: Transgender Student-Athlete Policy Anonymous Survey

Dear Athletic Administrator:

My name is Lisa Brookens. I am a graduate student at Smith College School for Social Work. Prior to graduate school I was a student-athlete playing soccer for the University of Washington in Seattle. I am conducting a research study exploring whether or not transgender-inclusive policies exist and athletic administrators' perceptions of these policies in NCAA institutions. This email is being sent to all 2,198 Athletic Directors and Senior Woman Administrators at NCAA membership institutions.

The anonymous survey should take approximately 20 minutes of your time. If you do not feel you have the time to complete this survey, please forward this email on to another athletic administrator in your Athletic Program who you feel would be better able to take the survey. The survey will be available on a time-limited basis only. Results from this survey will be posted on a public website by August 2011 for your reference. You will receive another email at that time notifying you that results have been posted with a link to access them. If you would not like to receive future emails from me, please respond to this email with "remove" in the subject line. Thank you in advance for your time.

Please click on the link below to access the anonymous survey:

**<http://TransStuAthlete.survey1.sgizmo.com/s3/>**

## Appendix B

### Second Email Contact to Potential Participants

Subject: Transgender Policy Survey Reminder-- # Institutions have weighed in already!

Dear Athletic Administrator:

I am sending this reminder email to encourage your participation in my study examining whether or not transgender-inclusive policies exist and athletic administrators' perceptions of these policies in NCAA institutions. # of your fellow NCAA membership institutions have chosen to take this survey already, do not miss your chance to weigh in!

The anonymous survey should take approximately 20 minutes of your time. If you do not feel you have the time to complete this survey, please forward this email on to another athletic administrator in your Athletic Program who you feel would be better able to take the survey.

Again, this is an anonymous survey open only for a **time-limited basis**. The more participation from Administrators like you, the more accurate information I will be able to collect. I plan to post results on a public website by August 2011 for your reference. You will receive another email at that time notifying you that results have been posted with a link to access them. If you would not like to receive future emails from me, please respond to this email with "remove" in the subject line. Thank you in advance for your time.

Please click on the link below to access the anonymous survey:

**<http://TransStuAthlete.survey1.sgizmo.com/s3/>**

Sincerely,

Lisa Brookens

Smith College School for Social Work

## Appendix C

### Third and Final Email Contact to Potential Participants

Subject: Transgender Policy Survey Closing!-- # Institutions have weighed in...

Dear Athletic Administrator:

I am sending this **last reminder** email to encourage your participation in my study examining whether or not transgender-inclusive policies exist and athletic administrators' perceptions of these policies in NCAA institutions. # of your fellow NCAA institutions have chosen to take this survey, do not miss out on your chance to weigh in!

The anonymous survey will only remain open until midnight, **3/23/2011**, EST. While the survey only takes 20 minutes, you are welcome to pass it on to another administrator in your program who you feel is better able to complete it.

Results will be posted on a public website by August 2011 for your reference. You will receive another email at that time notifying you that results have been posted with a link to access them. If you would not like to receive future emails from me, please respond to this email with "remove" in the subject line. Thank you in advance for your time.

Please click on the link below to access the anonymous survey:

**<http://TransStuAthlete.survey1.sgizmo.com/s3/>**

Sincerely,

Lisa Brookens

Smith College School for Social Work

## Appendix D

### HSR Approval Letter



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Smith College  
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063  
T (413) 585-7950  
F (413) 585-7994

January 11, 2011

Lisa Brookens

Dear Lisa,

Your revised materials have been reviewed and all is now in order. We are happy to give final approval to your study. This is a complicated issue and it will be interesting to see what your participants have to say. It seems to me that nowhere is a gender binary conviction more powerful than in sports, or am I wrong?

*Please note the following requirements:*

**Consent Maintaining Data:** You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

*In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:*

**Amendments:** If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

**Renewal:** You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

**Completion:** You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ann Hartman".

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.  
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Jill Clemence, Research Advisor

## **Appendix E**

### **Informed Consent**

Dear Participant,

My name is Lisa Brookens. I am a graduate student at Smith College School for Social Work. Prior to graduate school I was a student-athlete playing soccer for the University of Washington in Seattle. I am conducting a research study exploring whether or not transgender-inclusive policies exist and athletic administrators' perceptions of these policies in NCAA institutions. The data collected here will be used in my Masters thesis and possibly for future papers or presentation.

As a participant, your involvement includes answering varied survey questions in the form of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and narratives. The inclusion criterion for this research requires that each participant have an administrative role in an Athletic Program that is a member of the NCAA. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes of your time.

Transgender student-athlete policies are often a complicated and debated issue in sports; thus, open and honest answers from participants are important. I am not interested in the “politically correct” answer, but the answer that YOU feel is most relevant to your point of view on the topic. Your candid involvement will help build a better understanding of transgender-inclusive policies for student-athletes in NCAA sports. This survey link is being sent to all 1,099 NCAA membership institutions, and anonymous results from the data collected will be posted on a public website for your reference by August 2011. Anyone who receives this email, regardless of whether they complete the questionnaire, will receive the public website address. If you would not like to receive this follow up email, please respond to the email address given below with “remove” in the subject line.

Your anonymity is of extreme importance in this research. This web-based survey format provides an opportunity to share your opinions on this often-complicated issue in an anonymous way. Results from this survey will be shared with my research advisor and/or a data analyst. In presentation or publication, data will be examined in the aggregate. When any vignettes or brief illustrative quotes are used, they will be carefully disguised. All data from this survey and research materials will be kept in a password secured location for a period of three years as required by Federal guidelines. Should I need the material beyond three years, it will be kept in a secure location and be destroyed when no longer needed.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants may refuse to answer any question in this survey, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time prior to submission of their survey. Data submitted in this survey cannot be withdrawn due to the anonymous nature of this study. In the case that you have additional questions or concerns, you may contact me by email at xxxxxxxx@smith.edu. Should you have any additional concerns about your rights or any aspect of the study, you are encouraged to call the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413) 585-7974.

BY CHECKING "I AGREE" YOU ARE INDICATING THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION ABOVE AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

(Please print a copy of this page for your records)

## Appendix F

### Transgender Student-Athlete Survey (online version)

Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in taking this survey. Please begin by answering the 2 eligibility questions below:

1.) Is your Athletic Program a member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)?

Yes

No

2.) Are you an employed administrator in your Athletic Program who may be responsible for implementing, changing, or creating policy?

Yes

No

#### Informed Consent

Dear Participant,

My name is Lisa Brookens. I am a graduate student at Smith College School for Social Work. Prior to graduate school I was a student-athlete playing soccer for the University of Washington in Seattle. I am conducting a research study exploring whether or not transgender-inclusive policies exist and athletic administrators' perceptions of these policies in NCAA institutions. The data collected here will be used in my Masters thesis and possibly for future papers or presentation.

As a participant, your involvement includes answering varied survey questions in the form of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and narratives. The inclusion criterion for this research requires that each participant have an administrative role in an Athletic Program that is a member of the NCAA. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes of your time.

Choosing to create transgender student-athlete policies are often a complicated and debated issue in sports; thus, open and honest answers from participants are important. I am not interested in the "politically correct" answer, but the answer that YOU feel is most relevant to your point of view on the topic. Your candid involvement will help build a better understanding of transgender-inclusive policies for student-athletes in NCAA sports. This survey link is being sent to all 1,099 NCAA membership institutions, and anonymous results from the data collected will be posted on a public website for your reference by August 2011. Anyone who receives this email, regardless of whether they complete the questionnaire, will receive the public website address. If you would not like to receive this follow up email, please respond to the email address given below with "remove" in the subject line.



**Your anonymity is of extreme importance in this research. This web-based survey format provides an opportunity to share your opinions on this often-complicated issue in an anonymous way. Results from this survey will be shared with my research advisor and/or a data analyst. In presentation or publication, data will be examined in the aggregate. When any vignettes or brief illustrative quotes are used, they will be carefully disguised. All data from this survey and research materials will be kept in a password secured location for a period of three years as required by Federal guidelines. Should I need the material beyond three years, it will be kept in a secure location and be destroyed when no longer needed.**

**Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants may refuse to answer any question in this survey, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time prior to submission of their survey. Data submitted in this survey cannot be withdrawn due to the anonymous nature of this study. In the case that you have additional questions or concerns, you may contact me by email at xxxxxxxx@smith.edu. Should you have any additional concerns about your rights or any aspect of the study, you are encouraged to call the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413) 585-7974.**

**3.)**

**BY CHECKING "I AGREE" YOU ARE INDICATING THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION ABOVE AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.**

**I agree**

#### **Definition**

**Please review the following definition of "transgender":**

**Transgender— An umbrella term encompassing a wide range of identities, appearances, and/or behaviors that fall outside stereotypical gender norms. The transgender umbrella includes, but is not limited to, individuals who behave and/or dress differently from their birth gender (for example, a female who wears mens clothing); individuals who do not identify as either male or female; and individuals who identify as a gender different from their biological gender (for example, a person born male who now identifies as female [MtF] or vice versa [FtM]).**

**(Beemyn, 2005; Gender Spectrum, 2010)**

#### **Gender Identity and Expression**

**4.) Does the College or University your Athletic Program is affiliated with have a non-discrimination policy that includes gender identity and expression?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

**5.) Does your city, county, or state jurisdiction require that your school has a non-discrimination policy for gender identity and expression?**

- Yes
- No

**6.) Does your College or University have a private or religious affiliation that may exempt them from adopting a gender identity and expression non-discrimination policy?**

- Yes
- No

**7.) Does your Athletic Program have a non-discrimination policy that includes gender identity and expression?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

**8.) Please describe or cut and paste the policy here, being careful to delete any identifying information:**

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**9.) Please describe or cut and paste the policy here, being careful to delete any identifying information:**

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**10.) To the best of your knowledge has your Athletic Program encountered a situation/s that relates to gender identity or expression discrimination?**

- Yes

No

**11.) Please explain the gender identity or expression related discrimination/s here using as much detail as possible, being careful to exclude any identifying information:**

---

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---

**Definition**

**Please review the following definition of "transgender":**

**Transgender— An umbrella term encompassing a wide range of identities, appearances, and/or behaviors that fall outside stereotypical gender norms. The transgender umbrella includes, but is not limited to, individuals who behave and/or dress differently from their birth gender (for example, a female who wears mens clothing); individuals who do not identify as either male or female; and individuals who identify as a gender different from their biological gender (for example, a person born male who now identifies as female [MtF] or vice versa [FtM]).**

**(Beemyn, 2005; Gender Spectrum, 2010)**

**Transgender-Inclusive Policy**

**12.) Adopting transgender-inclusive policies is important for equal opportunity of all student-athletes**

- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Neutral
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

**13.) Creating transgender-inclusive policies is important in your Athletic Program.**

- Strongly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Neutral
- Slightly agree
- Moderately agree
- Strongly agree

**14.) Does your Athletic Program have any specific policies that address Male to Female transgendered student-athletes (MtF) or Female to Male transgendered student-athletes (FtM)?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

**15.) Please describe or cut and paste the policy here, being careful to delete any identifying information:**

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**16.) To the best of your knowledge, has your Athletic Program had a situation with past, current, or prospective transgender student-athletes in which an existing policy would have helped to resolve the issue?**

- Yes
- No

**17.) Please describe the situation/s using as much detail as possible, being sure to exclude any identifying information:**

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**18.) Would you like to see the NCAA adopt a national policy that includes transgender student-athletes?**

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

**19.) Please expand on why you are not sure you would like to see the NCAA adopt a national policy that includes transgender student-athletes:**

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**Scenarios**

**20.) Scenario #1:**

**You are approached by a student-athlete in your Athletic Program who was born female, but informs you of the desire to be identified as male gendered. The student is interested in continuing to play for the women’s team, but wants to know what support will be provided by administration in this pursuit.**

- How would you respond to this student-athlete?**
- In what ways can your Athletic Program's administration be supportive of this student-athlete?**
- How welcoming and inclusive do you feel your Athletic Program would be towards this student-athlete?**

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**21.) Scenario #2:**

**A prospective student-athlete who was born male, but transitioned to the female gender using hormones for the past 2 years has contacted you to see if your Athletic Program would permit play on a women’s volleyball team. The student currently plays volleyball with a High School National Championship team and would typically be a student-athlete your program recruits.**

- How would you respond to this student-athlete?**
- In what ways can your Athletic Program's administration be supportive of this student-athlete?**
- How welcoming and inclusive do you feel your Athletic Program would be towards this student-athlete?**

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**22.) To the best of your opinion, how would you (or do you) describe your Athletic Program's overall attitude toward transgender student-athletes participating in your program?**

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**Demographics**

**23.) In what Division does your Athletic Program compete?**

- Division I-FBS or FCS
- Division I-Non football
- Division II
- Division III

**24.) What is the title of your position as an administrator in your Athletic Program?**

---

**25.) How many years have you been in the field of sports administration?**

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**26.) What is your age?**

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**27.) How do you identify your gender?**

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**28.) How do you identify your sexuality?**

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**29.) How do you identify your race or ethnicity?**

---

**30.) What religious or spiritual practice do you have, if any?**

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**31.) Please write any final comments you may have about transgender-inclusive policies and/or this survey.**

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**Thank You!**

**Thank you for taking this survey on this very important topic.**

**Descriptive results for this survey will be placed on a website, and participants contacted for this study will be notified when the results are posted. Planned posting date is August, 2011.**

**If you are interested in references used in this survey, and for further resources, feel free to follow the links provided on this page.**

**Glossary of LGBT terms-**

**[http://www.genderspectrum.org/images/stories/Resources/Family/A\\_Word\\_About\\_Words.pdf](http://www.genderspectrum.org/images/stories/Resources/Family/A_Word_About_Words.pdf)**

**On the Team: Equal Opportunity for Transgender Student Athletes-**

**Report written to introduce and recommend policies for inclusion of transgender student-athletes.**

**<http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/Issues-And-Research/Homophobia/%7E/media/Files/TransgenderStudentAthleteReport.pdf>**

**Transgender Law and Policy Institute-**

**“Non-profit organization dedicated to engaging in effective advocacy for transgender people in our society.”**

**<http://www.transgenderlaw.org/>**