Preferred Name and Pronoun Use at McGill University

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I would like first of all to thank everyone who participated in the survey and the interviews —without you, this would not be possible, and it was a privilege to talk to every one of you. Thank you for sharing so many difficult things with me, and I hope this report can do us all justice.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the disruptions it has brought about created a number of logistical challenges that have significantly delayed the publishing of this report. I apologize for these delays, and I thank everyone for their patience and understanding throughout the process of this research.

I would also like to thank the staff I've worked with at Student Records, IT Services and across McGill, for your help in putting this together and for your openness to change. Thank you to the JBSCE Subcommittee on Queer People, and to the SSMU Vice Presidents of University Affairs Madeline Wilson, Brooklyn Frizzle, and Claire Downie for all of your strong and consistent support. Thank you to Adrienne Tessier, Belle Sullivan, Sasha Simmons at QPIRG-McGill and VC Renaud at Queer McGill for your invaluable help in bringing this project to life. Finally, thank you to everyone who couldn't be named in this report, but whose contributions made this work possible at every stage.

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the findings of a study conducted during the Fall 2019 and Winter 2020 terms, looking into the use of the preferred names of transgender and gender-non-conforming students at McGill. 36 current or recent (graduating or expecting to graduate in the class of 2019 or later) students responded to a survey on their experiences regarding the use of their names in McGill's, documentation, records, IT systems, and in their interactions with faculty and staff. Roughly one third of these respondents were interviewed for further detail on their experiences and the related challenges they have encountered at McGill.

The survey found that 78% of respondents had not undergone a legal change of name, and 42% of respondents did not intend to. 59% of respondents who attempted to register a preferred name or a legal change of name with Student Records were unsuccessful. This is in spite of the fact that 50% of respondents either had attempted or had interest in updating information with Student Records. Further, only 13.9% of respondents had their currently used name displayed across all IT services.

The current "preferred name" option, which allows students to input a name which is not legally recognized for display on some documentation and IT services, was found to be insufficient to meet the needs of trans students. This option is limited both in the scope of what it intends to provide to students, and in the capacity to implement these existing provisions. Requirements for students to use their previously used name to log in to IT services, inconsistent and frequently unsuccessful updating of information in different locations, and the number of locations in which the preferred name is excluded, all severely limit the usefulness of the current system. Respondents found the current preferred name option to be poorly communicated and unclear, with a general consensus on the assumption that an attempt to use this would be unsuccessful. The process of updating documentation following a legal change of name was also found to be insufficient. Respondents similarly found the process unclear and difficult, with poor communication regarding requirements for documentation. Due to combinations of all of these factors, many determined that what was offered was not worth the effort required to attain it.

Beyond the issue of preferred name use, students consistently reported that harassment and discrimination were not uncommon from faculty, senior academic staff, and clinicians at the Student Wellness Hub. Though some reported hostile or difficult interactions with support staff, these were more often attributable to unclear documentation and overwork, and I advise strongly against a punitive approach towards workers in these interactions. Despite this, currently existing frameworks have no power to effectively check the ability of professors, supervisors, members of faculty, and the senior administration at McGill to use their power to harass, discriminate, and take retributive action against the people whose careers depend upon them. This will continue to happen, to trans people and many others, as long as power at McGill is organized in the manner it currently is.

I recommend a broad range of solutions for different offices and departments, largely revolving around a project to rework existing documentation (see section 4). Student Services

and IT must work with the various offices and departments at McGill which hold records of students' names to create a better communicated, more comprehensive, and more consistent process for updating students' names. This project should likely begin with the Student Wellness Hub, and then extend to offices such as International Student Services, Scholarships and Student Aid, and any other relevant student-facing offices at McGill. Students who have not undergone a legal change of name must have easy access to comprehensive accommodation on all official university documentation. The current preferred name system is also used by many students with non-anglophone names, particularly BIPOC students who adopt an anglophone or anglicized name for ease of communication or to avoid discrimination from their professors and peers. I strongly recommend further research be undertaken on what these students need from McGill's record-keeping, and how McGill can better support them overall.

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1. Introduction

McGill University is not, and has not historically been, a welcoming place to many kinds of people. Founded on the profits of slavery, it became an integral part of the Canadian settler colonial project, and remains a largely reactionary institution in both form and function. As McGill takes in massive donations, austerity continues for its student services, financial aid, and any department or organization that is not actively profitable. It limits access to economic opportunities and knowledge production to those who can afford the fee of admission, and the influence of its reactionary culture is felt from the exclusionary and discriminatory policies of its administration to the interpersonal interactions and everyday experiences of the marginalized members of its community.[1]

This report should be considered as an outline for how McGill can take one step towards addressing one of many things that have prevented it from being a fair or equitable place. The changes I am advocating for here are not radical: they are essential, but they are long overdue, and by no means the end of any of these problems. This report has two goals: to provide broader education on Preferred Name Use issues (and trans issues more broadly) at McGill, and to provide actionable goals across various offices and departments to ameliorate these issues.

The background will explain terminology, and then discuss the significance of the failure to recognize trans students' names and pronouns. The method used to collect the survey and interview data is then outlined, and the results will be displayed and discussed. The recommendations will provide specific advice to offices and departments that keep records of students' legal or preferred names, broken down by department. Each department's section begins with an executive summary to clearly outline the steps that need to be taken, followed by a larger discussion of the issues raised by these findings. Finally, I will discuss the many areas that I believe this kind of work can and must be continued.

While this report cannot possibly address the entirety of transphobia at McGill, I hope it can help provide a path towards a safer and more equitable environment for all of us. I have been very encouraged by the openness to change that I have seen among so many people I've spoken to for this project, and I am optimistic that we will see a measure of change where it is possible in spite of the inertia of old systems. I believe that most of what this report addresses is the result of unintentional error. The systems of record-keeping at McGill were designed without an awareness that trans people existed. What we see today is the result of these systems carrying forward unexamined. If these systems are examined, and their limitations resolved, it will be a significant step towards allowing trans people at McGill to attain the dignity and safety that we deserve.

1 Mignacca, Franca G. "McGill Professor, Students Call on University to Examine School's Links to Slavery." CBC News, July 27, 2020. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/charmaine-nelson-releases-mcgill-report-with-students-1.5664239.

2. Background

2. 1 Terminology

Previously Used Name/Currently Used Name — Where current documentation refers to trans students' "preferred" names, this report refers instead to "currently used" names. A name that one has used prior to transition-related changes of name, often referred to as "birth" names, "legal" names, or "deadnames," are referred to as "previously used" names. Trans people are not simply expressing a preference when we ask to be referred to with a particular name or pronouns - we are telling others who we are. This report will refer to "recognizing" trans students' names, and consequently "correcting" or "updating" documentation.

Trans — Transgender refers to an individual who identifies with a gender other than the one assigned to them at birth. It is not a categorization that everyone who is non-cisgender[2] identifies with. For ease of explanation in this report, "trans" refers to those who use a different name or pronouns than those assigned to them at birth as an expression of gender. This is not a requirement for one to be trans, nor does it necessarily make an individual trans. Rather, the purpose of this definition is to describe the specific interactions of trans and gender non-conforming students with the systems at McGill described in this report.

Workers/Support Staff — McGill employees working as support staff, in reception, or in any other role that places them in interactions with trans students but who do not hold power over these students, are referred to here as workers. This is, again, not an exhaustive or exclusive definition, but a conscious choice to highlight the dynamics of power in students' interactions with staff. This is not to imply that teaching assistants, course lecturers, instructors, advisors, and in many cases professors, are not workers, or are not exploited. This is to emphasize that different staff members hold different positions within the hierarchy of power at McGill, and that these positions shape the nature and significance of their interactions with trans students.

2.2 Significance of Preferred Name Use

There is a tendency across the political spectrum to dismiss issues like this as minor cultural debates. I argue that this is not the case. There are many different forms and degrees of harm, and pointing to one does mean ignoring the others. The improper use of our names is a small part of transphobia, which is itself a small part of the systems of oppression that exist in our society, but it is also a regular source of pain and exclusion that has deep meaning and repercussions.

In the move to online classes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the names that are displayed for each student are more relevant than they have ever been. Students now often have no ability to correct the people they interact with on an incorrectly documented name or pronouns, and McGill's vague gestures on the "future of learning" certainly seem to suggest that online learning will continue to play a significant role at this university. The way students' names are documented will continue to play a larger and larger role in how they are perceived as long as these trends continue.

There are two main forms of harm that result from the failure to recognize trans students' names. I distinguish between them to provide a better understanding of the scope of these issues, but I do not mean to suggest that either is more or less important than the other. The first form places trans students in threat of immediate material danger through a failure to protect their privacy: if a student's old name or pronouns are revealed to a professor, advisor, fellow student, or anyone else with whom they do not wish

2 Cisgender refers to individuals who identify with the gender assigned to them at birth

to share these things, they are put at greater risk of harassment, punitive use of power or authority, and violence. The ability to choose when or when not to disclose our transness, aside from representing a basic level of privacy that everyone deserves, is often a critical tool for trans people to safely navigate hostile environments of the sort that we often encounter at McGill.

The second type of harm lies in the psychological impacts of the disclosure of our previously used names or pronouns. On an individual level, regularly seeing this basic act of misrecognition can often produce dysphoria and anxiety, and worsen mental health overall. Numerous studies have demonstrated that, particularly for young trans people in the context of education, the recognition of preferred names and pronouns leads to vastly improved mental health outcomes and vastly decreased rates of suicidal ideation and behaviour.

In a 2016 survey on the mental health of transgender youth in British Columbia, Veale et al. compare mental health outcomes between transgender youth and the general population, finding a striking disparity that included 65% of respondents reporting suicidal ideation within the previous year compared to 13% in the general youth population.[3] In a 2018 study published in the Journal of Adolescent Health, Russel et al. examine a sample of 129 transgender youth in the United States. They find sharply reduced negative mental health outcomes (depression, suicidal ideation and behaviour) among participants who were able to receive recognition of their currently used names in their everyday contexts, notably at school.[4] The 2019 report on LGBTQ2 Health Policy for Canadian Post Secondary Students submitted to the House of Commons from the Canadian Centre for Sexual and Gender Diversity emphasizes that "gender-inclusive demographic options on institutional records and forms can encourage trans students' academic development and belonging by reducing daily stressors," and that "enabling students the opportunity to easily change their name and gender on official and unofficial school documents" significantly betters trans students' academic development.[5]

Beyond the individual level, these instances of harm reaffirm the collective understanding that McGill's trans community holds regarding this university and our place within it. One thing that almost every participant expressed was a sense that those in charge of this university fundamentally did not care about them, or about the trans community that exists here, and I cannot say that I disagree. McGill neglects many people in its community, and this sense of neglect is certainly not unique to trans students. What is unique in the issue of preferred name use, as many participants pointed out, was how simple of a failure this is. A university cannot end transphobia overnight, but it is frustrating for all of us to see such regular failure on something that should be so easy to provide.

I should hope that the presence of harm is enough to justify a call to action, but this harm has repercussions beyond the wellbeing of the trans community that exists at McGill. A university such as this represents for many the opportunity for class mobility, or at least the opportunity to pursue the kind of work that they find meaningful. When McGill excludes a certain group, particularly a marginalized group that experiences high rates of poverty, it forecloses these possibilities in people's lives.

I believe that there is, as I will outline in this report, a straightforward path that is available to McGill to provide this respect to its trans students. This will

3 Jaimie F. Veale et al., "Mental Health Disparities Among Canadian Transgender Youth." Journal of Adolescent Health 60, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 44–49. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2016.09.014.

4 Stephen T. Russell et al., "Chosen Name Use Is Linked to Reduced Depressive Symptoms, Suicidal Ideation, and Suicidal Behavior Among Transgender Youth," Journal of Adolescent Health 63, no. 4 (October 1, 2018): 503–5, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.02.003;

5 Woodford, M. R., Coulombe, S., Schwabe, N., and the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity. (2019, May 2). LGBTQ2 Health Policy: Addressing the Needs of LGBTQ2 Post- Secondary Students. Brief submitted to The House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, Government of Canada.

not end prejudice, discrimination, and harassment, and I encourage anyone taking this report to heart to view this as a first step that is essential, but that has come far too late.

3. Results

The results included here are from a survey and interviews conducted during the Fall 2019 and Winter 2020 terms. 36 current or recent (graduating or expecting to graduate in the Class of 2019 or later) McGill students who identified as transgender or gender non-conforming responded to the survey with their experiences. Approximately one third of these respondents were interviewed for further information, and to discuss the issues they had faced at McGill more broadly.

It should be emphasized that this data is not scientific, and neither are the conclusions of this report. I am confident that the experiences reported by the sample used for this study are broadly representative of the experiences of the trans community at McGill, but this data should not be viewed as empirical. Data was collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the shift toward online learning that followed fell outside the scope of data collection.

I have provided below the quantitative data collected in the survey. In the interest of protecting respondents' privacy, I summarize written-in answers to survey questions and the findings of my interviews. Individual documented cases have been shared with relevant departments as permitted by the students involved, but are not included here for public viewing. [6]

3.1 Current "Preferred Name" System

The current preferred name system allows students to select a name other than their legal name to be displayed online and in some documentation. In practice, under the current system, students using the preferred name option are not permitted to use their current name when receiving most documentation, using most IT systems, in class lists, or many other critical places that names are presented to staff and students. Documentation is inconsistently updated, often disclosing students' previously used names without their permission or knowledge. When it is updated, it is often difficult for support staff and administrators to determine which name to use in interactions with students, and which places they should use which name in documentation. All of this creates a second class of acknowledgement, where students can only be properly recognized by those around them if they were able to receive recognition from a government that intentionally prevents many of us from doing so.

3.2 IT Services

The vast majority of respondents and interview participants reported that their previously used names appeared in one or more places across McGill's IT services (figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1

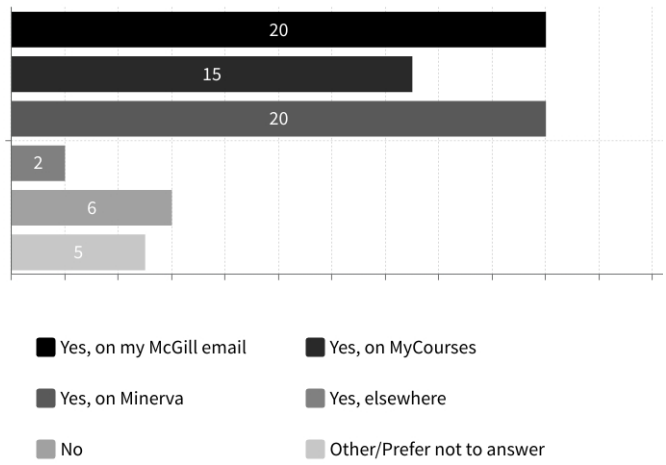

Figure 3.1 — Does your previously used name (including initials) or previously used pronouns appear anywhere in your profiles or usernames on your McGill email, myCourses or Minerva (or any other service of this nature)? Please select any/all that apply.

The majority had received emails with their previ-

6 If your department or office requires examples of specific individual cases, I cannot guarantee that a participant will give permission to share their information with you, but you can contact me through SSMU University Affairs and I can pass along your request to participants in this study.

ously used names, and had their previously used names displayed across various services seemingly at random (figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2

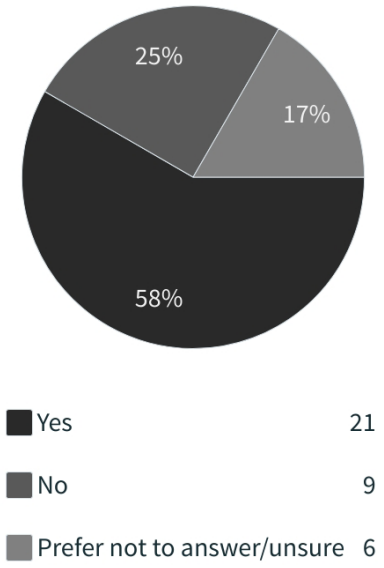

Figure 3.2 — Have you received emails from any McGill offices or organizations which used your previously used name or previously used pronoun

Figure 3.3

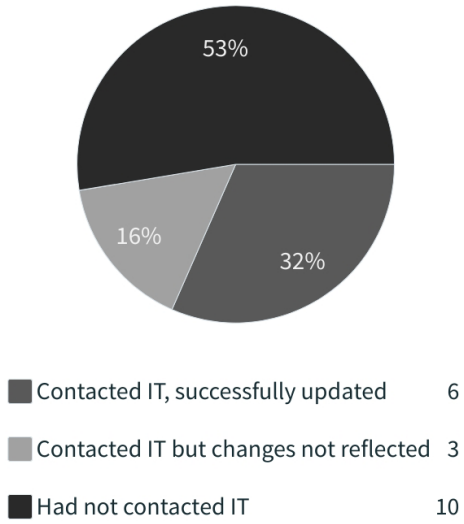

Figure 3.3 — Student Experience of Contacting IT for Name Change

Despite this, most had not contacted IT to remedy these issues (figure 3.3). Those who shared a reason for not contacting IT reported generally that they had little faith that the process would be successful or that they did not know how (figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4

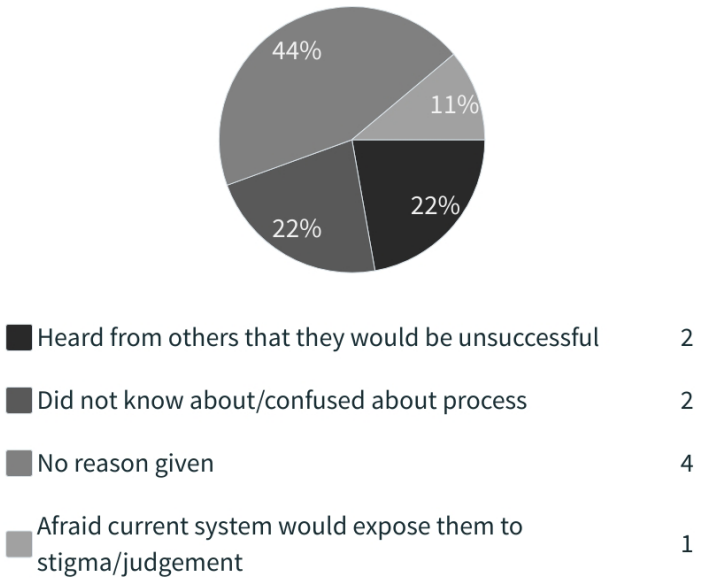

Figure 3.4 — Reasons given for not contacting IT

These are miscellaneous observations and reports from participants on specific issues. This is not an exhaustive list, and should be viewed in combination with the specific case studies provided.

- Students who have set up a preferred name are still required to log in to with previously used names
- No option is available for single letter names
- Student Records and IT name change processes are separate; some students who update with Student Records see changes in IT systems (or-vice versa), but many do not
- After contacting IT, students' emails were updated but no other changes were seen (including previously used names in McGill login, attendance sheets, class lists etc.)

- Skype[7] name left as previously used name after updating information
- Names displayed on myCourses reverts back to previously used names seemingly at random
- Email lists from various organizations and offices (particularly student services and alumni communications) regularly used previously used names long after they had been updated

The sample cases provided should be a better guide than the individual problems I've identified here, and ultimately I can only speak to how trans students experience these systems, but not to the systems themselves. These should provide an idea of where these issues are found and what needs to be different.

3.3 Student Records

Students reported broadly that the existing preferred name system and the system for updating a student's legal records were insufficient, difficult to access, and fail to accommodate trans students. Only half of the respondents had interest in (or had already completed) an update of their name with Student Records under the current system (figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5

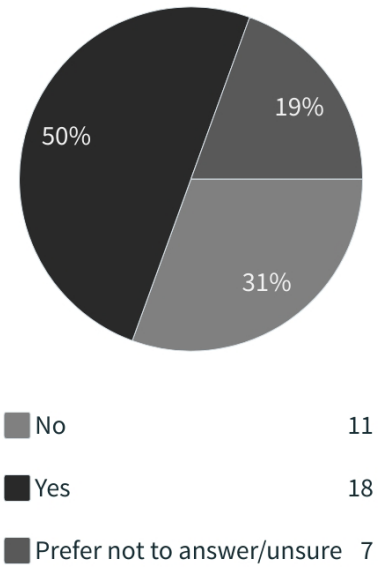

Figure 3.5 — Have you attempted, or are you interested in updating information with Student Records?

Respondents offered several explanations for this. Firstly, over half of respondents who had attempted to update their information were unsuccessful (figure 3.6). Another is the degree of accommodation provided by the preferred name option, the only option available to the 78% of respondents who had not undergone a legal change of name (figure 3.7).

Figure 3.6

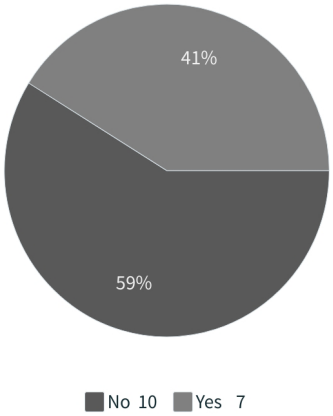

Figure 3.6 — Of those who have attempted (17) to update name or pronouns with the Registrar's office, were you successful?

Figure 3.7

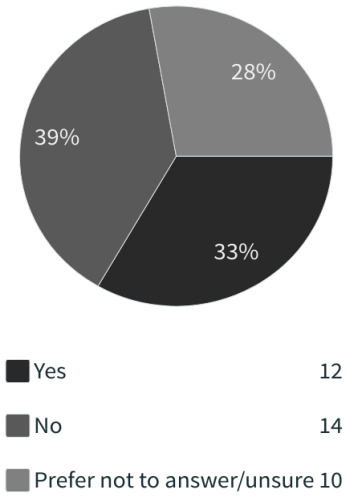

Figure 3.7 — Have you Undergone a Legal Change of Name or Pronouns?

7 Skype has, obviously, been phased out, but I wanted to flag this as a potential problem with Microsoft accounts or with other systems

As discussed in section 3.1, there are numerous limitations to the current preferred name system that prevent it from adequately serving the needs of the trans community at McGill. These are the responses that I collected from my interviews on their experiences with Student Records and the process of updating their names:

- Lack of clarity
  - Most students, in interviews, expressed that the existing process for adding a preferred name or updating a legal name is not easy to locate or understand. This was true both for those who had and had not attempted the process
  - The process for reporting issues with the display of names was not apparent to most students
  - Students who reached out to Service Point or other help desks were often directed to legal legal services, or other offices aside from Student Records
- Barriers to accessing legal changes of name
  - Students have been asked to provide varying types and amounts of documentation in order to receive recognition of a name change
    - E.g. One student was asked to provide as many as five pieces of identification, despite these documents not being officially required by McGill
  - Many students spoke to the logistical and financial barriers to acquiring an official legal name change in most places, including Quebec
    - The process of a legal name change is long, complicated, expensive, and in many cases impossible depending on the documentation that one possesses
    - Because of these things, many trans students are unable to receive a fully recognized name change in the current system at McGill
    - Further, those who are unable to attain a legal change of name are often unable to do so because of economic limitations, limited access to government documentation, or difficult home or family relationships, among many other factors that render them highly precarious and vulnerable to harassment and violence.

3.4 Student Wellness Hub

The Student Wellness Hub is one of the primary places at McGill where records are kept on students, and it is a place where trans people very regularly have negative experiences. The Wellness Hub used previously used names or pronouns in correspondence with one third of respondents (figure 3.8), and in just under half of respondents' interactions with staff (figure 3.9). The issues at the Wellness Hub are primarily related to the way that documentation is handled, and the way that trans people are treated in interactions with Hub staff.

Figure 3.7

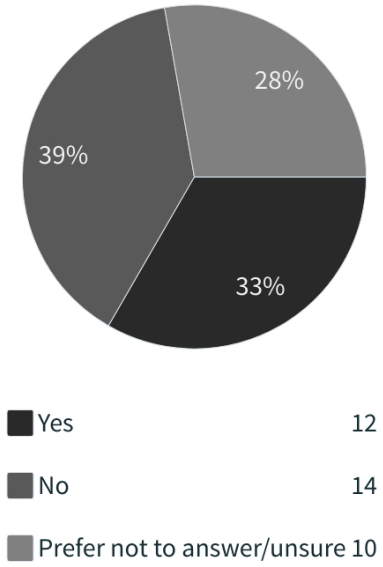

Figure 3.8 — Have you received correspondence (emails, phone calls, test results, etc.) from the Student Wellness Hub using your previously used name or pronouns?

Figure 3.9

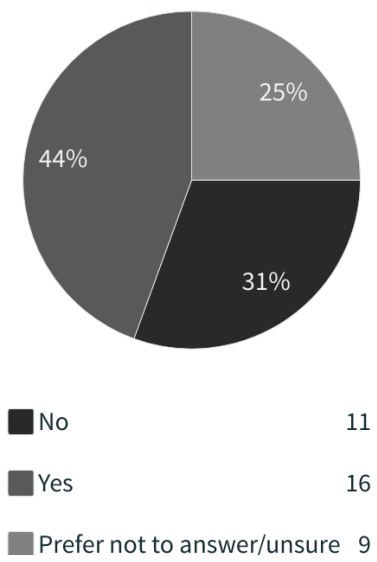

Figure 3.9 — Have you been addressed/referred to by a doctor, nurse, or other staff member at the Wellness Hub with your previously used name or pronouns?

These are my findings in both of these areas:

3.4a — Documentation and record keeping

- Reception staff are often presented with documentation containing incomplete, unclear, or incorrect information regarding a student's name and gender
  - E.g. Showing a student's previously used name, or showing "previously used name (new name)" with no explanation given
  - A lack of clarity combined with overwork means that misgendering/use of incorrect names is often inevitable in interactions with reception staff
- Trans students have no control over when their trans status is disclosed
  - Documentation that uses the previously used name or both names together discloses to a clinician or support staff member that a student is trans
  - In most situations, trans students will disclose their trans status to their doctors, and it is not necessary for documentation to proactively disclose this in most cases

3.4b — Clinical interactions

Based on confidential conversations with study respondents, I can conclusively say that transphobic harassment and discrimination are extremely prevalent among the Wellness Hub's clinical staff. This can include doctors, nurses, counsellors, case workers, and anyone who holds power over patients and their treatment. Generally, respondents reported that staff members withhold treatment or information from trans patients, demand answers to inappropriate and invasive questions, decide that a patient is either lying or incorrect about their own symptoms or health, or any number of smaller things that a patient has no power to stop. From my conversations with students, I can confirm that these things are very much present at the Student Wellness Hub in a way that has managed to surprise a population of people already accustomed to medical discrimination in the rest of the world.

3.5 Faculty and Staff

Though a number of students reported that they had had negative interactions with reception or support staff, most students also reported that they rarely found these interactions to carry intentional malice. Instead, most respondents pointed to how clearly overworked most of these staff members are, and broader ignorance of trans issues in society.

Over half of respondents had been addressed by faculty or academic staff with their previously used name or pronouns, and that the staff or faculty member in questions knew the student's preferred name or pronouns in around half of these cases (figure 3.10, figure 3.11). What follows is a broad discussion the experiences that trans students have with these individuals, in reference to the way that power is structured and distributed at this university.

Figure 3.11

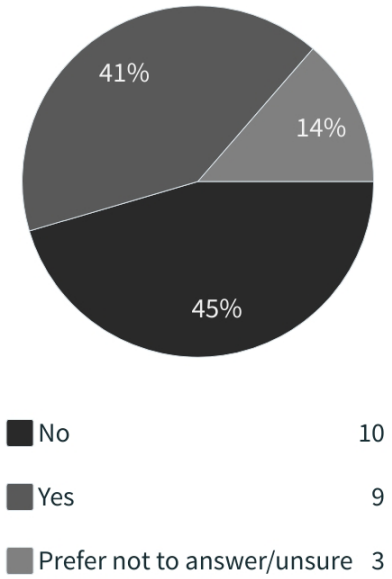

Figure 3.10 — Have you been referred to or addressed by a member of McGill's faculty or academic support staff (including professors, teaching assistants, advisors, etc.) with your previously used name or

Figure 3.11

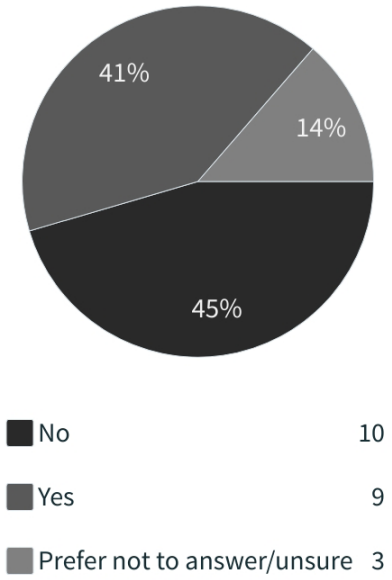

Figure 3.11 — If you have, was the faculty or staff member aware (as far as you knew) of your preferred name or pronouns?

Though my research was constrained to the issue of preferred name use, it was difficult to speak about interactions with faculty and staff without speaking about harassment, violence, and discrimination more broadly. Respondents' anecdotal experiences demonstrated that harassment, exploitation, and abuse are rampant at McGill as they often are at higher educational institutions. They further indicated that McGill has shown a consistent unwillingness to act upon credible allegations that a professor has harassed, abused, or otherwise exploited power to harm the students or staff below them.

Power is organized at McGill in such a way that it can easily be wielded against students or employees based on an individual faculty member, professor, or supervisor's prejudices. There is almost no accountability for many of these people, and I saw little confidence in the frameworks of accountability that do exist from respondents. McGill is a hierarchical organization, creating easily exploitable balances of power in every facet of academic life. This problem is significantly worsened by the existence and maintenance of immovable positions of power such as tenure, and creates an environment in which harassment, exploitation, and abuse are all but inevitable. It is unsurprising to then, that these things can go on so openly at a place like McGill.

4. Recommended Action

4.1 General Guidelines for New Documentation

These guidelines are created with a focus on IT and Student Records, but can and should be implemented across any office or organization that keeps record of students names. I encourage other offices and organizations to work with IT and Student Records in the process of creating improved documentation, and to examine and update the documentation that you currently keep.

- The name that should be seen first on a document with a student's information should be their preferred name or updated legal name
  - On documentation where a student's legal name is required, this should be clearly presented as a secondary detail included for external/legal documentation only
    - This communication can take the form of staff training on updated documentation, or of notes on documentation
    - The specific implementation of this will depend on the circumstances of a given office or type of documentation, but should generally follow the above procedure
- Expanding pronoun options
  - Selecting pronouns must be optional: not all students should be required to identify themselves with pronouns on documentation or elsewhere
  - They/them should be a standard option on all documentation, as should an option for a student to write in any other pronouns that they wish to use (where they can write in singular/plural/possessive forms [e.g. she/her/hers])
  - Specifically gendered addresses such as Ms./Mr., Sir/Ma'am, Monsieur/Madame, etc. should be avoided in mass communications
- Accommodations for specific exceptions
  - If a student requests that an aspect of their documentation related to their name or pronoun be changed, in a manner that new standard options cannot accommodate, this should be carries out as immediately and comprehensively as possible
    - E.g. Students requesting that the previously used name be used in certain places to protect their privacy

4.2 IT Services

- IT must collaborate with Student Records upon the creation of a unified, simple online form that allows students to update the names and pronouns that are displayed across documentation held at McGill, as well as in IT Services
  - This must be applied consistently across myCourses, Minerva, McGill email and associated accounts, and all other specific cases listed in the results
- IT must launch an extensive investigation into existing issues, primarily the failure to update information comprehensively in the current preferred name system, as discussed in the results
  - This project should seek to bring the display of names in all IT Services in line with the general recommendations above
  - Individual cases have been shared with IT Services as permitted by respondents, and should provide a material example of these issues
- IT must significantly improve its response to reports of the display of previously used names or pronouns
  - Addressing these reports should be a top priority for the IT service desk going forward, and it should be made clear to trans students updating their names that they can contact the service desk for this reason
    - These reports should be displayed to service desk team members as particularly urgent, as failure here can compromise students' privacy and safety
  - IT should either designate a staff member to respond to these reports, or have a designat-

ed procedure for resolving these issues

Broadly, IT must collaborate with Student Records on a larger project to update the existing documentation and systems for information keeping at McGill. When a student requests that an updated name or pronouns be displayed, this must result in a comprehensive process of updating information across IT Services, Student Records, and any other relevant offices as extensively as possible. There must then be a process by which students can report instances of the appearance of their previously used name, and a designated team member or standardized process to resolve them.

4.3 Student Records

- Revising the options available for students to update their names
  - McGill must make a distinction between trans students who wish to use a name other than their legal name, and other students who wish to use a nickname, or an anglicized or altered version of their name. The following procedures should apply:
    - Trans students using a name other than their legal name, modelled on McMaster University's policy[8] which allows trans students to update their name across university documentation without requiring legal documents
      - The previously used name is for most trans people sensitive, private information, and ensuring that documentation is updated should be a top priority of record keepers
      - This should be listed as a specific option on McGill application and registration forms
      - This option must involve a comprehensive update of records and display in all places where there is not an explicit legal requirement for a student's legal name
      - This option must also allow students to receive transcripts, diplomas, and other official documentation in their currently used name
    - Students who prefer to use a nickname, or an anglicized or altered version of their name
      - The previously used name is not typically sensitive, private information
      - This should be listed as a specific option on McGill application and registration forms, as distinguished from trans students' names
  - Trans students with an updated legal name
    - The same processes should be carried out regarding the updating of information
    - All documentation with a student's previously used name should be replaced with their current name, and previous documentation removed from records unless they cannot be replaced (E.g. documentation that requires signatures from someone who cannot be reached)
  - Must accommodate exceptions as widely as possible
    - Students who request that either their preferred or legal name either appear or not appear in a given place on given documentation or IT services should have their requests honoured to the fullest extent that is legally possible, (E.g. requesting that one's preferred name not appear on documentation sent to one's parents)
      - Among respondents, the number who would require exceptions such as these is relatively low, and as such these requests should not be difficult to meet
  - Must improve response to reports of issues with display of incorrect names
    - The incorrect display of a trans students'

8 The McMaster University name change procedure (outlined here: https://registrar.mcmaster.ca/services/name-change/) requires no documentation and offers a simple contact method, offering a full update of documentation without requiring extensive and difficult to attain proof (further outlined here https://www.mcgilldaily.com/2017/11/the-right-to-change-your-name-how-mcgill-must-support-trans-students/)

names or pronouns can have significant implications for their safety and wellbeing, as discussed in the background
    - A report made to Service Point, IT Support, or Student Records regarding preferred name use must prompt an immediate response, and be treated as a high priority and a threat to student safety
- Improved communication on process of adding preferred names and pronouns
    - There must be a simple, straightforward online form that allows students to select the name and pronouns that they wish to appear on their records
    - This must include a comprehensive explanation of the places that their legal name will still appear

I strongly recommend that further research be undertaken on preferred name use for students with non-anglophone names. This was not the specific subject of my research, but I can say confidently that the specific needs of these students regarding a preferred name use system are different from the specific needs of trans students regarding a system to recognize their names. However, I believe that a research project more specifically focused upon this issue would be necessary to conclusively recommend anything, and that such a project must be undertaken so that McGill can ameliorate at least some of the racist discrimination that these students regularly experience.

4.4 Student Wellness Hub

4.4a — Documentation and Record Keeping

- New documentation must be created in line with documentation guidelines provided in section 4.1
- There must be a specific examination, in cooperation with IT and Student Records, to examine which documents legitimately require that a student's legal name appear
    - Where legal names are required, it is critical that clinical staff be presented first with a student's preferred name
    - Legal names should be included as secondary information (with an asterisk or otherwise as appropriate for the situation
    - A staff member who looks quickly at this documentation should see the student's preferred name, as this is highly relevant in student-staff interactions
- Specific processes must be established and outlined to staff for updating a trans student's name
- Ideally, we would like to hear from the Wellness Hub's administrators for more detailed information about their documentation and record keeping

4.4b — Broader issues at the Wellness Hub

While I see a change in record keeping and better training of staff as an immediate solution, I want to bring up several other issues at the Wellness Hub. While many of the failures detailed in this report are caused by flawed bureaucratic systems, many of the practices of clinical staff at the Student Wellness Hub exhibit shocking bigotry. Bee Khaleeli expresses this much more eloquently than I can in their McGill Daily article which details a "labyrinthine mess of psychiatric malpractice" that includes constant misgendering, withheld diagnosis, and clinician's notes that clearly demonstrate a case of bigotry leading to the provision of negligent and actively harmful treatment.[9] It is highly reflective of many of my own experiences at the Wellness Hub, and the experiences of many of those I have spoken to in my research.

I applaud the Wellness Hub for hiring clinicians with specializations in trans health, but this is insufficient. One doctor cannot serve the range of an entire community's medical needs, and without changes to the structures that harm trans students at the Wellness Hub, this offers little help to those already struggling to receive adequate care. I urge the Hub's leadership to continue and significantly expand your work with groups and individuals advocating for equity and justice at McGill.

9 Khaleeli, Bee. "'My Brain Is Trying to Kill Me.'" The McGill Daily (blog), October 15, 2018. https://www.mcgilldaily.com/2018/10/my-brain-is-trying-to-kill-me/.

This problem is hardly unique to McGill, and trans people regularly face discrimination and mistreatment from doctors and nurses in a wide range of situations. Emilia Lombardi, Associate Professor of Public Health at Baldwin Wallace University, describes how trans people's "appearances, legal identities, or even just the knowledge that a given person is trans may limit access to the provision of quality care in health care facilities."[10] There are countless individual cases that demonstrate the regularity of this experience, many of which revolve around the failure to use a patient's currently used name. [11]That being said, many instances reported to me in confidence demonstrated gross bigotry and malpractice from numerous clinicians at McGill who continue to treat students. This mistreatment can cause very serious harm, whether it be emotional and psychological damage or the immediate physical harm of doctors attributing abnormal physical symptoms to some element of transness (hormones, lifestyle, etc.). This is particularly relevant as, for most international or out-of-province students, the Wellness Hub is the only source of day to day medical treatment.

I would also like to refer here to the recent article on the long history of anti-Black racism at McGill written by Dr. Rachel Zellars, lawyer and Assistant Professor at St. Mary's University, who completed her PhD at McGill.[12] Dr. Zellars points to many examples of McGill's deeply rooted racism and specific anti-Blackness, such as the $14 million overhaul of the Student Wellness Hub that nonetheless "evidenced no commitment to attend to the unique needs of Black, Indigenous, and racialized students." She cites many specific instances, such as the story of a student whose experience with McGill's "ineffectual counselling centre" "compounded her trauma, providing both a tipping point and clarity" on her decision to complete her degree elsewhere, as well as a case in which "an employee tasked with the well-being of students who require disability accommodations responded to the mental health crisis of a racialized student on campus by calling campus security and then contacting the police."

This is structural violence that McGill enacts on its own students, and it should be clear to all of us that any effort made to challenge this university's transphobia must exist in solidarity and collaboration with the struggle against this university's white supremacy. These struggles are critically connected, and it is crucial to understand that preferred name use is a very small part of the larger structures of exclusion and violence at this university. I implore the Wellness Hub to use this opportunity to address the many different ways that it has failed and directly harmed McGill's marginalized students. I also implore SSMU or any other body with sufficient funding to further carry out research and advocacy projects to addressing these issues specifically.

4.5 Faculty and Staff

4.5a — Workers/Support Staff

Due to the nature of their positions as representatives of many larger systems at McGill, reception and support staff members often become the points of contact where we experience McGill's failure to correctly recognize our names. Staff members are regularly presented with unclear or incorrect documentation that, combined with their jobs often requiring them to rush while processing and interpreting large amounts of information in a short period of time, inevitably causes instances such as those described in the results. This often occurs regardless of an individual staff member's intentions or beliefs.

10 Lombardi, Emilia. "Public Health and Trans-People: Barriers to Care and Strategies to Improve Treatment." In The Health of Sexual Minorities: Public Health Perspectives on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Populations, edited by Ilan H. Meyer and Mary E. Northridge, 638–52. Boston, MA: Springer US, 2007. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-31334-4_26. p. 639

11 Bever, Lindsey. "Transgender Boy's Mom Sues Hospital, Saying He 'Went into Spiral' after Staff Called Him a Girl." Washington Post, October 3, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2016/10/03/mother-sues-hospital-for-discrimination-after-staff-kept-calling-her-transgender-son-a-girl/.

12 Zellars, Rachel. "Canada's Racist Ivy League: The Virulence of McGill's Anti-Black Problem." Ricochet, October 19, 2020. https://ricochet.media/en/3330.

I do not wish to downplay the significance of these interactions, and I wish to be clear that transphobic harassment and discrimination are a serious problem at McGill. Instances where a staff members harms or endangers students, particularly based on their marginalized identity, should always be unacceptable.

That being said, while a given staff member may hold transphobic personal beliefs (which some of course will given the size of McGill's staff), this is not something that the university meaningfully can or necessarily should seek to root out and change. Transphobia is ubiquitous in our society, and I feel that an attempt by the university to change the individual beliefs of its underpaid and overworked employees would not be productive. Some minds may be changed in the course of staff education, but ultimately McGill should not place the responsibility upon its workers to overcome the failures of its systems.

Reception and support staff should be provided with correct, current documentation on students' names and pronouns, and a clear explanation (either on a given document or taught through training, as described in section 4.1) as to which name they should use in conversation or in legal documents. I also call upon the McGill administration to hear and meet the demands of current and future campus unionization efforts, and to treat its workers with the bare minimum decency of a living wage and reasonable working conditions.

4.5b —Faculty, Academic Staff and Administrators

This report has primarily looked at systems of record-keeping, unintentional errors, and a lack of simple accommodation for students' names and pronouns. I believe that these are areas where clear solutions exist, solutions which are possible to implement within the current structures of power at McGill. I do not believe that these kinds of solutions presently exist on the matter of high ranking faculty and staff. As it stands, there is essentially no framework that can meaningfully protect a student or staff member who brings forward allegations of harassment, abuse, or violence, from facing retribution from members of their departments, supervisors, professors, or anyone else who holds power over them. Rewriting the rules that exist regarding staff conduct in an attempt to reduce intentional misgendering would, I believe, accomplish little without a much larger change.

Institutions such as McGill have done little to demonstrate that they are capable of holding or maintaining a productive understanding of trans politics, or capable of applying rules of that nature to its own faculty. It is clear that across academia, reactionary and bigoted speech, ideas, and actions are consistently protected by university administrations and tenured faculty. In the wake of the backlash to a University of Ottawa professor's use of a racial slur, Provost and Vice Principal Christopher Manfredi emphasized to the McGill community in an email on December 15th, 2020, that "no single idea, argument, word, or work is 'prohibited' at McGill."[13] While the use of racist language inspires this kind of defence, clear assaults on the freedom to even discuss certain issues are met with silence.[14] It is naive to imagine, either hopefully or fearfully, that these structures will ever actually serve the interests of marginalized students and workers. The purpose of an institution like McGill is, ultimately, to generate and maintain wealth: for its senior administrators, for a select group of tenured professors, for individual donors who can launder their wealth and reputations, and for corporate donors who desire a larger pool of skilled labour so that they can pay these workers less. Those who hold ideas that challenge power are dismissed without thought, while professors who

13 Manfredi, Christopher. Letter to All McGill Students and Staff. "Academic Freedom / Liberté Académique," December 15, 2020.

14 Deif, Farida. "A Human Rights Controversy at the University of Toronto." Human Rights Watch, September 29, 2020. https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/29/human-rights-controversy-university-toronto.

engage in harassment or abuse are sheltered from consequences.

Trans people are misgendered and deadnamed constantly, often daily, and no one is under any illusion that this can be ended wholesale. What we can do, rather, is build power that we can use to protect ourselves when this is used against us in cases of harassment and abuse. I see campus organizations and unions as important steps in building this kind of power, but I cannot make a definitive conclusion on what should be done outside of what I've outlined. A simple policy can not change this, but a meaningful framework of accountability for faculty and academic staff who harass or abuse their students can make a significant difference in the safety and wellbeing of marginalized people at McGill.

5. Moving Forward

In hearing from a wide range of trans students at McGill during my research, many things came up that fell outside the scope of this project, and that I do not feel comfortable including here. Transphobia is near-ubiquitous in our society and institutions, but from my experience working on this project, I can confirm that what McGill creates is a uniquely hostile environment for trans people. What this report addresses is a very small part of what trans people face at McGill and in general. The recognition of our names and pronouns is a truly basic sign of respect, and one that we regularly do not receive. When taken as a small part of the larger structures of violence and discrimination that trans people are subjected to every day, the recognition of our names is a small part of what we need. At the same time, this issue is intimately connected to the mechanisms of violence and exclusion at an institution like McGill. It is difficult to imagine that any deeper change is possible when such a basic issue remains unresolved. Even if this will not fundamentally change this university, I believe that the changes outlined in this report are necessary steps to reduce the harm that is done every day to McGill's trans students.

In the course of this project, I came across many issues that I believe warrant further research and action. As mentioned in earlier sections on documentation, I believe that harassment and abuse require much more attention. Removing the ability of professors to attain knowledge of a student's trans status or previously used name takes away one lever of power but leaves many others. There must be a meaningful framework of support for those who come forward with these types of allegations, and there must be a body that can investigate these things legitimately without being beholden to the power they are meant to challenge. I also believe that it would be useful to consult, in the process of redesigning the way that names are kept at McGill, with other students using names other than their legal names, such as students with non-anglophone names opting to use another name and likely many others whose needs I cannot personally speak to. I recommend that SSMU University Affairs or a similar body undertake a research project on the needs, specifically of BIPOC students with non-anglophone names, regarding a preferred name system, and the specific challenges these students face in this regard while navigating these systems within a white supremacist environment.

I also implore anyone undertaking further research on the issues facing trans people at McGill to approach this issue with extreme care for the privacy of information. If not handled properly, the information that is collected in this kind of a study can easily be weaponized for punitive action or retribution against trans people. Allowing McGill to access anything resembling a list of trans students, or sharing private information disclosed in confidence will actively put trans people in danger and make irrelevant whatever research was being conducted.

If this report is received positively and some action is taken (which I am fairly optimistic will happen), there will likely be changes presented to us that do not fulfil what we actually need. Several efforts like this have been carried out in the past, and while valuable gains have been made, most of the central problems remain unresolved. I do not believe that this is the fault of previous researchers or of the community. I believe that this is the result both of institutional inertia and the difficulty of continuing this type of work beyond an individual's capacity or time at McGill. I am happy to consult with anyone going forward whom I can help, but I cannot

(and should not) work on this forever. I want to urge SSMU University Affairs, Queer McGill, the UGE, and other campus organizations to revisit all of these issues once (or if) changes have been presented, and to hold the offices implementing them accountable for following through.

My hope is that we can see, from this, some actual improvement in the quality of our lives, and gain something we can build upon to pursue the deeper changes that we need and deserve. There is no reason why we should have to put up with the way we are treated. Something I've taken largely for granted in this report, and which I want to make very clear, is that the things I am speaking about are painful. Being trans in an environment like this can be hard, and it can feel lonely, and it can be difficult to imagine that things will ever really change. We deserve safety, autonomy, and the basic dignity of recognition. We deserve better, and if we are not given better, we will have to take it.

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