

CHAPTER 5

Navigating Binary Spaces: Bathrooms, Schools, Sports

Key Questions

1. When you are moving through your day-to-day life and you are out in public, how much do you have to plan ahead to find a bathroom? Do you have fears about finding a bathroom?
2. Were there unisex bathroom options at your elementary, middle, or high school?
3. How was gender discussed in your elementary school, your middle school, and your high school? How was gender presented in the books in your school library? Did your school library have books with trans characters?
4. Were there any sports teams at your school that were not separated by gender? Were there any trans athletes at your school?
5. Do you participate in sports? How much have you thought about gender issues in your sport?

Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on issues relating to trans accessibility in three interconnected areas: bathrooms, schools, and sports. Public restrooms are everywhere you go. And in schools, restrooms are often strictly monitored gendered spaces. Sports participation often begins through school. Whether sports are tied to student athletics or move onto the international stage like the Olympics, bathrooms are also often at the center of gender policing and monitoring in terms of locker rooms and who can and cannot use them. Historically, many of these public arenas have been challenging for numerous groups of people with respect to full and equal access: women, people of color, people from a culture's nondominant religion, and people who are differently abled, to name just a few. It is important to keep these other groups in mind as you read about the ways

that trans people face and overcome challenges to full and equal access. You will also see that advocacy over bathroom access can sometimes help change public policy that affects schools and larger educational concerns. And in sports, the debate about binary gendered locker rooms moves us to much broader questions about overall gender equality in athletics. What would a sport without gender designations look like? As you read through this chapter and Chapter 6, be sure to note the ways that familial relationships are interwoven throughout all these public access issues.

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