

# In and Out: Exploring Inclusion and Alienation within the Sport Experiences of Hijabi Athletes in Ontario

by

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## Abstract

Western sport environments may create challenges for young Muslim women who choose to participate while adhering to their Islamic values and principles. In this way, participation in sport may serve to exclude young Muslim women when cultural and religious needs are not met. The purpose of this study was to explore how young Muslim women who wear the hijab experience inclusion or alienation due to their involvement in sport in Ontario. Data collection with seven Hijabi athletes consisted of semi-structured interviews and audio-diaries recorded over a one-month period to examine identity negotiation, social interactions with non-Muslim teammates and coaches, and the influence of broader discourses on the sport experiences of young Muslim women. Results pertained to solidarity as well as Islamophobic interactions with teammates, surveillance due to hypervisibility of the hijab, and behaviour modification. This research highlights the heterogeneity of Muslim women in Ontario and how they navigate sport experiences.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction and Literature Review

### Introduction

The positive effects of sport participation are well documented. Specifically, sport is associated with a number of positive psychosocial outcomes for youth, such as enhanced leadership skills, self-esteem, body image, and improved social relationships (Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity & Payne, 2013; Findlay & Coplan, 2008). For this reason, sport has often been used as a tool to foster inclusion (or integration) among immigrant youth and ethnic minority groups in Europe and North America (Spaaij, 2015; Walseth, 2008; Agergaard, 2011). Despite this positive goal of fostering a sense of belonging in certain communities, organizations hoping to implement sport programs for some populations may face additional challenges due to a lack of cultural awareness. These challenges include a lack of parental cooperation, culturally relevant sport opportunities or interest from participants. For Muslim women, Islamic values and adherence shape the way they approach sport. Therefore, participation in a sport context that is often aimed at the mainstream population may serve to exclude young Muslim women when cultural and religious needs are not met. Much of the research to date has focused on the lack of physical activity participation among young Muslim women, which has often been attributed to cultural and religious barriers (de Knop, Theeboom, Wittcock & Martelaer, 1996). However, there is limited research that has examined the sport experiences of young Muslim women who are actively competing in a Western context. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to explore the ways in which young Muslim women experience inclusion and/or alienation within their sport involvement.

# Literature Review

## 1.1 Islam and Sport

In the past twenty years, there has been an explosion in the literature on the sport experiences of Muslim women. Much of the research to date has focused on cultural and religious barriers that Muslim women face when accessing physical activity and sport. For this reason, it is important to first understand the position of sport in Islam, as well as how it is conceptualized in current literature. Islam is a way of life that emphasizes a holistic approach to health, including spiritual, intellectual and physical wellbeing (Daiman, 1994; Jawad, 1998). The Quran (the Islamic religious book) and Hadith (text concerning the life of the Prophet) contain examples that may be interpreted as advocating for physical activity (Sfeir, 1985).

Specifically, the Hadith contain examples from the time of the Prophet describing children participating in swimming, shooting and horse-riding (Daiman, 1994). There is also a hadith about the Prophet racing with his wife and reports that some women fought alongside men, which implies that they would be physically fit and capable (Sfeir, 1985; Jawad, 1998).

Physical activity and a physical education are also supported through religious texts and examples (Daiman, 1994; Jawad, 1998). However, for some Muslim women, there can be a conflict between participation in Western sport environments and Islamic values that advocate for modesty in dress and gender relations (Jawad, 1998). In this way, the public visibility of the body becomes an important concept in Islam (Sfeir, 1985). Therefore, women's participation in sport is contested because the dominant (Western/secular) sporting culture can lead to high visibility of women's bodies in public mixed-sex arenas. Accordingly, researchers have identified tensions between Islamic culture and physical education in secular societies since the early 1990s (Benn, 1996; Benn, Dagkas & Jawad, 2011; Carroll & Hollingshead, 1993). Research on sport and Muslim women in the West to date has centered on a lack of fit between Islamic values and Westernized ideals of sport (Ahmed, 2011); however, this body of research has been criticized for overlooking the implicit constraints that discriminate against Muslim women and instead insinuate that an inability to conform to a Western way of life is due to cultural and Islamic practices (Ahmed, 2011).

### 1.1.1 Sex segregated environments

Because the public visibility of the body is an issue of concern in Islam, the issue of sex segregation is pertinent to any examination of Muslim women in sport. While some Muslim women may be comfortable competing in mixed-sex sport environments, some women prefer, or are required by political or socio-cultural pressures, to avoid contact with individuals of the other sex after puberty (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). This is a questioned site of religious and cultural views, and there are widely different opinions, religious views, and lived realities on this issue globally (Badran, 1995; Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). From the Islamic perspective, there is nothing either in the Quran or in the authentic Hadith that explicitly emphasizes segregation between the two sexes (Daiman, 1994; Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). However, conservative interpretations of Islamic texts in conjunction with cultural practices continue to prevent or restrict women from taking part in many aspects of life including physical activity (Daiman, 1994; Ahmad, 1992; Amara, 2008). Controlled access is also very important to some Muslim women in order to ensure their sense of privacy. For example, in a study of the physical activity experiences of young Muslim women in Ontario, many of the young women stated that they only felt comfortable participating in the women's only swimming hours when the windows were covered so they could not be seen by onlookers (Nakamura, 2002). In this way, it is clear that it is not simply a matter of programs being sex-segregated but there is also a need to control the access to that sport environment to provide Muslim women with the appropriate conditions for participation.

It is also important to recognize the heterogeneity of young Muslim women in terms of their religious adherence and how this will impact their approach to various sporting activities. In a study conducted in Norway, the role of religiosity in the physical education experiences of 21 young Muslim women was explored through the use of life story interviews (Walseth, 2015). All of these girls identified as Muslim although their degree of adherence to religious traditions (e.g. wearing the hijab) varied. It is interesting to note that the participants, particularly those who had grown up in Norway, were accustomed to the mixed-gender physical education and their experiences were similar to non-Muslim girls' (Walseth, 2015). However, religiosity played a large role in the mixed-gender swimming classes (Walseth, 2015). The girls' discomfort in certain gender-segregated sports was attributed to an embodiment of their faith and internalized religion (Walseth, 2015; Benn et al., 2011).

Therefore, the issue of sex-segregation may be of more importance for some women and in certain sporting environments.

## 1.2 Gender and Sport

In addition to the Islamic principles which shape the way Muslim women experience sport, it is important to acknowledge the historically gendered ways in which women, more generally, have navigated sport spaces. The notion of femininity and what is considered socially and culturally acceptable for the female body is particularly relevant for the purpose of this thesis. Historically, certain character traits have been associated with a particular gender. For example, men may be considered to be naturally more aggressive and competitive while women are more docile and accommodating (Hargreaves, 1994). It is important to make the distinction that these characteristics are not biological qualities inherent to a particular sex, but are the result of the internalization of particular social and cultural norms (Hargreaves, 1994). For example, educating girls in school about home economics while boys are taught skilled trades, reinforces the notion that a women's role is as a housewife and a man's role is to provide for his family. These gendered roles are ever present within sport as well. It is often considered socially acceptable for women to compete in "feminine", and often sexualized, sports such as figure skating and volleyball whereas boxing or rugby are forbidden (Hargreaves, 1994). Women who transgress these gendered ideals are often ostracized and/or labeled as lesbians (Hargreaves, 1994). In many Muslim countries, presentation of the female body and participation in sport are very closely tied to the Quran and hadith (Mernissi, 1991). However, as noted earlier, the interpretations of these Islamic texts are subjective (Hamzeh, 2012; Mernissi, 1991). Therefore, the Muslim female body becomes a site of power and struggle as the predominantly male Muslim clerics interpret what is religiously acceptable (Mernissi, 1991; Sadr, 2012). This has profound implications for how Muslim women navigate their day-to-day experiences, but particularly in Western sport settings, where other dominating forces of Islamophobia and racism are present.

## 1.3 Hijab

It is impossible to discuss the experiences of Muslim women in sport, or any other sphere, without an examination of the hijab. Despite common misconceptions that the hijab refers to a headscarf, the Islamic concept of hijab has a more comprehensive meaning. It is mostly used

to refer to the practice of covering the head, arms and legs. The term “hijab” is being used to distinguish it from other types of veils such as the burqa or niqab. Many Muslim women adopt the practice of wearing the hijab in accordance with their commitment to religious adherence and the practice of modesty (Badran, 1995; Amara, 2008), although this concept of modesty applies to both men and women. It is important to note that not all women who are Muslim wear the hijab or Islamic dress, and diverse political, economic, and social situations have been shown to influence Muslim women’s choice in adopting this practice (Amara, 2008; Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). Islamic cultures share some unchanging factors such as adherence to the practices of the five pillars of faith, but Islamic cultures are also dynamic and there are differences in local contexts and lived interpretations of religious texts (Sfeir, 1985; Daiman, 1994). For example, there are countries that make the hijab compulsory and others that deny citizens the right to wear it in public (Amara, 2013). These different interpretations lead to differences in whether women believe it is an Islamic requirement to wear the hijab. Therefore, it is not a surprise that some people view the hijab as essential to religious fulfillment, while others may view the hijab as a political statement, while still others may see it as an oppressive obligation (Benn et al., 2011; Fekete, 2008).

### 1.3.1 Hijab in sport

Specifically in the Western sporting world, the dominant body culture often stresses high visibility of male and female bodies in compliance with the dress code regulations of international sports federations (Benn & Ahmad, 2006; Amara, 2013). This may be problematic for some Muslim women who choose to observe their faith by wearing a hijab, long sleeves, or track pants instead of shorts. For this reason, the concept of embodied faith is particularly pertinent when studying the sport experiences of young Muslim women. The concept of embodiment of a physical identity acknowledges the social whole of the lived body (Benn et al., 2011; Garrett, 2004). When considering the manner in which sport brings the body to the forefront, it has been noted that the body is considered “inscribed with and vehicles of culture” (Benn et al., 2011; Garrett, 2004, pp. 141). This means that the body and its functions are learned, socially constructed, and act as a mechanism to communicate particular discourses. For example, the veiled female body may serve as a symbolic representation of the ideal Muslim woman, which then perpetuates normative beliefs about what it means to be a Muslim woman. In this way, the body acts as both a biological entity and

a socially constructed phenomenon. Clothing is particularly important because it can function to highlight gender, class, ethnicity, and religion. It allows for public recognition and differentiation based on identity categories. Many Muslim women choose to embody their faith by wearing the hijab. In the literature on Muslim women in sport, faith is considered embodied in the sense that performance of the body, behaviour, and social interactions are considered essential to religious identity (Benn, 2009; Benn et al., 2011). Therefore, this concept represents the way in which faith, identity and body are interconnected in the lives of young Muslim women (Benn et al., 2011). This notion of embodied faith is also important in sport because some Muslim women may choose to participate in sport events with no special dress code requirements, while others will only take part provided their dress code for modesty is met, as evidenced by the Women's Islamic Games (Ahmad, 2011).

It is also important to recognize that for many Muslim women, the hijab may act as a gendering discourse (Hamzeh & Oliver, 2010). This “hijab discourse” refers to the way in which the visual hijab, or covering, is accompanied by a spatial and ethical hijab. The spatial hijab reflects the notion that the hijab acts as a boundary that controls female Muslim’s behaviour in public spaces, while the ethical hijab reflects the concept of the hijab as the “protector” that keeps Muslim women away from things that are prohibited or *haram* (Hamzeh & Oliver, 2010). Hamzeh and Oliver call for a reconceptualization of the hijab in the sport literature which acknowledges this discourse that is working in relation with other racializing, gendering and sexualizing discourses in the lives of young Muslim women (Hamzeh & Oliver, 2012). Therefore, the hijab is an important and complex element in research concerning young Muslim women’s experiences in sport.

For young Muslim women who choose to embody their faith by wearing the hijab, physical activity and sport may be seen as a challenge to their religious views (Benn et al., 2011). In Ahmad’s (2011) research, attention was drawn to the discriminatory practices of British football organizations and investigated the place of hijab in this domain. This study used a social constructionist framework to study the experiences of the British Muslim Women’s Football Team that represented Britain in the 2005 Women’s Islamic Games. For some of the participants of this study, the hijab was viewed as a barrier to sport participation. Some of the participants did not feel that there was a place for hijab in British football due to FIFA hijab bans and university policies at the time (Ahmad, 2011). They also felt that they were

challenging traditional cultural ideals by competing in football while wearing the hijab (Ahmad, 2011). The games became a safe space where religious identities were not threatened, and where the hijab did not represent a barrier. In this place, the women were able to hold on to their Muslim identity as well as rejecting cultural ideals of what it means to be a female football player (Ahmad, 2011). Similarly, in a study conducted in Southern Ontario, participants listed the issue of modest dress as a limiting factor in their participation in sport and physical activity (Nakamura, 2002). These young women, between the ages of 17 and 21, stated that strict uniforms in school sports teams had often acted as a barrier to their participation in the past (Nakamura, 2002). This research indicates that the role of the hijab is extremely important in the sport experiences of Muslim women. For Muslim women who embody their faith by wearing the hijab, pressure to conform or remove the hijab may alienate or push them out of sport. The studies above explored cases in which the participants turned to Muslim or women-only spaces in order to maintain their religious identity. To build on this body of research, this research study aimed to better understand these complex processes of negotiation as they occur by exploring the experiences of Muslim athletes as they competed in a Western context.

### 1.3.2 Hijab bans in sport

The media has highlighted several cases that illustrate the tensions Muslim women may face when attempting to participate in sport while wearing the hijab. For example, within the sport of soccer, there have been numerous instances of female Muslim athletes being ordered off the field when they refused to remove their hijab. The president of the Quebec Soccer Federation reported that it was abiding with FIFA international rules which state that players and referees cannot wear religious symbols on the soccer field (FIFA, 2010). Additionally, in April 2010, FIFA banned the entire Iranian girls' youth national soccer team from competing in the Youth Olympic Games, citing two rules that prohibit the hijab: wearing religious symbols that have political, religious or personal statements, and wearing anything that may be dangerous to himself or another player (FIFA, 2010). In a 2011 paper, Ayub analyzed the broader implications of FIFA's decision. Specifically, the timing of the policy implementation was questioned as an anti-hijab sentiment was sweeping across Western nations (Ayub, 2011). It was also noted that to be true to these rules, players with visible tattoos that are religious or political should also be banned, though this has not been the case (Ayub, 2011). The lack of implementation of these rules as a blanket policy has caused FIFA's hijab ban to be perceived

as specifically targeting Muslim women. Hamzeh (2017) categorized this ban as a double hijabophobia, acknowledging the intersectionality of Islamophobic and sexist ideologies behind this ban. The colonialist hijabophobia dimension labels the Muslim female body as a site of danger and risk, while the Islamacist hijabophobia labels the Muslim female body as a symbol of the nation (Hamzeh, 2017; Jiwani, 2010). For Muslim women, particularly those competing at an international level, these sexist, Islamophobic bans overlap to exclude them from their sport. (Hamzeh, 2017).

A similar example was reported in 2009, when the Bahrain girls' basketball team was banned from competing at the Asian Youth Games. In a decision similar to FIFA's ruling, a tournament referee disqualified the team when players refused to remove their hijabs. After controversy arose from that event, FIBA's governing body ultimately decided that the hijab would not be permitted in any future FIBA sanctioned games. This FIBA ruling is also exemplified in the case of Bilqis Abdul-Quadir, a successful basketball student who played collegiate basketball for the University of Memphis. During her high school career, she broke both the male and female scoring records in Massachusetts; however, despite her success, she was prohibited from playing due to FIBA's rule. She began a campaign called "Muslim Girls Hoop Too" to encourage other Muslim girls to participate in sport and has worked to petition against the ban. Recently, in May 2017, FIBA overturned its hijab ban and will now allow headgear during its sanctioned games. Although her chance of playing basketball professionally is now gone, the tireless efforts of Muslim women, like Abdul-Quadir, who are pushed out of their sport, inspire and pave the way for other Muslim athletes. This example highlights the complex environment young Muslim women are navigating in order to participate in sport.

Particularly relevant in this examination of the hijab is Amara's (2013) work, which explored the position of Islam in Western societies and its impact on sport discourse. He stated that Muslim Europeans may view sport as a field to explore their multiple identities, whereas conservative-nationalist authorities may view sport as a field to protect from the over-visibility of Islamic identity (Amara, 2013). Therefore, the examination of Muslim women's experiences may be influenced by this Islamophobic and xenophobic attempt to prevent Islam from taking over Western sport spaces (Amara, 2013). For young Muslim women, alienation

may occur due to believing that they do not belong in Western sport environments. Consequently, this research study aimed to explore tensions that young Muslim women may face as they compete in order to better understand how broad discourses and political sentiments influence their sport experience<sup>1</sup>.

## 1.4 Islam in the West

An examination of the portrayal of Islam in the West is pertinent to any discussion on the experiences of Muslim women in sport. In the aftermath of 9/11, issues of religious integration, accommodation, and engagement of Muslims in the West resurged (el-Aswad, 2013; Rahman, Fung & Yeo, 2016). Images of Osama bin Laden were juxtaposed with images of George W Bush as he launched his campaign to protect and save the West, accompanying juxtapositions of ‘us versus them’, East versus West, freedom versus oppression, and Christianity versus Islam flooded the media (Jiwani, 2004; el-Aswad, 2013)<sup>2</sup>. The Bush administration passed a law on September 14, 2001 to authorize the use of military force against those responsible for the 9/11 attacks (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2003). Through political media campaigns that framed Muslims as dangerous, violent and anti-Western values, the administration justified their invasion of Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria (Schmitt & Shanker, 2005). In addition to debates on national security and terrorism, the status of women in Islam became a primary topic of interest and justification for interventions in Muslim countries (Haddad, 2007). In order to better understand the place of Islam in Western societies today, Orientalism and literature surrounding Muslim women in the West will be reviewed in the following sections.

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<sup>1</sup>I use the term discourse to refer to ways of thinking that are expressed through language; what statements are/can be said about a particular topic and the attitudes, beliefs and practices that are conveyed (Foucault, 1979). Political sentiments here relates to the discursive practices engaged in by politicians and organizations.

<sup>2</sup> Osama bin Laden was the son of a Yemeni millionaire, born in Saudi Arabia. He was the leader of Al-Qaeda, a terrorist organization that was responsible for the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. This attack was the justification for the “War on Terror”, an international military campaign launched by the U.S government in 2001 by the Bush administration. He was killed by American soldiers in Pakistan in 2011, under the Obama administration.

### 1.4.1 Orientalism

Said (1978) described the way in which the Occident (the “West”) produced the concept of the Orient (the “East”) in order to subjugate and control its resources. Said has argued that the origin of Orientalism can be traced back nearly a thousand years to the representation of the Christian crusades and particularly to the era of colonialism, which resulted in the political domination of the Orient and the surge of geopolitics based on economic interests. Orientalism is a comprehensive system of thought and scholarship which includes historians, sociologists and anthropologists alike (Said, 1978). Through an analysis of Western art and writings about the Orient, Said proposed that much of Western knowledge about the Orient, and Islam in particular, was based on affirming European identity rather than objective, intellectual inquiry. Essentially, through constructing the Other/Orient as inferior, barbaric, and illogical, European powers were able to affirm that they were superior, civilized, and logical (Said, 1978). In this way, Said argued that the subjugation of Muslim people and the control of their resources through colonialism and imperialism were seen as justifiable.

Considerable literature has documented examples of early Orientalism. For example, paintings of the Arab world by European artists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century often depict harems, vast expanses of sand, and mystery. In France in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, French entrepreneurs circulated postcards of Algerian women; these images were meant to depict the real, everyday lives of Algerian women as proof of their exotic and peculiar culture, but were actually photographs taken in a studio (Alloula, 1986). Therefore, the photographs may be a better representation of the French colonial perspective than of Algerian life. In this way, the Orient, and the Orientalized body, became an exemplification of all that the Occident found odd and abhorrent, yet exotic and captivating about the Orient (Haddad, 2004). Therefore, the Orientalized body came to symbolize difference and “otherness” which served to legitimize unequal power relations. Once again, the Orientalization and vilification of Islam by the West served to justify political, social and capital domination of the East (Said, 1978).

Contemporary mainstream media and Western scholarship have continued to portray Muslims in terms of their otherness (Lewis, 2003). Classical Orientalism has expanded and been modified to represent political Islamism and the fear of Islam (el-Aswad, 2013; Lewis, 2003). Today, global depictions of Muslims have centered around issues of Islamic jihadism,

fundamentalism, and global terrorism, which have incited Islamophobia, an irrational fear of Muslims (Esposito & Ibrahim, 2011; Gottshalk & Greenberg, 2008; Hamdon, 2010). This portrayal has exacerbated sociopolitical problems in the Muslim world as well as in the West, and a “New Orientalism” consists of representing Islam as of anti-democracy and anti-modernity (Hamdon, 2010). The frequent images and news coverage of suicide bombings have become representative in the Western world for the Islamic “culture of death” (Asad, 2007; el-Aswad, 2013). Karim’s (2000) analysis of Orientalist representations of Islam in contemporary media coverage further confirms Said’s (1978) central tenets, including the portrayal of Muslim men as barbaric and regressive and Muslim women as oppressed and submissive. Additionally, contemporary Western media has been criticized for providing a simplistic interpretation of issues in Muslim countries which lack historical and cultural understanding (Karim, 2000).

#### 1.4.2 Situating the Muslim woman in the West

While many countries, such as Canada and Britain, maintain that multiculturalism is an important value, political rhetoric has placed emphasis on visible Islamic symbols as problematic signs of non-integration (Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012). In the 2015 Canadian federal election, Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who was running for re-election, pledged to establish a tip-line to report “barbaric cultural practices” and called the niqab “rooted in a culture that is anti-women” (Powers, 2015). Similarly, in 2011, in the United Kingdom, Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron stated that “state multiculturalism has failed” (BBC News, 2011). These sentiments have echoed the social cohesion agenda based on integration of Muslim minorities that has permeated politics in the West for some time<sup>3</sup>. Specifically, the issue of the veil, be it the hijab or niqab, has often been portrayed as an attack and threat on Western culture and values (Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012). In essence, the veil represents a visual element that in some Western ways of thinking conveys submission (Odeh, 1993; Haddad, 2007). For example, former French President Sarkozy

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<sup>3</sup> The U.K House of Commons released a report on social cohesion, in which they state: “The Committee felt that any cohesive society should also demonstrate the ability to integrate people from different ethnic backgrounds so that they can relate together in terms of where they live, their education, employment, and social/recreation spheres” (2004, p. 6)

repeatedly maintained that the veil is not welcome in France as it is a “sign of women’s debasement” (Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012). The veil, according to some Western discourses and understandings, keeps Muslim women powerless and vulnerable. Therefore it is understood and is increasingly being represented as a symbol of the dehumanization of women (Chakraborti & Zempi; Yegenoglu, 1998). Islamophobic perceptions of Muslim coverings, be it the hijab, burkha or niqab, depict Muslim women as a homogenized group who are all “similarly oppressed” (Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012; Yegenoglu, 1998). Orientalized, Islamophobic<sup>4</sup> and xenophobic<sup>5</sup> assumptions about Islam as an uncivilized religion justify the stereotypes of the barbarism of Muslim men, and therefore, the submission of Muslim women (Haddad, 2007). This association between the veil and Orientalized beliefs about Muslim women fuels the belief that they are oppressed and bound by tradition, which is another dominant feature in the discourse surrounding Muslim women (Yegenoglu, 1998; Jiwani, 2004). Within Western popular media, this feature often serves to underpin the ‘rescue’ motif in which “the white male explorer seeks to rescue the imperiled woman of colour and save her from the brutality of cultural traditions” (Jiwani, 2004, p. 270). Interestingly, as Jiwani (2004) noted White, Western feminism has also been criticized by feminists of color for adopting this rescue motif. In a 1992 essay, Burton explored the relationship between British feminists and Indian women in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. She noted that most middle-class feminists did not view women from the “East” as equals but rather as individuals needing saving by their liberated British “sisters” (Burton, 1992). Jiwani (2004) notes that the rescue motif is also evident in the reaction of Western feminists to the experiences of Afghan women. They were viewed as victims of barbaric, violent Muslim men, who required saving. This discourse is also quite prevalent within the field of sport for development, which aims to liberate and empower Muslim women through physical activity programs. For example, in Harkness’s (2012) ethnographic account of a female Muslim football team in Iraqi Kurdistan, the author states, “Females in the Middle East remain ‘captives in a society which instructs them to be

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<sup>4</sup> Islamophobia is a term that emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to refer to anti-Muslim sentiment, bigotry and hatred. Although often linked with racism, as the portrayal and perception of “Muslimness” is often associated with brown and Arab bodies (Miles & Brown, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Xenophobia, the distrust and hatred of foreign people and the desire to remove them one’s state, is also an important term to center within this work as Muslims and racialized individuals have long been positioned as foreign and “Other”.

obedient, economically dependent on men and confined to housework and procreation” (Harkness, 2012, p. 729). I would argue that this is a homogenous and Orientalized representation of the “Middle East” as juxtaposed with Western societies. This quote and analysis plays into Orientalized stereotypes of Muslim women and serves to perpetuate the rescue motif in which these oppressed participants need to be liberated from their backward cultural traditions.

It is also important to note that much of the sport literature to date has focused on the low levels of sport participation among Muslim women, which has most often been attributed to religious and cultural barriers. By indicating that restrictions lie in cultural and Islamic practices that limit Muslim women, the stereotype of the Muslim women in need of rescuing is perpetuated. This view overlooks issues such as Islamophobia, racism, and classism that may discriminate against Muslim women and instead focuses on culture and Islam as forces that keep them oppressed. Additionally, this Orientalized, Islamophobic and xenophobic perspective perpetuates the idea that all Muslim women, and their experiences, are the same. Thus, this current research aims to address this rescue motif in the sport psychology literature by acknowledging the autonomy of Muslim women and the diversity of their experiences. It also important to note that from this Orientalized and Islamophobic perspective, Muslim women who wear the hijab, or other Muslim coverings, in the public sphere represent a visible ‘threat’ to Western ideals of secularism and equality which may be implicated in their daily lives (Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012). For example, in France, there was widespread opposition to the niqab and political rhetoric expressed this in humanitarian discourses of “liberating” Muslim women from the “oppression” of their backward culture (Williamson & Khiabany, 2010). Legislation which prohibited the wearing of the face veil, niqab, in public places in France was passed in 2011. Unfortunately, this often leads to additional problems for Muslim women who must now choose between being true to their beliefs or breaking the law. These sentiments of rescuing the Muslim women from backward cultural practices have been echoed in recent political discussions in numerous Western countries, such as Australia, the United States, Canada, and the U.K.

Muslim women who choose to wear religious coverings in Western, non-Muslim countries are instantly identifiable in public as Muslims, which may make them more susceptible to targeted

victimization (Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012; Iganski, 2008). This victimization, which may consist of verbal or physical attacks, of veiled Muslim women is considered to “hurt more than ordinary crimes as they are an attack upon the victim’s core identity” (Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012, p. 272). Particularly with the rise of alt-right movements in the West, women who choose to wear a veil “are publicly branding themselves as Muslims at a time when such a label carries the potential fear of making them vulnerable to open hostility” (Afshar, Aitken & Franks, 2005, p. 262). There is also literature to support that these assumptions give rise to Islamophobia by acting as a mechanism to construct difference (Chakraborti & Garland, 2009; Iganski, 2008; Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012). The veil thus becomes an ideological means where Islamophobic attacks against Muslim women are justified and expected (Klaus & Kassel, 2005; Charkraborti & Zempi, 2012).

## 1.5 Inclusion and Alienation

It is clear that the experiences of Muslim women in the West are complicated due to social, political and ideological discourses that frame them as “other” and “alien”<sup>6</sup>. These alienating and potentially violent discourses are integral to understanding the lived experiences of Muslim women. An examination of the sport experiences of Muslim women in the West cannot be adequately conducted if removed from this broader understanding. Therefore, this research study aims to explore whether sport in these complex contexts may lead to the inclusion or alienation of young Muslim women in the West. In order to do so, social inclusion and alienation must be defined. Social inclusion is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon (Donnelly, 1996; Bailey, 2005) that refers to notions of belonging, recognition and acceptance of the diversity of individuals in order to allow everyone the opportunity to participate equally in society (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002). The Laidlaw Foundation identify five critical dimensions of social inclusion. They are: valued recognition, human development, involvement and engagement, proximity, and material well-being (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002). In the Canadian Senate’s report (2013) on social affairs, the committee stated, “social inclusion refers to the ability, of an individual or group of individuals, to participate in the

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<sup>6</sup> I use the term ideology to refer to a system of ideals or beliefs, which justify particular social hierarchies. This would include Islamophobic and racist discourses in the West.

social and economic lives of their communities and to have their contributions acknowledged. It also involves access to tools – such as education – that enable participation and a set of shared rights, values and responsibilities that bind people together in a cohesive society” (p. 7). Similar to Donnelly & Coakley’s definition, the core of social inclusion is understood to be that diversity, whether on the basis of religion, culture, race, or gender, must be recognized and valued. It is important to contrast this with social integration which is a dominant framework in the use of sport among young Muslim women and ethnic minority youth (Walseth & Fasting, 2004; Walseth, 2006a; Spaiij, 2015). Social integration refers to the movement of minority groups into mainstream societies through processes such as adoption of the common language, social norms, and values of that society. Integration, I would argue, is akin to assimilation and may result in the further alienation of young Muslim women as they struggle to maintain their cultural and religious identities.

The concept of alienation is also a complicated one that has been conceptualized in many ways. One way to understand this phenomenon is through Durkheim’s (1897) description of anomie. According to Durkheim, the desires and self-interests of human beings can only be held in check by a collective conscience, a common social bond that is expressed by the ideas, values, norms, beliefs, and ideologies of a culture (Durkheim, 1897). However, due to increasing divisions of labour and rapid social change, the collective conscience of societies and identification with the wider community weakens (Durkheim, 1897). This leads to anomie, a condition in which individuals experience unhappiness, social unrest, and stress due to the weakening of a collective conscience and social bonds (Durkheim, 1897). Durkheim also distinguished between two types of solidarity: mechanical and organic. Mechanical solidarity occurs in earlier societies which are relatively homogenous where there are high levels of social and moral integration (Durkheim, 1897). Organic solidarity, on the other hand, occurs as societies become more complex, wherein individuals have more specialized roles and therefore become more dissimilar from the group. The collective conscience in this society is therefore weakened and anomie will likely occur. For young Muslim women in the West who have seemingly contradictory identities (Eastern and Western), anomie may occur as they struggle to maintain a strong bond and identification with both communities. For example, young Muslim women who identify as athletes may feel that they are dissimilar from members of their ethnic and religious communities. The ensuing tensions that may occur when they challenge the boundaries and norms of their Muslim identity may result in further alienation

and weakening bonds. Conversely, they may also feel alienated and dissimilar from their athletic community due to their identification with a Muslim identity. There is limited research which has examined concepts of inclusion and alienation among Muslim women competing in a Western context. Therefore, the purpose of this research study was to examine this notion of inclusion or alienation from various communities by better understanding the process of identity negotiation that young Muslim women may undergo when competing in sport in a Western context.

## 1.6 Identity

It is imperative to discuss the concept of identity in order to understand inclusion or alienation in the sport experiences of young Muslim women. Identity, particularly social identity, can be conceptualized in a multitude of ways. On Hall's (2000) writings on cultural identity, he stated: "Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicisation and are constantly in the process of change and transformation" (p. 17). This definition implies that the meaning of an ethnic or religious belonging to a group is not static and will change in different contexts. Even though we might feel like the same person, we represent ourselves differently to others in different contexts because we are positioned differently by social expectations (Walseth, 2006b). These different positions and multiple identities can lead to identity conflicts (Hall, 2000). Therefore, this concept of identity is one based on an understanding of identity as ever changing, rooted in a particular context, and constructed through difference (Hall, 2000), because identities are constructed within specific discourses that are products of difference and exclusion. It is particularly important to define identity within this interdisciplinary work as I draw on both behavioural and sociocultural theories to better understand how Muslim women negotiate their personal identities as well as how their identities are constructed through larger discourses about Islam, femininity and normative sport culture.

For the purpose of this research, identity is understood to be socially constructed rather than as a stable, inherent condition. It is also important to note that it is often in relation to the Other<sup>7</sup>, to what someone is not, that identity is often constructed (Hall, 2000). As outlined by Said's work on Orientalism, it is through identifying the Other, that one is able to create and solidify their sense of self. Thus, identities are able to function because of their capability to exclude or leave out a different group (Hall, 2000). This is particularly relevant in the study of Muslim women who are negotiating between identities that have historically been viewed as contradictory. Identifying as Western and athletic may lead them to being excluded from their identity as Muslim, and identifying as a Muslim may lead them to being excluded from their identity as Western and athletic. Thus, this research study aims to better understand the process of identity negotiation that young Muslim athletes may undertake when participating in sport in Canada.

According to Andersson (2002), 'identity work' consists of the everyday behaviours and thoughts related to issues of belonging and non-belonging to a social group. This concept demonstrates the ways in which individuals negotiate the various implicit and explicit moral traditions and values that are demanded by particular groups (Andersson, 2002). These processes of negotiation and self-reflection were observed to play a significant role in the experiences of ethnic minority youth in Norway as they participated in sport (Andersson, 2002). Walseth (2006b) also employed the notion of identity work to better understand the dynamic aspect of identity construction of 21 young Muslim women with immigrant backgrounds living in Norway. This study emphasized how young Muslim women's identity work, in relation to sport, was centered around their religious and ethnic collective identities. A central focus of the study was on how young women's experiences of sport and physical activity changed throughout their lives. Three types of responses were displayed: being situated clearly within their ethnic identity, challenging the boundaries of their ethnic identity, and emphasizing religion rather than ethnicity (Walseth, 2006b). Firstly, the young women who positioned themselves clearly within the framework of their ethnic identities were often

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<sup>7</sup> The "Other" refers to someone who has been labeled as belonging to a subordinate or marginalized social categorization. For example, within Orientalist theory, the Orient was identified as the "Other", the non-European self. This identity was constructed in reference to normative ideals and understandings of White as superior.

not interested in sport because doing sport was not seen as a respectable femininity (Walseth, 2006b). Secondly, the young women who challenged the ideal of femininity by participating in sport were often reprimanded or harassed by family and community members as they engaged in sport (Walseth, 2006b). Finally, those who regarded Islam as a more important source of identification than ethnicity were able to participate in sport comfortably because they believed it to be consistent with the health aspects of Islamic beliefs (Walseth, 2006b).

The concept of identity work and the research in this area is relevant to this study for a number of reasons. First, it highlights the diversity among young women who all identify as being Muslim. Second, it provides preliminary evidence that young Muslim women may experience friction from their cultural community when they place more value on their identity as athletes. This may lead to feelings of alienation from their cultural community due to their involvement in sport. It is important to note that this study focused on how young Muslim women negotiated their cultural and religious identities to justify their physical activity and sport participation. It did not explore how young Muslim women may negotiate their athletic identity and what it means to be a female Muslim athlete in a Western sport context. Therefore, this current study aimed to address this gap in the literature by exploring how young Muslim women challenge the boundaries of their athletic identity as well as their cultural and religious identities.

It is interesting to note that in Alamri's (2015) study, one Muslim teacher from a co-educational school noted that there are great misunderstandings among female Muslim students and their families about the difference between Islamic teaching and ethnic culture. While there is research to suggest that ethnic cultures are the key driving force behind lack of sport participation of Muslim girls (Walseth, 2006b; Kay, 2006), the narratives of the female Muslim students in this study suggest that it is their common Islamic identity which plays the most significant role (Alamri, 2015). This is important because it further demonstrates the heterogeneity in the experiences of young Muslim women in sport. It also emphasizes the significance of a common Islamic identity on the sport experiences of young Muslim women in sport; however, women who have a common Islamic identity may still demonstrate diversity in their interpretation and adherence to Islamic traditions. In a study of a group of young Muslim women in Australia, identity negotiation also occurred as the soccer team practiced for their tournament (Palmer, 2009). Specifically, the young women used their

shared experience of playing sport to establish a cultural identity that both affirmed and challenged Islamic traditions. It was noted that the participants demonstrated great diversity in their interpretation of Islam and this created tension as they negotiated their identities, which were often conflicting (Palmer, 2009). Participation in the soccer team allowed the young women to express more Australian aspects of their identity, such as playing Western music, removing their hijab and exposing their hair, arms and legs during practice (Palmer, 2009). During the carnival, at the end of the season, they reinforced Islamic aspects of their identity by dressing more modestly and showcasing their Somali culture (Palmer, 2009).

A theory that is particularly helpful in understanding this phenomenon is Goffman's (1959) analysis of "Presentation of Self in Everyday Life." Goffman used the imagery of the theatre to describe how individuals attempt to control the impressions that others have of them by changing their appearance or behaviour (Goffman, 1959). During social interactions, he proposed there is a front stage where positive aspects of the self are performed, and a back stage where individuals can prepare for their role (Goffman, 1959). For the participants in Palmer's (2009) study, soccer practice was observed to be the "back stage" where girls could practice different roles, and the carnival became the performative "front stage" where they could perform for the broader community (Palmer, 2009). This further illustrates the dynamic process of shaping one's identity. This concept of using the Muslim-only practice as a "back stage" environment is relevant for this current research study where young Muslim women are actively competing in a non-Muslim setting. Therefore, they may not have a "back stage" practice environment in which they can practice different roles with their teammates. This study, (Palmer, 2009), and much of the research to date, has focused on the sport experiences of Muslim women within their own communities, which greatly limits our understanding of the processes of identity negotiation of young Muslim women who are stepping outside their cultural or religious communities to compete in sport. This current research study aims to address this gap in the literature.

## 1.7 Social Support

Various social agents can influence the experiences of young Muslim women in sport, and it is therefore important to consider the ways in which other individuals may influence sport participation, identity, and alienation or inclusion among young Muslim women. Social support is one framework through which to examine these influences. Specifically, for young

Muslim women, social support may act as an important buffer against the stress of navigating these complex processes of identity negotiation. Social support refers to an individual's belief that help is available from other people in different situations (Cobb, 1976). In a broad sense, it refers to social interactions that are intended to produce positive outcomes. There is wide agreement in the sport psychology literature that social support is a multidimensional construct (Cobb, 1976; Thoits, 1982); however, there is a large variety in the terminology used to describe these dimensions. For the purposes of this research, it is helpful to distinguish between structural and functional aspects of social support. Structural social support refers to the social networks that an individual has, while functional social support refers to the resources that those networks provide (Rodriguez & Cohen, 1998). The social support literature further distinguishes between three main types of functional social support: emotional, instrumental, and informational (Rodriguez & Cohen, 1998; Langford, Bowsher, Maloney & Lillis, 1997). Emotional support includes expressions of trust, compassion and caring; instrumental support includes the provision of material aid such as finances or transportation; and informational support includes provision of information intended to help an individual cope with difficulties or stress (Rodriguez & Cohen, 1998).

Within the sport literature, there is evidence to suggest that athletes who are facing adversity, such as coach conflicts, bullying and abuse, may benefit from social support (Tamminen, Holt & Neely, 2013). Specifically, social support from coaches, parents and peers has been identified as a key resource for athletes (Sheridan, Coffee & Lavalley, 2014; Jowett & Poczwardowski, 2007). Coaches are observed to play a critical role in facilitating strong bonds between athletes, and positively impacting motivation and sport enjoyment (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; Jowett & Poczwardowski, 2007). Parental support also plays a key role in the experiences of athletes, particularly in youth sport. There is literature to support a positive relationship between parental support and athlete motivation in sport (Ullrich-French & Smith, 2006). Parental support and the promotion of a task-involving climate (i.e., a climate which emphasizes self-improvement, learning and individual effort), is also associated with athletes persisting in sport (Le Bars, Gernigon & Ninot, 2009). Therefore, this research aims to explore the social support that is available to young Muslim women in sport to better understand their experiences.

### 1.7.1 Young Muslim women and family support

Much of the current literature pertaining to social support in the lives of young Muslim women who are engaging in sport revolves around parental influence on sport participation. Religious and cultural adherence influences the day-to-day experiences of young Muslim women, particularly those who may deal with pressure from their families to adopt and maintain their cultural identity (Benn & Pfister, 2013). Kay (2006) maintains that a Muslim family exerts a tremendous influence over its members, shaping customary behaviours and beliefs, which may impact Muslim women's sport participation. Specifically, parents may be reluctant to allow their daughters to participate in sport when it defies Islamic values and traditions, unless there are changes in the way of sport is currently provided (Dagkas, Benn & Jawad, 2010). In the literature it has been noted that some Muslim girls give up certain sports (i.e., swimming, dance, gymnastics) when they reach puberty due to parental pressures when Islamic values of modesty cannot be met (Kleindienst-Cachay, 2011). Even in countries where there are no formal bans on wearing the hijab, broader Western norms within sport environments may cause Muslim girls to drop out of sport altogether or to participate in a more 'covered' sport such as martial arts or fencing (Kleindienst-Cachay, 2011; Kay, 2006). For example, in Germany, a well-known karate sportswoman reported that at the onset of puberty she had given up swimming as a sport because of her father's wishes and instead decided to compete in martial arts because the uniform conformed to the norms of her community, regarding modesty (Kleindienst- Cachay, 2011). This example demonstrates how a lack of parental or familial support may lead to young Muslim women dropping out of their sport. It also highlights the way in which gendered and cultural norms about femininity shape the sport experiences of young Muslim women.

The importance of family support was also observed in a study conducted within a football club for Muslim and Christian girls in Palestine (Gieß-Stüber, Kremers, Luft & Schaller, 2011). The families of these young girls supported their decision to participate in the club but they maintained the cultural belief that the activities of women and girls required the approval of their nearest male relatives. Changes in a family's structure was observed to have sudden and grave outcomes for young women, as exemplified by the case of one of the Muslim players (Gieß-Stüber et al., 2011). When one participant's religiously moderate father died, she was no longer able to play football without a hijab because, in addition to having to cover her

hair, her uncle did not allow her to go out without the supervision by a male relative (Gieß-Stüber et al., 2011). In contrast, some other Muslim girls in the football club were allowed to wear shorts and shirts for sports. There is literature that suggests that older people, particularly those residing in rural areas, are inclined to hold more traditional views than young people (Velloso, 1996), which may impact the social support provided to young Muslim athletes. Members of the aforementioned football club frequently recounted comments made by their grandparents or elders regarding their feat that sport would lead to masculinization of the girls and subsequently impair their chances of future marriage (Gieß-Stüber et al., 2011). This research highlights the way in which gendered norms surrounding the role of women in Muslim Palestinian communities affect the social support, or lack thereof, that young Muslim women receive from their families and community members. The football club's mistreatment of these girls, by overlooking these ingrained cultural norms, demonstrates a failure to acknowledge sport as experienced by non-Western women. This is extremely important for my current research study because a lack of social support may also lead to feelings of alienation as young Muslim women begin to feel isolated and unsupported within their communities.

A lack of support from families of young Muslim women was also echoed in Kay's (2006) work with South Asian Muslim girls in the U.K. For these young women, their families played a key decision making-role in their daughters' sport participation to ensure that it did not transgress religious or cultural ideals. Furthermore, the broader ethnic community played a role in influencing the parent's decisions, and ultimately the young women's participation (Kay, 2006). Similarly, Palmer (2009) described how the sport experiences of Somali girls, as they planned and practiced for a football tournament, were influenced by the girls' family support. Palmer noted that the girls commented on the importance and need to cover their bodies and maintain modestly while playing soccer, although this was often expressed as parental disapproval rather than their own desire to maintain religious requirements (Palmer, 2009).

It is important to note that researchers in this area have focused on overall family influence rather than social support more specifically. There is a dearth in the literature on young Muslim women in sport that uses theories of social support to understand their experiences. The studies reviewed above do not distinguish between the types of social support that are available (or in this case, absent) in the sport lives of young Muslim women but rather draw

broad conclusions about families' support. Therefore, my research aimed to address this gap in the literature by inquiring about emotional, instrumental, and informational social support. Additionally, the research to date has focused on the lack of parental support despite noting that some parents supported their daughters' decision to compete in sport (Walseth, 2006b; Kay, 2006). In order to build on this area of research, this current study aims to highlight the social support available to young Muslim as well as any lack of support in order to provide a more diverse and complex understanding of this issue.

### 1.7.2 Young Muslim women and social support from non-Muslim coaches/peers

The effect of social support, or lack thereof, on the sport experiences of Muslim girls has thus far focused on the influence of the family and broader ethnic community. There is not currently much research on the role of social support from non-Muslim teammates or coaches. However, in Ahmad's (2011) study conducted with the British Women's Football team which competed in the Islamic Games, participants commented on their sport experiences in university prior to joining the Muslim league, which included some information about the influence of their coaches. Many of the players on the team had both the desire and talent necessary to play at higher levels, but their coach expressed the notion that hijab could not be incorporated into elite level British football (Ahmad, 2011). One participant also stated that it was difficult enough to fight university personnel to get them to tolerate the hijab, so she could not see herself continuing with the sport once she graduated (Ahmad, 2011). In Nakamura's (2002) study, some of the girls expressed their negative experiences during compulsory P.E classes due to teachers' displeasure with alterations to the school uniform. Additionally, some girls cited a lack of accommodation by coaches as the reason that they dropped out of school sport teams (Nakamura, 2002). Thus, coaches and teachers appear to play an important role in the sport experiences of young Muslim women.

Alamri (2015) also suggested that schools and teachers' "ignorance" of the Muslim students' Islamic needs was a common theme that emerged in a case study of co-educational and single-sex schools in Australia. The girls reported that teachers refused to give them a break during Ramadan, in order to be consistent with their treatment of non-Muslim students in the class. Interestingly, teachers acknowledged and confirmed this point of view because they believed that expectations of students should be the same, regardless of their religious beliefs or cultural

background (Alamri, 2015). This lack of understanding created friction between the two groups. Additionally, female Muslim students in this study reported that their non-Muslim friends lacked awareness about Islam and therefore did not understand their unwillingness to participate in some sport activities (Alamri, 2015). Female Muslim students also reported that they often felt they needed to explain their actions to their non-Muslim friends which exposed them to racist and prejudicial encounters (Alamri, 2015). This is important as it suggests that some young Muslim women may feel unsupported by their friends, peers, and teachers in sporting environments. Unfortunately, Alamri's study indicated that there was ignorance and potential racist encounters but did not explore how this affected the young Muslim students' sport participation. Thus, it is important that this research study addressed this gap in the literature by exploring how young Muslim women made sense of and responded to this lack of social support from non-Muslim teammates and coaches. Additionally, it is important to note that what Alamri described as "ignorance" instead reflects larger issues of Islamophobia and xenophobia. It is impossible to separate the experiences of these students from the larger political and social context. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to understand how young Muslim women understand and experience Islamophobia in Western sport contexts.

In summary, the research to date has focused on cultural and religious barriers that young Muslim women may face in participating in physical activity. There is a dearth of literature that explores the experiences of young Muslim women actively participating in sport within a Western context. Much of the research has focused on community level sport and increasing the physical activity levels of this community (Palmer, 2009; Walseth & Fasting, 2004). Therefore, this current study aims to provide new insight by focusing on the experiences of young Muslim women who are engaged in competitive sport in Canada. A particular focus of the research to date has been on issues of social integration and how identification with Islamic and cultural values may restrict young Muslim women from being more active in the West (Walseth & Fasting, 2004; Walseth, 2006a). Thus, the current study proposes to expand this identity literature by exploring aspects of the dominant Western sporting context which may serve to exclude young Muslim women. Regarding social support, the focus of past research has centred on the social influence from parents and the broader ethnic community (Kay, 2006), which has frequently been cited as a barrier for young Muslim women to engage in physical activity. However, the different types of social support available to young Muslim women have not been explored. Furthermore, the social support, or lack thereof, from non-

Muslim teammates and coaches has also been overlooked in many of these studies. This research study aims to address this gap in literature by exploring different types of social support as well as considering non-Muslim sources of social support. Finally, sport is a value-laden environment, which may serve to include or alienate young Muslim women. Broader policies and discourses surrounding Muslim women in the West will likely have an influence on their sport experience. Therefore, this research will explore how Orientalized views of Muslim women may contribute to inclusion or alienation for young Muslim women.

## 1.8 Research Objective

The purpose of this research study is to explore how young Muslim women who wear the hijab may experience inclusion or alienation due to their involvement in sport in Canada. The specific research questions are: 1) How do young Muslim women negotiate their identity in relation to their sport involvement? 2) How does social support, or lack thereof, from teammates, coaches, and parents affect the sport experiences of young Muslim women? and 3) How does the place of Islam in the West affect the ways in which young Muslim women navigate their sport experiences in Canada?

## Chapter 2 Methods

### 2 Methods

#### 2.1 Paradigmatic Position

The aim of this research was to explore the sport experiences of young Muslim women and how they may experience inclusion or alienation in relation to broader social processes; therefore, a qualitative study was conducted from a social constructionist paradigmatic position. Social constructionism acknowledges that knowledge and meaning are historically and culturally constructed through social processes (Schwandt, 2003). Therefore, this paradigmatic approach helped to provide a deeper understanding of how young Muslim women socially construct and ascribe meaning to their sport experiences within a specific social and historical context. Social constructionists adhere to a relativist ontology which maintains that reality is actively constructed by participants, rather than construing an objectively distinct reality (Pascale, 2011). Accordingly, the goal of the researcher was to understand the multiple realities of the participants (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Additionally, social constructionism posits that meanings are not simply given, but are actively constructed in specific contexts and through social interaction with others (Schwandt, 2003). For this reason, a subjectivist epistemological position was adopted when undertaking this research. Epistemology refers to the way in which knowledge is collected, and this subjectivist position acknowledges that the researcher and the participants will play active roles in constructing the knowledge generated in this research study (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba 2011). Therefore, my goal as the researcher was to enter the world of these young Muslim women and form a meaningful relationship with them in order to better understand their perspectives (Charmaz, 2004).

#### 2.2 Methodology

I used a multiple case study approach to study the experiences of seven young Muslim women, between the ages of 16 and 26 years old (Stake, 1995). In order to get a comprehensive understanding of how young Muslim women experience inclusion or alienation due to their sport involvement, multiple interactions with participants was deemed necessary. Therefore, data collection included both semi-structured interviews and audio-diaries.

Following ethical approval from the University of Toronto's Office of Research Ethics, seven young Muslim women participating in a variety of sports were recruited to participate in this study, beginning September 2017. I made initial contact with Muslim youth groups in the GTA whose female members were actively involved in sport, and some participants were recruited from these groups. A recruitment script was also circulated on social media websites and Muslim Link, an online hub for Muslim events. Participation was not limited to any denomination of Islam. Two of the participants disclosed that they were Shia'a and the other five were Sunni. However, this was not a main focus of this research study. In order to be included in the study, participants had to self-identify as being Muslim and be actively participating in a mainstream sport setting while wearing the hijab (i.e., participants playing sport in a Muslim league were not included). This is because the focus of the study was on the experiences of young Muslim women competing in a Western context. Furthermore, the social support received from non-Muslim teammates and coaches is a major component of this research and would be best understood with participants who had experiences outside of a Muslim-only league. Due to the fact that previous research has typically focused on individuals competing in the same team or sport, this research aimed to include participants from a wide range of sports. The athletes who participated in this study play soccer, basketball, Muay Thai, volleyball and dodgeball. This wider sampling was used to better portray the diversity of experiences that athletes may have due to the nature of their participation in different sports (i.e., soccer versus swimming). Athletes were informed that they would be asked to complete two interviews as well as audio-diaries for the span of one month.

## 2.3 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Muslim female athletes at the beginning and end of a one-month period. Interview questions were asked to inquire about their sport background, their identity as Muslim female athletes, social interactions, as well as how their sport experiences may have been impacted by broader policies and discourses surrounding Muslim women in the West (see Appendix B). Analysis of the initial interviews provided additional insights to help inform questions that were included in the follow-up interview. The use of semi-structured interviews was chosen as a method of data collection to allow participants to share information relevant to the topic while still allowing participants the freedom to express themselves (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). This method allowed participants to

reveal more about their experiences, which provided me with more in-depth information about their experiences (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). The interview guide served as an interview protocol, containing several open-ended and clarifying questions (Morse & Richards, 2002). The interviews were conducted in a setting of the participants' choice and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

## 2.4 Audio Diaries

Participants were also asked to record audio diaries (approximately 2 per week) for the span of one month while they were in their competitive sport season. These audio-diaries were recorded after practices or games and allowed participants to reflect on their interactions with teammates, coaches and players. Audio-diaries can be used to help the researcher develop new insights into how participants make sense of their world. By asking participants to record diary entries after being in a sport environment, this method allows the researcher to capture their experiences prospectively (Monrouxe, 2009). This was valuable for the current research because it provided access to information that the participants may have forgotten to mention in the interview or that they may have considered irrelevant at the time. For example, by asking participants in an audio diary entry to describe the sport environment or the conversations that they had with their coach during a specific game, they were able to provide a more comprehensive description of their experience than in an interview alone. The process of self-reflection through the use of audio-diaries is also beneficial to better understand how the participants make sense of their experiences. Audio-diaries were chosen, rather than a written journal, due to the ease in completion that is associated with this method (Markham & Couldry, 2007). Additionally, audio-diary entries tend to be less structured and allow participants to reflect on a particular issue in great depth (Markham & Couldry, 2007). This was particularly helpful because this research aimed to explore how the participants are making sense of their social interactions and experiences in sport.

Each participant was given an audio-recorder and asked to record two diary entries per week, after a practice or game. The audio-diary prompts inquired about the participants' experience during practice, a description of the space/activities, how they felt during the practice and what interactions they had with their teammates and coaches (see Appendix C). Participants were asked to record the entries in a private setting to ensure confidentiality. Additionally, once the researcher collected the audio-diary entries, they were kept on a password-protected computer

and deleted from the audio-recorder. Some of the participants were a bit weary of using the audio-recorder and worried that they may accidentally delete the recording. They were more comfortable with the recording applications on their phone and instead decided to record the audio-diaries that way.

## 2.5 Data Analysis

A thematic analysis was used to identify, interpret, and report patterns in the interview and audio-diary data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method of analysis was chosen due to its emphasis on interpretation, which allows for both social and psychological interpretations of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As the focus of this research was to understand how young Muslim women make sense of their sport experiences as well as how larger social processes contribute to that construction, this analysis was particularly useful. Thematic analysis also requires an in-depth examination of the data and acknowledges that themes do not simply emerge from the data, but rather are actively identified and selected by the researcher in order to contextualize the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, this method is flexible regarding sample size, data collection method, and theoretical approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

There are six main phases of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarizing oneself with the data, creating initial codes, searching for themes throughout the data, reviewing all of the themes, defining and naming themes, and finally producing the report. After conducting each interview, I listened to the audio recordings and jotted down notes about emerging themes and recurring thoughts. This formed the basis of the questions that I asked in the follow-up interview as well as initial codes during the data analysis process. For example, some participants talked about how they felt “seen” or very visible when they were playing sport. Within my follow-up interviews, I asked them if they to expand on this concept and whether they experienced this phenomenon in Muslim as well as sport spaces. The conversations we had during this process eventually led to the creation of “Surveillance” as a main theme.

I then began to transcribe the interviews and audio diaries as they were collected and read them multiple times to familiarize myself with the data. To create initial codes, I analyzed each participant’s interviews and audio diaries individually before looking across cases. I uploaded the transcripts into NVivo, to help facilitate this process. I read the transcripts and identified how participants talked about navigating sport spaces, their social interactions and how they

understood their identity as Muslims and athletes. There were many codes generated during this phase and they were quite descriptive in nature (e.g. “playing sport in the Muslim community”, “singled out because of the hijab” and “sport attire”). I then shifted to formulating more abstract ideas as I began to consider the social contexts in which this data was generated. During this time, I began to think about Quranic verses and hadiths that “fit” the data. I was surprised by how many times participants would allude to a hadith or even quote a particular verse as they made sense of their experiences. Therefore, I realized that it would be important to incorporate and center Islam in the creation and presentation of the themes. This phase of searching for themes was also supplemented by conversations with my thesis supervisor who acted as a critical friend and provided alternative interpretations of the data (Foulger, 2010). During this phase, many of the initial codes were collapsed together due to their similarity to generate themes. For example, “feeling obvious in sport spaces” and “being watched” were eventually combined into a higher order theme of “surveillance”. Other themes were developed as I began to notice the nuance in how participants talked about their experiences. For example, a general theme of “social support from teammates” was expanded to include “solidarity” and “facilitating a supportive environment”. At this time, I began to review all of the themes I had created and switched to analyzing across cases to identify connections and the themes that I felt were most salient in the experiences of the participants. As I finalized the names of the themes, I decided to include both the Arabic text and English translation of various verses from the Quran and hadiths to better represent my participants experiences.

## 2.6 Reflexivity

Due to the active role that I adopted as a researcher, it was important to be reflexive and acknowledge the influence that I had on the data constructed during this process. As I am operating from a social constructionist paradigmatic position, I acknowledge that truth is relative and our reality is constructed within a social context (Hammersley & Gomm, 1997). The individual factors and assumptions that we hold as researchers will undoubtedly shape our decisions and interpretations throughout the research process. Within this paradigm, there is a focus on maintaining a “disciplined subjectivity” in which we recognize that bias is unavoidable and often necessary when conducting research but should not be excessive or wield an unwarranted influence on the research process (Wolcott, 1995, pp. 157). Researchers

are therefore encouraged to systematically monitor and engage in reflection to avoid producing and interpreting data that is full of personal projection (Peshkin, 1988).

Therefore, I decided to keep a journal throughout this research process to document my experience and think critically about the assumptions and past experiences that I bring to the table. This process of self-reflexivity was extremely important to ensure that I actively and critically acknowledged my position as both an outsider (as a researcher) and an insider (as a Muslim woman) in this research. I also had regular conversations with my supervisory committee members to acknowledge and monitor my subjectivity. Through these discussions, supervisory committee members acted as critical friends to ensure that I was keeping an open mind and exploring different theories and interpretations of the participants' experiences (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). The following is an initial reflexive statement that described my position prior to data collection and analysis of this research.

### 2.6.1 Reflexive statement

It was my first time going swimming since I began wearing the hijab. My parents had enrolled my sister and me in swimming classes years before but it had proved to be too costly. The condo we lived in at the time had a swimming pool but it was outdoors and I felt completely exposed to the peering eyes of anyone who walked by. On this day, however, we had decided to take a long bus ride to my sister's friend's condo that had an indoor pool. Instead of the bathing suit that I had worn when I was younger, my thirteen-year old body was clad in swimming leggings and a long sleeve shirt that my parents had purchased after a painstaking search of Islamic clothing stores in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). My sister wore a matching outfit. As my sister's friend let us into the pool, I remember breathing a sigh of relief as I realized the pool was relatively empty. I felt awkward and uncomfortable slipping into the pool for the first time in ages and did not want a huge audience. There were two women and a man laughing and talking in the shallow end. With a shy smile and nod, we entered the shallow end on the opposite side from them. They returned neither the nod or the smile, and simply stared at my sister and me. "It's okay", my sister reassured me. "They've probably just never seen someone swim in a hijab before."

I turned my back to the group but I could feel the heat of their gaze on my back. I felt uncomfortable. I felt unsafe. Faking a smile, we began to float, recalling what we had learned

in our swimming classes so long ago. I noticed that the trio had moved and were now treading in the deep end, their gaze never leaving our bodies. We were swimming for about 5 minutes when I noticed that one of the women had left the pool. The lifeguard walked to where we were swimming and quietly asked us to leave. Shocked and confused, my sister's friend asked why. She was a resident in the condo, paid for the services and was allowed to have guests. The lifeguard struggled to find an answer and kept looking uncertainly to the other swimmers. She informed us that there had been a complaint and some residents felt uncomfortable swimming in the pool with us. When asked why we had to leave if someone else felt uncomfortable, the lifeguard floundered for an answer and said she would have to talk to management. She returned a few minutes later with a security guard and informed us that we had to leave because we were wearing clothing that was not "swimming" approved. Our leggings and shirts were made out of Lycra but our hijabs were not. I remember wanting to argue that one of the other women swimming was wearing a t-shirt, but by that time, I was tired and struggling to fight back tears.

We were escorted out of the pool by the security guard. I felt like a criminal. I felt different. I felt like I did not belong. Similarly, while wearing a long-sleeve underneath my basketball jersey hadn't bothered me before, it now reminded me that I looked different from all of my teammates, that I was different and alien in that environment. While I still loved wearing my hijab, I now understood that I lived in a world where it would not always be perceived as a personal and individual choice. And, although that swimming pool experience did not stop me from being physically active altogether, it took me five years before I was able to step back into a swimming pool.

I still believe in the power of sport. My personal experiences on sport teams helped me build lasting friendships and increase my self-confidence. But I also understand that sport can be a venue that is hostile and alienating. In the lives of young Muslim women who are facing and battling oppressive forces that aim to define what they should wear, how they should behave and which spaces their bodies can occupy, sport can play a much more complex role. Due to my past experience, I want to explore this complex relationship to better understand young Muslim women's experiences in hopes of facilitating new understandings to inform research and practice.

## 2.7 Ethical Considerations

This study conformed to protocol submitted to the University of Toronto's Research Ethics Office (ORE). Accordingly, participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and they provided informed consent form prior to beginning this research study. As participants were asked to discuss feelings of alienation, there was a possibility that they might experience psychological discomfort or distress. Therefore, the researcher provided all participants with a list of culturally sensitive resources during the initial semi-structured interview. Additionally, they were made aware that they were able to withdraw from the study at any point in time. All interview data and audio-diaries were kept on a password-protected computer. As this process of data collection was on-going, participants were informed that they were able to withdraw their audio-diaries until they have been analyzed in order to give them control of their personal information. The audio-diaries recordings were deleted once they had been transcribed; all personally identifying information was removed from transcripts, and participants were asked to choose pseudonyms in order to maintain anonymity.

## Chapter 3 Community

### 3 Overview

The results and discussion sections are organized into two main chapters: Community and Social Systems. This chapter on Community begins with a profile for each participant. Following the participant profiles, there is a note on the diversity of the participants of this study. The results and discussion are then presented, simultaneously, in three main sections. The first section deals with social interactions that participants had with their parents, family and broader Muslim community. The second section deals with the participants' relationships with their coaches. The final section describes their relationship with their non-Muslim teammates.

#### 3.1 Participant Profiles

Sarah is a 24-year-old Muay Thai fighter, born and raised in Toronto. Her mother is a White Canadian who converted to Islam when she was 30 years old. Her father is Ghanaian-Canadian who left the family when Sarah was approximately 13 years old. Her extended family are White, non-Muslims but her mother, a nurse, raised her and her younger sister as Muslims. Sarah began wearing the hijab when she was nine years old and maintains that going to a high school with many other Hijabi students gave her a sense of community. Regarding her sport participation, Sarah did not participate in organized sport or consider herself an athlete, with the exception of horseback riding for a few years when she was younger. When she was 19 years old, Sarah saw a movie about kickboxing and decided to sign up for a free trial at a gym near her house. She was hooked. A year later, she had her first fight and has been competing ever since. She has had seven sanctioned fights and is pursuing her goal of competing professionally.

Mel is a 20-year-old university student, born and raised in Ontario and currently living in Mississauga. Both of her parents are Egyptian-Canadian and she has one younger brother. Mel grew up playing numerous sports, including karate, swimming, and basketball. She is a licenced swim instructor and lifeguard. Her father is very physically active and they have

bonded over years of playing sports together. When she was in middle school, her family moved out of Toronto and she began attending an Islamic school for the first time. She did not find that there was a lot of interest in female sports at the school and eventually stopped playing on organized teams. She had continued to play recreationally in her Islamic school but missed the competitive aspect of sport. Upon entering university, Mel decided to try out for a competitive basketball league. She initially felt uncomfortable and worried about her decreased fitness levels, due to years of being out of sport. For the past year, she has been readjusting and falling back in love with basketball. She hopes to be an inspiration to other Muslim girls and show them that they can play, no matter their age or past sport experiences.

Joy is a 26-year old college student who plays soccer on her school's varsity team. She was born in Tanzania but moved to Dubai with her parents when she was four years old. Her younger sister was born in Dubai a few years later. Her mother is a Portuguese Catholic and her father is a Tanzanian Muslim. A self-titled "tomboy", Joy was captain of her high school basketball and soccer teams, in addition to playing volleyball and running track. However, soccer firmly has the number one spot in her heart. She played throughout high school and for a team in Sharjah, UAE, that was coached by Diego Maradona<sup>8</sup> before deciding to focus on her university studies full-time. Her family moved to Canada in 2013, which is when she began playing for her college team, as well as other recreational leagues in the GTA. Soccer, school, and work keep her very busy, which often limits the time she has to spend with her family. However, her parents both played national field hockey for Tanzania, so they understand the struggle and sacrifices she makes for her sport.

Maia is a 16-year-old student, born and raised in Ontario. Both of her parents are Pakistani-Canadians who grew up in Canada. She has three brothers and a cat she adores. After attending Islamic school since junior kindergarten, she decided to transfer to a school in the Catholic district school board for high school. Sport is very important for her – she wanted to attend a school that prioritized athletics and have the chance to attend OFSAA. The Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations is the second largest association of its kind in North America.

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<sup>8</sup> Diego Maradona is a former Argentine retired professional football (soccer) player and manager. He was named joint FIFA player of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with Pelé.

She comes from a very athletic family. Both of her parents played varsity level sports in university – her father played basketball and volleyball, her mother played soccer. Her brothers all play sports competitively as well. She grew up doing gymnastics, basketball, swimming, and soccer. She played competitive basketball and soccer for the past few years but has decided to focus her attention and energy on soccer. Her goal is to become the first hijabi athlete to play soccer for Canada.

Laila is a 20-year old university student who is studying international development. In addition to her love for public service, she is an avid writer and athlete. She comes from a very close-knit family. Her mother is an Italian Canadian who converted to Islam, and her father is Indian Muslim. She has two younger siblings, who she tries to spend as much time with as possible. She considers her family to be quite physically active, particularly when it comes to spending time outdoors. She plays competitive soccer and basketball but has also started playing volleyball on a recreational intramural team at school. Soccer was the sport she played most seriously when she was younger – a fact she attributes to her father who grew up playing soccer in England. Her father coached the competitive (rep) soccer teams that she and her siblings played on when they were younger. When she was entering high school, she had the opportunity to go to a school that was well known for its athletic program. However, she made a last-minute decision and switched to a school that was more multicultural and did not emphasize athletics as strongly. She had grown up playing sport in predominantly White leagues and neighbourhoods and wanted to play in a more culturally diverse environment. Diversity is important to her and has made her sport experience all the more enjoyable.

Tasnim is a 16-year old high school student who was born and raised in London, Ontario. Both of her parents are Egyptian Canadian and come from large families. She has two younger siblings, a brother and sister. They were all introduced to basketball when they were in Islamic school, after which her passion for the sport grew and she continued playing basketball in a house league outside of school. She has also been playing competitive, club basketball for the past two years. She also plays on her high school basketball team and had the privilege of attending OFSAA this year. Tasnim has always wanted to attend OFSAA and was able to do just that when her team won their district championships. Although she decided to attend public school rather than continue at her Islamic high school, she maintains close friendships

with her Muslim friends. She has a large extended family that she adores and a tight-knit Muslim community in London, Ontario.

Khadija is a 19-year-old international student who is studying at a university in Toronto. She was born and raised in Dubai, UAE. She came to Canada two years ago with her mother and two sisters, who are also studying at the university level as well. She currently plays in a competitive dodgeball league with a team of friends from her University orientation week committee. Describing herself as clumsy and a nerd in her childhood, Khadija's decision to participate in the dodgeball league came as a huge surprise to her family and herself. Her physical activity and sport backgrounds were quite limited when she was living in Dubai despite many girls-only options and support from her parents. She describes orientation week as an event that forced her out of her comfort zone and encouraged her to explore new experiences. Sport and physical activity, in the form of dodgeball as well as working out at her condo gym, have presented many challenges in relation to sport attire and uncomfortable Western practices. However, these experiences have also increased her confidence and have allowed her to make new friends and connections.

### 3.1.1 Heterogeneity among Muslim women

يَتَأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ  
لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقْوَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

*O people! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another.*

*Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him.*

*Surely God is All-Knowing, All-Aware.*

Prior to presenting the results and discussion, I feel that it is important to take a moment to acknowledge and appreciate the diversity that exists within the Muslim community. I set out to recruit anyone who identified as being visibly Muslim and who was competing in sport. As a result, the participants who approached me to take part in this study were from a diverse set of cultural, religious and sport communities. Two of my participants were Shiaa Muslim, while the other six were Sunni, from various sects. Some of the participants were immigrants to Canada, others were born here and others still had parents who were born here in Canada. These different generations of immigrant experiences resulted in differing sport experiences, which will be evident in the following sections. Additionally, some of the participants had parents who were both born Muslim, some who had converted to Islam and one participant had a parent who was not Muslim. They also come from diverse cultural backgrounds (Egyptian, Pakistani, Italian, to name a few). All of these wonderfully diverse identities play a role and shape the experiences that these young women have in sport.

As I have read literature on Muslim women and sport over the past few years, I have been struck by researchers' decision to homogenously sample "South Asian" women or "Arab women" and then make generalizations about the experiences of Muslim women as a whole. The Muslim community is extremely diverse. As a reminder of this, the verse above from Surah al Hujurat (chapter 49) of the Quran is often quoted to remind Muslims of the beautiful diversity that exists in the human race. The implication here is that there are many different nations and ethnicities, and we have a duty to respect and be acquainted with one another. In

multi-cultural countries like Canada, this diversity lends itself to some rich (and complicated) experiences. In the following sections, I hope to present a vivid description of how these seven young Muslim women navigate their sport experiences, here in Canada.

### 3.2 Parents and Family

﴿ وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۖ إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا آفٌ وَلَا نَهْرَهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ﴾ (٢٣)

*“And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you **be dutiful to your parents**. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but **address them in terms of honour**.” (Quran 17:23)*

The relationship between parent and child is one of the most significant aspects in Islam. In many verses of the Quran, such as the one above, respect and honour for one’s parents is mentioned right after worshipping God. The participants of this study frequently spoke of the importance of their parents, and family, in their day-to-day life. Interestingly, most participants spoke of their childhood sport experiences as a family affair. Laila talked about how her parents were not only supportive of her pursuits in sport, but were the reason why she and her siblings were so physically active:

I mean my parents have always pushed us into sports, [they] had always made sure we’re doing things. So, my sister and I are both – we’re both always very athletic. My brother just joined the cross-country team and he plays basketball as well in a house league kind of thing, and soccer in the summers. So, we’re all very active. And then my parents – my dad plays soccer and then my mom doesn’t play sports as much but she runs a lot, does a lot of CrossFit, bootcamp, stuff like that. (Laila, 20, Interview 1)

For Laila, sport is something that was ingrained in her family structure. She talked about how her family loved to be outdoors and physically active together. Her father’s love of soccer was the main driving force behind her playing rep for a number of years. Mel also talked about her father’s role in encouraging her to be physically active. She said, “My dad is really active, and then he encourages us, we’ll go to the YMCA every week... I got all my sports stuff from my dad” (Mel, 20, Interview 1). Tasnim also described physical activity and sport as something her family does together:

All my cousins, like, my cousins living in Toronto and Hamilton, and then I also have cousins here and in the U.S. They're all,– they all play sports. My cousins in Hamilton are really big on squash. But also, like, basketball's just like a thing that we do altogether when they come over. Like, everyone kind of just plays even if they don't know how to. Like, we have a – we got a basketball net at my grandparents' house here. (Tasnim, 16, Interview 1).

Maia also highlighted the importance of her family's sport experience and understood it to be the reason they were so supportive of her athletic career:

My dad has been – both my parents, they've been playing sports forever. My mom's a soccer girl and my dad's a basketball, volleyball person... My mom played for U of T 'cause she went there. And then my dad played basketball at Waterloo and volleyball, and then he played for Iceland- the basketball league. And then just sometimes now recreationally on Wednesday nights he'll go play. And then my mom is in a women's league and she'll play. (Maia, 16, Interview 1)

In Kay's (2006) work on the significance of family influence on young Muslim women's sport experience, it was noted that family views on physical activity and the role of women were key determinants of a daughter's sport participation. Recent literature from Europe, specifically from Norway and Denmark, has reported a common pattern of fathers supporting their daughter's participation, while their mothers were less likely to do so (Agergaard, 2016; Strandbu, 2005). Similar to the current study, the fathers had been very active as children and youth, which led to their promoting of this active lifestyle to their children (Agergaard, 2016). However, participants in the current study also cited their mothers as key supportive agents in their sport and physical activity experiences. This may be due to the fact that the participants in this study had parents who were born in Canada or immigrated here when they were very young. Second generation immigrants may have more time, money, and resources for sport activities than recent or first-generation immigrants (Nielsen, 2013). For many of the participants, their mothers also had sport experiences in Canada to draw upon, which may have influenced their willingness to support their daughters' sport careers.

Maia also pointed out that her parents had faced some difficulties with their own parents' feelings toward their sport careers:

My grandparents weren't like that. They weren't that supportive. They were, like, "You know, why are you spending so much doing this stuff that may not benefit you?" They didn't really understand it as to why it was worth their time... My cousin, he could have played on scholarship to Michigan State but they didn't let him. He had

scholarship offers, he was an amazing basketball player... my dad was furious. (Maia, 16, Interview 1)

She felt that a huge part of why her parents were so supportive of her sport endeavours was related to their own experience fighting for the ability to compete. She recounted stories of her father having to turn down a sport scholarship because his parents did not want him to “waste his time” on sports. For this reason, Maia felt that he ensured that she was able to pursue her sport career in whatever way she wants. She also talked about this supportive environment that her parents provide in relation to her decision to quit gymnastics:

[My parents] are really supportive about it. When I wanted to stick with one sport, my parents were like, “Okay.” I’d been thinking about it for a while ‘cause it was starting to become a lot for me... At my highest – kind of the most sports I was playing per year, consisted of swimming, basketball, soccer, and gymnastics. When I dropped gym - I loved it, but my parents were like the outfits at the time - the world wasn’t so open about it. I would wear shorts but I think in competitive, the boards were not as open to it as they are now - of people wearing a bit more covered clothing. So [my parents] were like, “That’s gonna be a barrier for you.” Like, “Okay you know what, I see where you’re going with this.” So I just stuck to soccer and basketball, and swimming occasionally. (Maia, 16, Interview 1)

Maia’s parents understood that she wanted to excel in her sport, and they therefore supported her decision to focus her time and energy on soccer and basketball. It is interesting to note that her decision on which sport to drop was related to issues of modesty and sport attire in gymnastics. She talked about how her parents were supportive in providing her with as many modest alternatives as possible, but acknowledged that she would be continuously facing that barrier if she continued with gymnastics. This supports previous research, which demonstrated the way in which Muslim women may be pushed out of Western sport due to structural and institutional barriers when Islamic requirements of modesty are not met (Pfister, 2010; Benn et al., 2011).

Laila also talked about the instrumental support her parents provided her in relation to her sport attire. She noted that they were very emotionally supportive about her athletic career and always cheered her on, but also went out of their way to make sure she had sport attire that made her feel comfortable when competing:

My parents have always been like great with the uniform and trying to find me the best accommodations they can. And it was always me who felt very like uncomfortable. Back in the day, I had a full like tights, long sleeve, and so my parents – I don’t even

know how they found those, [if they] bought it off eBay or found someone to make it... They would try to do the best that they could for me. Umm so it was never like you know, “Buy the cheapest thing that you can and put it under” it was like, “No, we’re gonna find you good quality things.” So I always appreciated that. (Laila, 20 Interview 2)

They ensured she had modest, good quality clothing that she felt comfortable competing in. For Laila, this really highlighted their support and commitment for her sport career. Instrumental support was also described by Tasnim when she reflected on all of the commuting back and forth that her parents do for her basketball games:

They’ve taken their time and driven me, [they] drive me everywhere (laughter). Like last year for club, my basketball practice was like half an hour away... So like, I don’t know, they’ve just been doing a lot of driving with like my brother and my sister playing club as well. (Tasnim, 16, Interview 2)

Sarah describes how she relies on her mother for emotional support rather than instrumental support:

She’s very emotionally supportive, growing up like she would always like – I’ve called her many times when I’ve been like leaving the gym, frustrated. She’s always very supportive and if I call her and I’m like, “I got really beat up today, and I’m really upset” then she’ll talk to me about it, you know? Like she’s always helpful... As for this sport itself I don’t think she’s ever said anything negative about me doing it. I was kind of surprised when I started fighting - I thought she would be upset. She doesn’t really care as long as I don’t get injured. (Sarah, 24, Interview 1)

When I asked her to elaborate further on her mother’s feelings of Muay Thai specifically, she said:

I think she thinks that being healthy is Islamic. You know like I think she feels that as long as we’re not going overboard and like pushing ourselves to an unhealthy point that we’re following the Sunnah. (Sarah, 24, Interview 1)

For Sarah, she felt that her mother’s social support stemmed from an Islamic understanding of health as a moral duty in order to follow the Sunnah (the prophetic tradition). Based on this understanding, she felt that her mother’s support of the sport would be conditional if she was badly injured. This is supported by sport literature conducted in the UK which noted that parents may be reluctant to allow their daughters to participate in sport, unless there are changes in the way sport is provided in order to accommodate religious requirements (Dagkas, Benn & Jawad, 2010).

Khadija also talked about her parent's support of her physical activity as conditional when she said:

I get a lot of support from both of them because they both did, at one point in their lives at least, enjoyed gyming a lot. My mom's like, just 'be careful.' Cause there's that whole like sports culture that she is aware of and doesn't really like. And umm like for example in hockey, just there's a reputation that comes with the players and she wants me to like steer clear of that... But yeah she was always supportive but - she'd support to the point until something happens. (Khadija, 19, Interview 2)

Despite her parents understanding and supporting her desire to be physically active, they were wary of potentially un-Islamic aspects of Western sport. She talked about her mother warning her away from social events involving alcohol, aggressive male players, and inappropriate contact with male teammates. She also said that she knew her mother was supportive of her sport experiences on the condition that Islamic requirements are met.

Khadija also said that not all of her extended family members were very understanding of her sport experience. Therefore, she often selectively chose what information she shared with certain members of her extended family:

If it ever does come up, there are certain family members who I'll like be a tell-all to, like 'oh you know we were playing against an all-male team and they were so annoying about getting us all out, and you know, physically pinned me with a softball. Foamball, it hurt.' Umm but then there are certain family member who I'll just be like 'oh yeah I'm playing dodgeball and umm it's great' and I'd walk out of the conversation. There's no extremist in our family like ideology. But at the same time, if certain family members were like 'oh so she's on a team with guys playing against guys' it would create drama and create a lot of biases in the family... my uncles would - they wouldn't really say anything 'cause my uncles are fairly like, live and let live, but the aunties would go straight to my mom and not hold back. I don't want that to happen to my mom 'cause it's happened before (Khadija, 19, Interview 2).

Khadija's quote reflects findings from previous literature on the experiences of South Asian Muslim women in the U.K. (Kay, 2006). It was noted that the broader ethnic community played a role in influencing the parent's decisions, and ultimately the young women's participation in sport (Kay, 2006). It is important to note that for Khadija, her decision to engage in sport has repercussions for her mother. Therefore, Khadija needed to consider how the simple act of engaging in sport may affect not only her, but her loved ones as well. This has interesting implications for sport research, which has traditionally focused on the way

family affected the sport experiences of Muslim women but has overlooked the influence of one's sport experience on the personal and social lives of those closest to them.

In our interviews, Joy also talked about the resistance she faced from some members of her extended family, who were not initially supportive of her soccer career. She recounted that through playing and challenging her male relatives, she was able to earn her extended family's respect and support:

So we'd go on trips and [my male family members] were all football players and everything. So, we'd start playing and they were like, "Okay, so, she's not that bad" you know. So I started getting a little bit more respect and stuff and then I'd joke around with the uncles and whatever while we're watching soccer. All the aunties are like making tea and I'm there with the boys. Eventually they became very supportive until today... So things changed, for sure. (Joy, 26, Interview 1)

Joy felt that she had to earn her family's respect and support in relation to her ability as a soccer player. During our interviews, she often talked about how her aunts felt that she was not feminine enough and wanted her to wear dresses and fit in with the girls. They often expressed their frustration at her desire to play soccer with her male family members. It was only after a few family trips in her teenage years where she was able to showcase her skill that she felt her extended family really began to respect and support her athletic career.

### 3.2.1 Sport facilitating belonging in the Muslim community

Participants also described positive experiences that they had in the Muslim community due to their identities as athletes. Sport was described as a way that brought them together with certain subgroups within their Muslim community. Maia described being a part of a Muslim women's soccer league with her mother and how building friendships there played a vital role in establishing her love for sport. Mel also described her love of playing basketball with her Muslim friends:

I feel more comfortable with Muslim women because like, they understand everything you're gonna say. And also you can use your Muslim language, like for example at ISNA, everyone says 'wallahi, inshallah'. Everyone just uses the Muslim slang and then now in [my university sport league], I try to throw that stuff and I was like, oh wait, wrong audience, I can't. So especially in sports, you can use that stuff where it's like... just like the social aspect of it. And it's kind of better with Muslims because like I don't know, they understand. Like, 'oh you have to pause to pray' for example. (Mel, 20, Interview 1)

This notion of sport fostering belonging for Hijabi athletes in the Muslim community was also expressed by Laila's quote:

The place that I feel most belong to that community is when I'm playing soccer because, yeah we're just playing soccer and there's always something to talk about after the game, versus just being in a mosque and running into someone... It's been a nice experience so far. And yeah, it's nice to like start making more, making friends and connections in that religious space. (Laila, 20, Interview 1)

Laila, who is White-passing and a recent Hijabi, often talked about the difficulty feeling welcomed or feeling as though she belonged in specific religious spaces. She was always very conscious of the differences between herself and members of her community. The quote above illustrates the way in which her identity as an athlete allowed her to feel accepted and a part of the Muslim community.

### 3.3 Coaches

Coaches played an important role in shaping the sport experiences of participants. Maia talked about how her coach always treated her the same as her other teammates, which contributed to her feeling as an insider on the team:

Practicing, I feel no different. We all wear the same uniforms, we all are coached by the same person, we all do the same thing. Umm we're all yelled at the same by our coach (laughter). We're all like praised for whatever we do on the field by my coach. (Maia, 16, Interview 2)

For Maia, she really appreciated when coaches focused on the game and did not make her feel like she stood out. Laila, on the other hand, preferred when coaches asked questions to help establish a relationship that was not purely focused on the sport:

Like the coaches that I've had more recently, they'll ask, after a practice or a game, they'll ask you like a random question or if they see your parents in the audience, they might ask you about your family, things like that. They're interested in knowing [about you] and that also helps you create a better connection with them and feel more positive then about playing for them and playing on that team. (Laila, 20, Interview 1)

This was more important for Laila because she is White-passing and often felt that she identified differently from what people would expect. Therefore, she appreciated being able to share more about herself and build a more substantial connection with her coaches. After attending a high school and competing for clubs that were very White, she often felt that

coaches were not as aware of cultural and religious differences. She noted that since transferring schools in high school, she has had more diverse coaches. She said:

The coaches I've had since high school and university have been like diverse. Way more diverse than it was when I first started in Toronto... My high school is very diverse, [my university] is very diverse, and so like even if you have a coach that might not be from a racialized background they're still – because they're in a surrounding that's very diverse, they're more attuned to differences. (Laila, 20, Interview 2)

It is important to note that when Laila described her previous sport experience as “White”, she was not referring to the race of her coaches and teammates but rather a normative culture that upheld Whiteness. As she noted, she had Caucasian coaches in university but because the social environment of the teams were racially, ethnically and religiously diverse, they were more aware of disrupting White, Christian norms that permeate Western sport culture.

Tasnim also talked about the awkwardness of having coaches who did not understand Islam or who have never interacted with Muslim female athletes before. Although she now has a great relationship with her basketball coach, their first encounter was uncomfortable for her:

I remember the first thing he asked me when I walked into tryouts. Me and my friend – she's also a Hijabi - the first thing he asked us was like, 'Oh you don't wear shorts?' That's the first thing he asked us. (Tasnim, 16, Interview 1)

Laila also described a similar situation, which unfortunately occurred well into the season:

At one of the games last year, my coach was like, 'So are you gonna keep that on?' We were getting ready for the game and I'm like, 'Yeah' ... I think because the refs had - it seemed like the refs had mentioned something to him because I saw the ref kind of watching us have our interaction. (Laila, 20, Interview 1)

Whereas Joy's teammates and coach had stood up for her when a referee had reservations about allowing her to wear the hijab, Laila's coach instead approached her and insinuated that she should take off her hijab. Laila did not seem think much of it but just said she found it “weird”. She felt that this experience was not as bad as when a previous coach would actively try to convince her to wear a regular swimsuit rather than the more modest one she chose to wear:

People would ask sometimes. My swim coach would be like, 'You know if you just wore a regular suit, you'd probably be faster' ... I remember staring – I was a very shy, and felt very uncomfortable talking about it. (Laila, 20, Interview 1)

## 3.4 Teammates

The data that was created through the interviews with participants highlighted the complexity of social relationships that the participants had with their teammates as a function of their identities as Muslim women who play sports. To better explain these relationships, various themes around participants' social interactions with teammates will be explored.

### 3.4.1 Supportive environment

Participants' relationships with their teammates were important to them but their significance was expressed in various degrees. Maia, who was the youngest participant and grew up playing competitive soccer, said “[Sport] occupies my time which means I don’t have time to always spend with friends. So my soccer teammates become my sisters” (Maia, 16, Interview 1). In her audio-diaries, she often talked about her friends from her soccer team and the social events they had planned. Her mother was also quite involved with the team and is friendly with the other mothers on the team. Maia described her team as a warm and supportive environment.

Sarah also talked about the supportive atmosphere of her gym. She had switched over to this gym after some difficult experiences at her first gym and stated:

I was surprised by how nice everyone was, and how welcoming they were. I feel like that’s what’s interesting about Muay Thai. It’s such a brutal sport, but everyone in it is so nice, generally. Everyone is so welcoming, so I really enjoyed it. I was happy that they were welcoming me. And they’re all just, like, kind of family here. Like, everyone’s like your brother or sister. (Sarah, 24, Interview 1)

For Sarah, who trained in a predominantly male environment (she is one of two female fighters in this gym), respect was the primary determinant of a supportive, social relationship:

You don’t have to engage in actual physical contact often. If you’re hitting pads, you’re not actually touching anyone. Even if you’re doing drills, like you have gear on, so you don’t have to touch anyone. I don’t like clinching, which is basically wrestling while standing up, you know? So, I pretty much only do that if I have a fight coming up in the next couple of weeks, and I feel like I need to practice. Um, but other than that, I usually don’t engage in that... if I say I don’t wanna clinch, [my teammates] will be okay with it because they all know why, and they understand, you know? They all understand why I wear a hijab and that I’m Muslim, and it has never been a problem. (Sarah, 24, Interview 2)

Although not a space exclusively for Muslims, she feels comfortable at the gym because she knows that most of the fighters understand and respect her Islamic values. This experience can be juxtaposed with Alamri's (2015) study, which explored the physical activity experiences of female Muslim students in Australia. The students frequently needed to explain their "Islamic" actions (wearing the hijab or not participating in mixed-sex activities), which exposed them to ignorant and prejudicial comments (Alamari, 2015). For Sarah, the head coach educated his fighters but more importantly maintained an environment where respect is key, which decreased the likelihood of these negative encounters.

Tasnim did not have a lot to say about her teammates in our first interview together but she mentioned interactions with her teammates in her audio-diaries while away at OFSAA. When I asked her to talk about that experience, she stated:

We only had like two games a day and they were really spread out so we had a lot of time to hang out with each other. So we hung out at the hotel and at the mall. And even when we were just like driving from place to place, I was with the same girls in the car and in the hotel, so I got way closer to them than I had before during the season, so that was really fun. During the season, I didn't really feel close to any of them but then I got to spend so much time with them and it was just really fun. Umm, obviously like in the hotel, when I took off my hijab. They were like, 'oh my god, your hair. Like, I've never seen it before.' Stuff like that. (Tasnim, 16, Interview 2)

Although she had not mentioned any unpleasant or awkward encounters during our first interview, it seemed that she had initially felt uncomfortable and reserved with her teammates. After this trip, where they travelled to Guelph, it seemed that she was able to build a more substantial relationship with them outside of a sport and school setting. Notably, it appeared that showing them her hair was a big moment and helped them establish a bond. For Tasnim, it was a natural moment for her as she is accustomed to family and female friends seeing her hair, but it was a significant moment for her non-Muslim teammates who were seeing a different side of her for the first time. Literature to date on the experiences of Muslim women in sport has not explored this notion of vulnerability that may be associated with showing one's hair to their teammates, but it has interesting implications for relationships with teammates. In Tasnim's case, it made her feel closer to her teammates and established a bond that carried through to the rest of the season.

This interaction also highlights a phenomenon that Yegenoglu (1998) refers to as a "Western/colonial desire to see". By allowing her teammates to see and interact with her

without the hijab, Tasnim becomes less of a mystery. This desire to see and unveil Muslim women is understood as a way to make them more familiar in relation to dominant, Western notions of femininity (Samie & Sehlkoglou, 2015). In essence, this “desire to see” continues to objectify and perpetuate the Orientalization of Muslim women. This has important implications for Western sport settings, which tend to emphasize high visibility of the body. Although, Tasnim found unveiling was a bonding experience, other Hijabis may not feel as comfortable. The hijab is a crucial part of Muslim women’s identity and they should not feel the need to unveil to satisfy other people’s desire, even in female only spaces.

### 3.4.2 Solidarity

Participants also described the way their teammates actively came to their defense during difficult moments with referees. At a national beach volleyball competition, a referee told Laila that she and her partner could not compete because they were not wearing identical outfits. Laila recounted being overwhelmed and said:

Some refs would let it go, I guess they would assume, or they’d ask and I’d be like, “It’s religious” and they just let it go. But one ref was being really sticky about it, and I remember my partner having to like change what she was wearing to match what I was. (Laila, 20, Interview 1)

Laila’s father came to speak with the referee, who refused to budge on his decision. Laila recounts her embarrassment and gratitude that her teammate chose to put on leggings and a long sleeve so they would not be disqualified. Laila also noted that her teammate was probably upset that she had to put on more clothes, but made the “sacrifice” in order to compete. Laila was accustomed to sport policies and regulations that dictate what she can and cannot wear as a Muslim woman, but felt more uncomfortable when her non-Muslim teammate was impacted by sport regulations. It seems that young Muslim women understand and have begrudgingly accepted external regulation of their bodies by sport organizations.

Joy also recalled a situation when her teammates stood up for her at a playoff game:

They [referees] do an equipment check before they start a game so they say, “Starting eleven, get on the line” and then they check our cleats and they make sure we’re not wearing jewelry and stuff like that. And at that point he goes, “Oh I let you play in this [hijab] the last time but I can’t let you play this time.”... My teammates stood up for me and they got all sassy and everything and he eventually let me play...I think I was a bit taken aback initially just because I think I was in shock for a minute. Then once

everyone else started fighting for me I was like, “Okay get your act together and answer him” ... You have to know the rules and the regulations. If I was in the wrong, I would have sat down or whatever. But I knew I was [right]. I always follow the rules so I was okay. (Joy, 26, Interview 1)

Despite knowing that she was not doing anything wrong, being told that she could not play caused Joy to panic. Her teammates stepped in to argue with the referee until she had a chance to regroup. She later talked about how it meant a lot to her to have them defend her in that way.

Khadija also talked about a particular instance where her hijab slipped off during a game:

Everyone on the team is super respectful about, you know, she needs two seconds to like fix [her hijab]. So that’s nice. Also during the game once it [the hijab], came undone a little bit and I was like, freaking out... [my teammates] stopped the game. (Khadija, 19, Interview 1)

She talked about how her teammates were kind enough to stop their dodgeball game rather than having her step aside to fix it. The opposing team was angry at the interruption but her teammates ignored them and waited for her to finish fixing her hijab. Khadija later talked about how this display of solidarity strengthened her bond with her teammates and showed her that they “had her back”. In this way, Khadija’s teammates actively contributed to creating a sense of inclusion in her sport experiences.

### 3.4.3 Social exclusion

Despite these positive experiences with teammates, participants often described situations where they felt excluded within their sport environments. These instances of social exclusion were described in relation to social events containing alcohol and due to differences in sport attire.

#### 3.4.3.1 Alcohol

﴿ يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴾ (٢١٩)

They ask you about alcohol and gambling. Say, “In them is great sin and [yet some] benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit.” (2:219)

Joy, who immigrated to Canada five years ago, talked about struggling to make friends with her teammates in her first year due to team social events revolving around alcohol:

The captain of the team was like, “Oh I’m having a kegger” or something. I don’t know, something at her place and she’s like, “Oh you should come too”. I’m like, “No, like I don’t drink. And she’s like, “No, but just come hang out and whatever.” And I never went. And then that year, I don’t know whether it was just the fact that I was a rookie on the team or whether this also played a part of it, but I did feel like an outsider that first year...Even at practice and whatever, you know, they knew each other because they got drunk together and they hung out together. They all went to that party and stuff. So that first year was a little difficult. (Joy, 26, Interview 1)

Within Islamic teachings, the use of intoxicants, such as alcohol, are prohibited. For many Muslims, this means that they do not drink, sell, serve, or even frequent environments where alcohol is being consumed (Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah). Although there are variations in interpretation of hadiths related to alcohol, it is commonly understood to be haram (forbidden) within all Islamic schools of thought. For Joy and other participants of this study, attending these types of team-bonding events was perceived to be contrary to their religious beliefs. She noted that not attending the party made her even more of an outsider on the team because the rest of the team was able to connect and form a relationship at that event. Years later, Joy said that being excluded from social team events did not bother her quite as much, but notes that it did still affect her overall relationship with her teammates:

Socializing in college is going to the bar, going out on the weekends and drinking and partying and that kind of thing. So there’s a whole culture outside of here which I don’t necessarily participate in. Sometimes we’ll come back at practice or we’d be sitting in school, we’re all hanging out and they’re like, “Oh my God, you know last night blah blah blah this happened or that happened.” Or like I’ll see it on their snaps and stuff and it’s just like “Oh”. (Joy, 26, Interview 2)

Tasnim also talked about how members of her team have gotten to be close friends because of the bonds they formed at parties that she chooses not to go to:

[Drinking] is a big thing because obviously, going to parties and stuff. And you just have to say no. But it’s much easier because I have my other friend too. It’d be kind of awkward if I was by myself. But they had like a couple parties on the weekend, basketball team parties and in the group chat, they were talking about all the alcohol they were gonna bring. Me and my friend were just like, “Mmm, no thanks.” They had

a really good time. I remember seeing – well everyone was talking about it like on Snapchat and everything, umm they posted stuff. (Tasnim, 16, Interview 2)

Tasnim, who was still in high school, found it easier to avoid attending these parties because she had a friend on the team who was also Muslim. However, this often positioned both of them as the “Muslim outsiders” on the team.

While literature to date has not explored the experiences of Muslim women as pertaining to the place of alcohol in sport, broader research on sport-related drinking is useful to understand this issue. Burdsey (2010) explored the experiences of British Muslim cricket players and noted that they remain largely excluded due to their religious identity. Interestingly, he noted that English cricket players and fans that visited Pakistan for cricket matches complained of facing “an unbearable absence of alcohol” (Burdsey, 2010, p. 316). It is also important to note that sport-related drinking has historically been linked to a normative culture of heavy drinking among men (Palmer & Thompson, 2007). The participants of this study noted that sport-related drinking also played an integral role in the lives of female athletes. Therefore, future research should address this gap in literature by deepening our understanding of women and sport-related drinking as well as how athletes who do not drink for personal or religious reasons are affected by this culture.

Laila also talked about how it was sometimes uncomfortable to explain her adherence to certain Islamic practices or ask for accommodation: “I would like feel a little weird to be like, ‘Hey I have to step out to like go pray’ or like, ‘Yeah I’m fasting so like I’m not gonna eat right now’” (Laila, 20, Interview 2). She also talked about how following the Sunnah, by eating at halal restaurants and not drinking alcohol, often caused barriers to participating fully within her sport community:

[Our team] is planning a Secret Santa and then we’re picking a place to go for food. And they’re like, “Let’s go to hotpot. Let’s go to like all-you-can-eat sushi” and I’m like “the last time I went to all-you-can-eat sushi, it’s like forty dollars and I can only eat vegetables.” And like bars and places where there is alcohol or where a lot of people go. As I get into university – like even my TA was like, “Yeah like for the last tutorial like, let’s go grab drinks at the pub we have on campus.” And it was just like – you don’t really realize like how those things are exclusive. (Laila, 20, Interview 2)

Laila expressed her frustration for exclusionary social events that permeate sport and university life. When asked about how she felt as a Muslim woman playing volleyball at her university, she stated:

I think it reflects how even though our school has a lot of initiatives to sort of make environments inclusive and be aware of different religious accommodations, athleticism is still very far behind that. Just because those areas are still really dominated by non-Muslims so it is definitely a lot harder to feel included in those spaces when your needs are never really taken into account. (Laila, 20, Interview 2)

This quote highlights how Laila felt about the fact that sport environments in particular were more difficult spaces to navigate for Muslim women. She perceived that there was a lack of Muslim representation and an unwillingness to accommodate diverse needs, which led to feelings of social exclusion. In essence, the Muslim identities of the participants led them to avoid attending social events that did not accommodate their values, and this in turn led to feelings of isolation and disengagement from teammates. This finding has profound implications, as these social events are often not considered part of the sport context but play a large role in the dynamics of sport teams. Future research should explore how team activities, outside of the sport setting, affect the sport experiences of Muslim women.

### 3.4.3.2 Sport attire

Participants' choice of modest sport clothing was also a frequent topic of conversation, which may have served to increase feelings of social exclusion in sport. Even at a young age, participants had to be prepared to answer questions in their sport community that related to their choice of clothing. Tasnim talked about how before she wore the hijab, people were often curious as to why she wore long sleeve shirts or pants rather than shorts:

I got a lot of comments on that [sport attire]. Even from little kids like, "Oh why are you wearing pants? Why aren't you wearing shorts?" And they'd like ask their parents and stuff, and I kind of just [needed to] explain since I was little. (Tasnim, 16, Interview 1)

Joy also talked about how her adherence to Islamic values of modesty affected her sport experiences. She mentioned one instance where the referee made her change her long-sleeved undershirt:

Another game I played, the ref made me change the shirt I had on. I had on a white long sleeve undershirt underneath my jersey and he made me change it to black because we had to all – again this idea of like being uniform and so we were wearing

black shorts so we had to all be wearing [black shirts]... why would that matter? (Joy, 26, Interview 1)

She expressed her frustration and embarrassment for repeatedly being called out by referees, and in some cases by teammates as well, for dressing differently. Laila also discussed how dressing differently affected her sport experience:

Now as it's getting colder, everyone's bundling up with their hoods and their scarves around their hood and long-sleeves and leggings. So I would say in terms of not really having conversations or interactions about Islam or my hijab specifically, you do sort of feel more like you belong, in that you're feeling less like an outsider when everyone else is kind of dressed at practice the same way, versus the times when it's hot and everyone's complaining about how hot it is. Then they kind of look at you in a way where it's like "oh, we don't know if we should complain in front of her because clearly she has it harder." (Laila, 20, Audio-diary)

In the summer outdoor soccer season, Laila felt that her teammates felt sorry for her because she was covered up while they wore shorts and t-shirts. As they transitioned into the Fall/Winter season, their sport clothing began to resemble hers. Her modest clothes and identity as a Muslim woman became slightly less visible, and made her feel like she belonged with her team. Although the issue of clothing and sport attire has widely been explored in the literature on the experiences of Muslim women, the notion of clothing as a symbolic expression of collective identity has been largely overlooked within a sport team setting. Much of the literature to date has focused on how Muslim women need to modify their sport uniforms to meet religious and cultural expectations. While this was evident in the interviews, participants also spoke of how their uniforms served to highlight the difference between them and their teammates. For young Muslim women who often wear a hijab and add leggings or long-sleeved shirts to their uniform, it may serve as a stark reminder that they are "outsiders" as Laila remarked. This is particularly relevant in light of research that has identified sport uniforms as an important aspect of creating team identity (Slater, Barker, Coffee & Jones, 2015; Biddle-Perry, 2012). Therefore, this theme highlights the need to move beyond focusing on sport attire as a passive barrier for Muslim women engaging in sport and instead reconceptualize clothing and sport uniforms as active symbolic tools that work to create boundaries and construct differences in sport environments.

### 3.4.4 Setting limits on relationships with teammates

It was evident in my interviews with all the participants that their decision to not attend social events they deemed incompatible with their Islamic values was a conscious and unapologetic one. Khadija talked about the relationship her teammates have with each other and stated:

Honestly, the bond they have centres around alcohol ninety percent of the time so I'm not that jealous... Spending that time together celebrating, it does create a little bit more of like a "yeah we're a team" dynamic between the other players, but then also it's like I don't wanna' participate in that to get that. Like if that's the way that I have to be to get that dynamic, I'm not gonna' do that. (Khadija, 19, Interview 2)

Joy echoed this sentiment when she said:

I don't want a social life because to me a social life over here is going out partying and drinking. Like that's not me. I've gone out with my teammates, these kids a couple of times and I just stand there looking at them and I'm like, 'Oh my God. This is what you wanted to do.' (Joy, 26, Interview 2)

The realization that social events revolved around alcohol led to participants expressing that they needed to set clear limits on their relationships with their teammates. Khadija talked about being friends on the court but not necessarily feeling the need to extend that relationship outside of sport:

Like on the court, we do work together. Yeah, we do work together and so it's like, "I'm okay with you." And then off the court I don't distance myself, but I wouldn't go out of my way to just communicate with you. (Khadija, 19, Interview 2)

Mel expressed the same feeling in our first interview when she said:

Basically we're just teammates. That's it. We just meet in the practice and then we just go our separate ways, and we meet in the practice every week. So we don't really know each other outside of the practices. Obviously I have like my one Hijabi friend that we have talked outside of the practice, but that's it. (Mel, 20, Interview 1)

When I asked her to elaborate in our second interview, she stated:

I wouldn't want a personal close relationship with them. Maybe we can practice more, but I wouldn't wanna like get to know them that much, because for me, friends are who you are. Like, whoever you hang around with, that's who you're gonna' be. So, your friends also encourage you and discourage you from stuff. For example, if you have friends that are always like "yo, let's catch salat" [prayer], you're gonna always catch salat. But if you have friends that are like "yo, it's okay, we'll pray at home or

whatever”, and then you’re gonna end up being like who you hang around with. So if I have close non-Muslim friends - I’m not saying they’re bad people, but they don’t have the same things that I have. Like they don’t have prayer five times a day, so they wouldn’t encourage me to pray five times a day. Why would they, when they don’t do it? So why would they want me to do that, right? So it’s just different goals, different paths in life, right? Like I don’t mind being friends with them, but not like my close friends. (Mel, 20, Interview 2)

Mel felt that her relationship with her teammates could not extend off the court because they had different values and priorities in life. Although she did not see a problem with having acquaintances or surface-level friendships with her teammates, she expressed only wanting to closely befriend other Muslim people who will encourage her to practice her faith. She did not believe that her non-Muslim teammates would understand the importance of Islam in her life, and feared that they would lead her further away from her religion.

Sarah also felt most comfortable being friendly with her teammates without needing to consider them “close” friends. She stated:

It’s like how close do I wanna be with them, you know what I mean? Like I feel like they’re all closer to each other but I don’t wanna be their best friend necessarily, you know? I feel like I kind of just wanna go in and I wanna have them respect me for how – like I want them to like me as a person also, but I want them to respect me firstly for how good I am and how hard I work at the sport. But I don’t feel like I really need a relationship with them that extends beyond that. (Sarah, 24, Interview 2)

For Sarah, having the respect of her teammates was the most important thing. She too did not feel that her relationship with her training partners needed to extend outside of the gym. This finding is particularly interesting when considering numerous studies that aim to develop social capital within societies by promoting social integration via sport programming (Maxwell et al, 2013; Palmer, 2009). Although organizations may be using tools such as Bailey’s social inclusion framework (2005) to make spaces more equitable and inviting for Muslim women, it seems that the resulting relationships may not translate outside of those sport spaces. For the young Muslim women in this study, they noted the many exclusionary social activities that their teammates partake in and it has led them to believe that a “close” relationship would not be possible outside of sport. Therefore, social inclusion within sport does not necessarily mean social integration on a societal level.

These findings echo past research on exclusion within the experience of Muslim women but are also reflective of larger patterns of social exclusions within sport. Although sport is often

positioned as a field where individuals are able to build character, gain confidence and learn to work together, sport spaces are often difficult and messy for marginalized populations. Past research has explored how anti-Black racism (Douglas, 2005; Valentine & Darnell, 2012), homophobia (Anderson, 2002), sexism (Krane, 2001), classism (Bruno Massao & Fasting, 2016; Gayles, Comeaux, Ofoegbu & Grummert, 2018) and transphobia (Semerjian & Cohen, 2006; Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2013) produce and exemplify social exclusion within sport spaces. Therefore, it is important to problematize this notion of sport for inclusion, particularly in sport spaces that are based on highly gendered, White, Christian ideals.

## Chapter 4 Social Systems

### 4 Overview

This section will focus more broadly on how the networks of relationships introduced in the last chapter (family, Muslim community, coaches and teammates) are structured and work to shape (or constrain) the sport experiences of the participants. This chapter will illustrate how surveillance (in Muslim and sport spaces) leads to participants modifying their behaviour in order to be socially accepted. Islamophobia and mainstream representations of Muslim women in the media will also be explored to better demonstrate how the participants understand and experience sport in a Western context.

#### 4.1 Surveillance

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ  
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

*And be regular in prayer, and regular in charity: And whatever good you send forth for your souls before you (from this life), you shall find it with Allah: Surely, Allah sees well all that you do. (2:110)*

Within the social context of sport and the relationships that participants had with their parents, family, coaches and teammates, a recurring theme of surveillance was identified. Participants reported feeling seen or under constant surveillance due to wearing the hijab. Sarah said, “I’ve been wearing a hijab since I was nine. So I’m very used to the reactions I get from people and, you know, just feeling kind of seen” (Sarah, 24, Interview 1). When I asked Laila about her transition to wearing the hijab two years ago, she stated, “I feel like now that I started wearing a hijab, I’m a lot more conscious about what it means to be a Muslim woman. And like, how I’m being perceived in different spaces” (Laila, 20, Interview 1). These quotes highlight not only the feeling of being seen or being under surveillance, but also the way in which participants were conscious of other people’s perceptions of them. These quotes also suggest that their perceptions of surveillance differed depending on the spaces that they occupied.

This notion of surveillance is supported by research on Muslim women, South Asian, and “brown” folks in the sport literature and more broadly. The Othering of Muslim women through the association of terrorism with brown bodies and the hijab, in particular, has resulted in experiences of discrimination via surveillance of these bodies in public spaces (Finn, 2011). It is important here to understand that the body can be conceptualized as both a biological entity and a socially constructed phenomenon. As noted in the literature review, the veiled, brown female body serves as a symbolic representation of Islam (Ahmad, 2011). Perhaps for this reason, Muslims, and brown bodies in general, have been unduly subjected to authoritative surveillance in airports, public transportation and online (Finn, 2011). This new Orientalism which positions Islam as violent, anti-democratic and inherently anti-Western may serve to legitimize surveillance of Muslim bodies in public spaces (Hamdon, 2010). Interestingly, this authoritative surveillance is often paired with surveillance by “ordinary” public citizens. Participants of this study reported experiences of this everyday surveillance in sport spaces as well as among the Muslim community.

Foucault’s theories of surveillance are a particularly helpful tool in order to better understand how these young Muslim women experienced and responded to this surveillance. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault builds on Jeremy Bentham’s notion of the Panopticon to describe the function of discipline as an instrument of power (Foucault, 1979). The Panopticon is a circular building with an observation tower in the centre, which allows for increased security by allowing those in power, to effectively monitor everyone in the surrounding building from the central tower. By placing people in a state of constant visibility, the efficiency of the Panopticon is maximized, even when there is no one asserting their power: individuals in the building begin to self-police because they believe they are under surveillance (Foucault, 1979). As Foucault states, the Panopticon serves to “arrange things [so] that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary (Foucault, 1979, pp. 201). It is important to note that the Panopticon is a metaphorical representation of the way power works within society. The Panopticon works to discipline and control large groups of people in a way that is efficient and self-sustaining. As we will explore in the following few sections, the young Muslim women in this study constantly perceived that they were under surveillance in both their Muslim and sport communities. Their persistent social alertness, increased mindfulness,

and “reflection” forced these young Muslim women to self-monitor in order to behave in a socially acceptable manner.

#### 4.1.1 Surveillance in sport spaces

Participants expressed feeling visible and under surveillance when they were in sport spaces. When I asked Khadija to describe her first few sessions working out at the gym at her condo, she stated:

Umm, in the beginning I used to feel it a lot. I was like, “oh my God everyone’s staring at me.” Cause again like workout clothes they’re not exactly the most loose things so everyone could see everything, and I’m not really comfortable with that. (Khadija, 19, Interview 1)

This quote highlights that wearing sport attire heightened her discomfort and feeling of being seen within sport spaces. When I asked her to expand on this feeling, she stated:

It’s off-putting when people stare at you and you don’t really know what they’re staring at you for... and then the anxiety kicks in and you’re like, “ okay I’m just gonna like leave now. I’m just gonna go.” (Khadija, 19, Interview 1)

Similar to Laila, Khadija thought about and questioned the perceptions that others had of her in those spaces by trying to figure out why she was being stared at. She left the gym because she felt that she did not belong in the space and began to feel anxious under the surveillance of other people in the gym. There has been research on South Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants that explores the way in which surveillance works to racialize individuals and reduce their mobility and access to public spaces (Omi & Winant, 1994; Finn, 2011). This was evidenced in Khadija’s experience: feeling under surveillance at the gym made her so uncomfortable that she decided to leave. From her perspective, and perhaps from the perspective of the people who were staring at her, the gym is not a place for Muslim women.

Sarah also discussed this feeling of being under surveillance in sport spaces when she said, “I felt very obvious. I felt like everyone’s looking at me ’cause it was mostly men in the gym, and then, if there were any women, there were definitely no Muslim women” (Sarah, 24, Interview 1). She expanded on this further:

‘Cause I feel like anywhere I go, I’m just viewed more as a hijab than as a girl. You know, I feel like I’d be viewed as a Black woman if I didn’t wear a hijab... The main

thing that people see me as now - I feel like they see me as a hijab. (Sarah, 24, Interview 1)

Therefore, participants felt that they were being watched primarily due to the hijab and their identity as Muslims. It is important to note that “Muslim” often not only indicates a religious identity but also functions as a racial classification that homogenizes people from the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, etc. (Shams, 2018). Ahmed (2011) also describes how within Western nations, racial identity acts as a major identifier of the “other”. In a study that explored the surveillance experiences of college aged South Asian women in the U.S, participants described feeling watched by non-authoritative White Americans (Finn, 2011). The term “non-authoritative” is used to refer to ordinary citizens who are not in positions of relative power or authority. The Muslim women in Finn’s (2011) study felt that being under surveillance marked them as potential terrorists and differentiated them from White Americans. In the present study, Sarah seemed to recognize this, and noted that her identity as a Black woman was essentially negated by her identity as “Muslim”. In essence, being Muslim in the West, and in Eurocentric sport spaces in particular, served to erase other aspects of these young Muslim women’s social and personal identities.

These quotes echo the sport experiences of other non-normative athlete’s experiences. Douglas (2012) describes the way in which Serena and Venus Williams, two Black female athletes in a predominantly White, elitist sport of tennis, have been surveilled by the media in an attempt to observe and control their representation. Through racist and sexist media coverage of their lives, on and off the tennis-court, Serena and Venus have been under the watchful gaze of White tennis association (and fans) to quickly point out any signs of deviancy. This surveillance has also been noted with Black female athletes in collegiate athletes in the United States (Foster, 2003; Lee, Bernstein, Etzel, Gearity & Kuklick, 2018), racialized NBA players (Leonard, 2015) and female rugby players (Chase, 2006). Similar to these other marginalized populations, the participants of this study were cognisant of being under surveillance for trespassing on a space that was not designed for them. This research supports past data but also highlights the unique challenge that these young Muslim women faced as they navigated sexism, racism and Islamophobia in sport.

#### 4.1.2 Surveillance in the Muslim community

The feeling of being under surveillance was also mentioned in relation to the Muslim

community. Mel talked about how she was aware that although no one made direct comments to her, she felt that she was being watched. She stated:

I would wear Adidas pants and stuff, and then umm, no one [in my family or Muslim community] said anything to me directly, but you kind of know they can see it. And you know you're not supposed to wear tight stuff, you know what I mean? So, for example, when I leave the house, I can't leave the house wearing what I play sports in because I have to cover up. Then I can take off my jacket or whatever when I play. So like, no one said anything directly, but like, it's there. (Mel, 20, Interview 1)

Sarah also talked about feeling under surveillance by Muslim neighbours and community members:

I'm also always kind of worried about like who's watching me... Instead of worrying about if Allah is watching me, like I'm just thinking of what neighbour [is]. If I'm ever leaving the house to go to the gym, I always put sweatpants on top of my shorts and leggings because I know that certain neighbours will be like, "Why – What are you wearing blah blah blah?" (Sarah, 24, Interview 1)

It is interesting to note that Sarah juxtaposes this surveillance from her neighbours with the religious belief that she was under surveillance by God. While being watched by Allah is highlighted as important, Sarah expressed her annoyance that her neighbours concerned themselves with her sport attire. This may be due to the understanding that Allah's gaze is one of protection and love, while the gaze of her neighbours was perceived to be one of judgement. Furthermore, choosing Islam means that individuals submit themselves to Allah and willingly choose to be under His surveillance, whereas the surveillance by members of the Muslim community is unwanted and forced upon them. This notion of willingly choosing surveillance as a symbol of their faith but rejecting it when used by other people to restrict their actions may also be understood in relation to Muslim women's decision to wear the hijab. Hamzeh and Oliver's conceptualization of the physical hijab being accompanied by a spatial, ethical, and spiritual hijab in sport may serve as a useful framework to understand this phenomenon (Hamzeh & Oliver, 2012). In that study, the authors conceptualized the hijab as a gendering discourse, which acts as a boundary to constrain Muslim female mobility in public spaces (Hamzeh & Oliver, 2012). While this was evident in the sport experiences of the participants in the current study, it is also important to note that, like their choice to be under the surveillance of Allah, they willingly exercised their agency by wearing the hijab. It would seem that these young Muslim women conceptualized the hijab not only as a boundary that "restricts" them, but one that protects them. The decision to wear the hijab was a symbol of

their faith and relationship with Allah, as was their willingness to be under His surveillance or watch, and the hijab was viewed primarily as a protection rather than a tool to monitor cultural transgressions. Similarly, surveillance by Allah was viewed as protection, whereas surveillance by the Muslim community was experienced as a restrictive force.

In my second interview with Khadija, she talked about how seeing other members of the Muslim community on the street triggered a process of reflection. She stated:

If they're older and, you know, a big beard kind of guy then it kind of serves as the same reminder. I think seeing a physical reminder of your culture or religion helps trigger that reflection. (Khadija, 19, Interview 2)

To Khadija, being under surveillance was not always viewed negatively as she considered it a reminder to think about her Islamic values and reflect on whether she was living up to these values. It is interesting to note that she used an example of an older male figure as a positive reminder of her religion, rather than another female Muslim or Hijabi. In my conversations with Sarah and Laila, they often discounted the surveillance by men, brushing it off as “sexist”. They felt that Muslim men could not understand the complexity associated with wearing the hijab in the West and therefore found it easier to ignore their judgement. They often spoke of surveillance by Muslim women as being more salient in their experiences. Therefore, it seemed that while participants were all aware of surveillance by the Muslim community, their perceptions and reactions to this surveillance differed. This is particularly interesting in light of the profound social support and participation from their fathers that they described. It highlights the heterogeneity of Muslim men’s understanding and attitudes about Muslim, female sport.

Mel also talked about how this surveillance extended to issues of mixing with the opposite gender and sport. She stated:

It's such a taboo subject like mixing and talking to the other gender and stuff. Especially if they saw me playing with guys - if I did that, people would label me, they would call me a “ho”. They would call me a bunch of stuff if I did that. (Mel, 20, Interview 1)

Previous literature on the sport experiences of Muslim women has highlighted the vastly complex issue of mixing between the sexes. While some Muslim women, such as Laila and Sarah, felt comfortable training and playing sport in mixed-sex sport environments, others

were either uncomfortable with or forced to avoid these spaces (Benn et al., 2011). In our interviews Mel stated a desire to play with men, although she noted that members of her Muslim community would not consider this behaviour acceptable. Conservative interpretations of Islamic texts, cultural practices that emphasize the “honour” and reputation of women, in conjunction with increased surveillance of Muslim female bodies prevented Mel from feeling comfortable engaging in mixed-sex sporting environments. Specifically for Mel, her fear did not just lie in being seen engaging in a “unacceptable” behaviour, but that her transgression would stick with her. Therefore, playing sport with men was not worth risking her reputation within the Muslim community for life.

## 4.2 Representing More Than Yourself

مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي تَوَادِهِمْ وَتَرَاحِمِهِمْ وَتَعَاطُفِهِمْ مَثَلُ الْجَسَدِ إِذَا  
اشْتَكَى مِنْهُ عُضْوٌ تَدَاعَى لَهُ سَائِرُ الْجَسَدِ بِالسَّهْرِ وَالْحُمَى

*The similitude of believers in regard to mutual love, affection, fellow-feeling is that of **one body**; when any limb of it aches, the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever.*

*(Sahih Muslim)*

Along with the idea of feeling as though they were under surveillance, participants frequently mentioned how being visibly Muslim meant that they represented more than themselves when they were in public spaces. The hadith above is a quote of the Prophet Muhammad, narrated in a well-known book called Sahih Muslim. In this quote, the Prophet likens the global Muslim community (Ummah) to one body. The understanding here is that regardless of borders, languages, genders, or class, there should be love, compassion and support for one another. Any pain or oppression that one Muslim faces, hurts Muslims everywhere. This beautiful hadith serves to highlight the unity of the Muslim Ummah. However, this unity may prove to be problematic for more visible members of the Ummah, living in politically charged, Islamophobic times. Laila stated, “I’m a lot more aware of the sort of different umm ideas people might already have of me because of being a visible Muslim woman” (Interview 2). Maia also talked about how wearing the hijab affected how she felt she was being perceived by others. She stated:

When you’re identifiably a Muslim - it changes things. Like before I was Hijabi, no

one knew who my parents were sitting on the stands. Obviously, unless they knew me. And no one knew if I was Muslim. I was just a regular girl who wore shorts and t-shirt when I was younger... Then when you start wearing and start playing with it you [begin to] represent more people because you represent a group of people that don't necessarily get that representation all the time, especially in sport. (Maia, 16, Interview 2)

It seems that this notion of identifiability operated on various levels. On a micro-level, the hijab made participants more identifiable as Muslims and subjected them to increased surveillance on a daily basis. On a meso-level, the hijab also made Maia's parents identifiable within the stands and increased her awareness of representing them and other Muslims in the immediate vicinity during her sport competitions. Finally, on a macro level, the hijab resulted in making Maia feel that she represented the Muslim community as a whole due to her identifiability as a Muslim woman.

A recent study explored the metaphorical differences among dominant British culture and British Islamic subculture regarding the hijab by reviewing articles, interviews, and comments from online British newspapers (Allah, 2015). One notable finding was that within the dominant British culture, identity was understood to be "stolen" by the veil (Allah, 2015). While women who wear the full veil (burkah) are described as identity-less, mainstream British media also claim that it is also difficult to tell women who wear the hijab apart from one another (Khir Allah, 2015). In essence, the personal identity of women who wear the hijab, or other forms of the veil, is taken away. The participants of the current study highlighted their awareness of this phenomenon, by noting that once they put on the hijab, they become a "Muslim woman" more so than any other aspect of their personal identities. This was evident in Maia's quote above as she perceived herself to be a representation of her parents and the Muslim community, rather than herself as an individual. This phenomenon was also observed in Sarah's previous quotes when she described being perceived as a Muslim woman rather than a Black woman. As noted by the Quranic verse at the beginning of Chapter Four, Islamic societies emphasize ethnic and racial diversity and a sense of collectivism regarding identity. However, one could argue that contemporary Western societies are more geared towards individualism (MacDonald, 2018). Therefore, although being both Black and Muslim was important to Sarah, she acknowledged that in Western society, she would be seen as representing Islam alone.

Joy also highlighted the feeling of representing the Muslim community when she stated:

Whenever I do stuff on the field, yes I do sometimes question whether situations happen because I am just the way I am, where I am, who I am, coloured or whatever. Or whether it's just part of the sport. (Joy, 26, Interview 2)

Joy talked about how she represented the Muslim community and individuals who are coloured, and she also questioned how other people responded to her in a sport setting. In this particular instance, she was talking about another player being aggressive towards her and not being sure if this player was responding to her as an individual or because she was representative of Islam. In our interviews, she noted a few instances where this aggressive behaviour occurred towards her but she was quick to dismiss it. Interestingly, in another study with female, Muslim participants it was noted that many of the participants rejected some racist or Islamophobic interactions as such and instead attributed them to ignorance (Sibai, 2015). Similar to Joy's experience here, they would dismiss or minimize the negative interactions because it was difficult to always consider themselves as victims of Islamophobia.

Tasnim also talked about the pressure that came with wearing the hijab and feeling like a spokesperson for Islam when she's on the court. She stated:

I feel like sometimes there's a lot of pressure to just represent our whole religion. But it's kind of hard, like I'm just one person... I kind of think of it as a good thing - putting awareness out there too, like showing people [Islam]. It's like killing two birds with one stone. You're playing basketball and then you're also spreading awareness [about Islam]. (Tasnim, 16, Interview 2)

It is interesting to note that Tasnim acknowledged the pressure of the situation but also viewed it positively. Due to the fact that she felt she represented the religion and was under surveillance, she was able to control the narrative and positively spread awareness about Islam. This relationship between surveillance and pushing back against dominant narratives about Islam is supported in the literature. A study on the experiences of young Muslim Americans found that their experiences of surveillance and discrimination affected their identity development (Sirin & Fine, 2008). Many of the participants reported a strengthening of their religious identity and began actively seeking to educate other Americans as an act of resistance to this surveillance and discrimination (Sirin & Fine, 2008).

Participants also pointed out that they felt they were seen as a representation of Islam on and off the court or field. Mel stated, "So umm I think it's the case for everything. Like not only on the court. I'm representing all of my religion, right? So, even when I walk outside. Like, I'm

not only representing myself, right?” (Mel, 20, Interview 2). Sarah echoed this sentiment when she pointed out, “I feel like anywhere I go in life, but also in the Muay Thai community, I feel like I’m representing Muslims” (Sarah, 24, Interview 2). When asked to expand on how she felt about representing an entire religious community rather than simply herself, Sarah stated:

I don’t feel like we’re represented very much, so it’s difficult. I feel like if I’m ever at an event, like fighting, I feel like I have to represent myself well, because there’s no one else to represent Islam, you know? If you act badly there’s no one else to kind of uphold the image of Islam, so it’s your responsibility to be patient, and be a good representation (Sarah, 24, Interview 2).

Once again, the quote highlights how participants felt that they represented the Muslim community at large. Sarah also acknowledged the pressure it placed on her, as she did not feel the Muslim community was often represented well or enough within certain spaces. Thus, it was up to her to positively represent her entire religious community.

### 4.3 Performing Identity: Behaviour Modification in Muslim and Sport Spaces

As participants expressed their awareness of being perceived as representatives of the Muslim community rather than as individuals, they also described how they subsequently modified their behaviours in Muslim and sport spaces. During our discussion about the hijab, Khadija stated:

On a day-to-day basis [the hijab] is kind of for creating that identity for myself. And then in the broader sense it like reminds me to protect myself... That’s why I would never take it off. Even though I have those moments, I would never take it off because it reminds me to protect myself and not do dumb stuff. I don’t remember this on a day to day basis, but thinking back I’m like “oh yeah, the fact that I was wearing [the hijab] and like was conscious of it on me is the reason why I didn’t go with this group of friends to this place. (Khadija, 19, Interview 2)

Khadija described being visibly Muslim and wearing the hijab protected and kept her from going places that were not in line with her identity as a Muslim. She talked about having “weak” moments where she would think about not wearing the hijab, but felt that it served as a moral protection and reminder to act in ways that were Islamically responsible. This is supported by literature on the spatial hijab and the way in which Muslim women avoid spaces that are “forbidden” by Islam due to their decision to wear the hijab (Hamzeh & Oliver, 2012).

Sarah echoed this statement in our second interview when she stated:

[The hijab] like it stopped me from doing things that I would have done that I probably shouldn't have done... I feel like it's prevented me from doing some negative stuff in my life though so I feel like it's something that I appreciate rather than dislike.  
(Interview 2)

It is important to note that most of the participants viewed this behaviour modification, and in many cases restriction, as positive because it kept them in line with what they considered Islamically ethical and moral values. I understood this behaviour modification to be internally imposed as they attempted to behave in ways that were in line with their chosen identity as Muslims, rather than an externally imposed action to placate others. This internally imposed behaviour modification can be understood through Tansin Benn's work on embodied faith. For young Muslim women, embodied faith is reflected by the physical representation of the body but also behaviour, social interactions, and speech that is representative of Islamic values (Benn, 2009). Therefore, these participants who chose to embody their faith by wearing the hijab often thought about and modified their behaviour so that their actions were also in line with their faith.

#### 4.3.1 Performing "good Muslim" in sport spaces

The most frequently cited reason for behaviour modification was to positively represent Islam in public spaces. It seemed that this feeling of being under surveillance and being a representative of the entire religious community caused the participants to modify their behaviour when in public spaces. This was also exemplified in environments where Muslim people were not often present. Sarah stated:

I feel like a lot of the places I've been in my life, like when I used to horseback ride, was like all White people. Or in Muay Thai, there aren't that many Muslims around me. Sometimes there are guys – there's a lot of Muslim guys who do this sport but they're not visibly Muslims. So I feel like I'm one of the only ones in the area that wears a hijab, and so I have to represent and not, you know, do anything crazy and try to be as nice to people as I can, try to show people what Muslims are about with just my actions, you know? (Sarah, 24, Interview 2)

Sarah was conscious of the responsibility she carried as a visible Muslim as opposed to Muslim men who may not be as identifiable. She also illustrates in this quote how she felt she had to be the "nice" Muslim to ensure that people were left with a favourable impression of Muslims. Sarah, in particular, mentioned this notion multiple times throughout both

interviews. Having grown up with her extended family that was non-Muslim, she seemed to be very aware of this pressure. This highlights the heterogeneity of Muslim women's experiences and how diverse cultural backgrounds may lead to differences in how this "responsibility" is understood. It is also important to note in this example that this self-surveillance and behaviour modification was undertaken in response to perceptions about others' expectations of Muslims, rather than arising from a desire to meet their personal, religious or ethical values.

Laila also echoed this sentiment when she talked about her transition to wearing the hijab:

I remember after I started wearing [the hijab], I was so conscious to be really nice. Like I was really worried that I would forget to open the door for someone and they would say something to me and I wouldn't know [how to respond]. And I don't know – I still don't know how I would respond. (Laila, 20, Interview 1)

As evidenced by this quote, Laila felt that she needed to be especially nice to everyone in the public sphere once she became identifiably and visibly Muslim. She also voiced her concern at not being able to properly respond to criticism or potential Islamophobia if someone deemed she was not being "nice" enough.

Mel also talked about the pressure and frustration associated with always having to be kind and respectful so as to represent Islam well, particularly in a sport context. She stated:

It definitely is a lot of pressure. For example, some games, I don't know, maybe a few years ago, I would get really mad and I always want to like yell at the refs or I'd wanna just like talk back and stuff. But then I was like, if I do that, it doesn't just mean that I'm like mad and whatever. It would make my whole religion look bad, like, "Oh, all these Muslims – like they're so mad about everything" or something like that, you know? (Mel, 20, Interview 1)

Therefore, even though she may have been angry at a particular call when playing basketball, she forced herself to modify and moderate her behaviour in order to positively represent Islam. She acknowledged that displaying angry behaviour may not be perceived simply as her reaction but become ascribed to Muslims generally. Therefore, as the "spokesperson" and representative of Islam in that space, she felt she had to behave respectfully and suppress her angry reactions. Therefore, the combination of Islamophobia, Othering and surveillance may work to render young Muslim women silent in sport spaces.

These experiences are supported by Tahseem Shams' (2018) ethnographic data on the experiences of South Asian Muslim women and various Muslim organizations in Los Angeles, California. Through interviews and discourse analysis, she explored the ways in which individuals and collective Muslim communities understood and responded to their hyper-visibility (Shams, 2018). It was noted that Muslim Americans actively engaged in self-policing to avoid being perceived as unwelcome outsiders, threats or generally anti-American (Shams, 2018). This self-policing came in the form of everyday practices to safeguard and prove themselves as innocent, moderate, "nice" Muslims. Similarly to the participants of this study, they felt that they needed to play the role of "model minority" in public spaces. This term, which has been most extensively used in research on the experiences of Asian Americans (Kim, 2014; Lee, 2016) is evident within the sport experiences of the participants of this study. The notion of a model citizen, or more specifically a model minority (as White and/or White-passing individuals are not required to demonstrate or validate their citizenship), refers to the way in which specific, culturally defined communities are pre-positioned through positive stereotypes to achieve success in Western societies (Kim, 2014). For example, seemingly positive stereotypes that Asian Americans are hard workers and highly intelligent positions them as "superior" to other minorities, such as Black Americans, but are still "inferior" to White, Christian citizens (Lee, 2016). This concept of a model minority is highly problematic as it homogenizes large groups of people, ignoring the diverse realities of individuals, and further establishes and solidifies a racial hierarchy (Lee, 2016). For many minority populations however, the status of the model minority is viewed as something to strive for, as being seen as a model minority may decrease the harsh realities of racism that they experience. However, it is important to note that while this approach provides Muslims with some safety in troubling, Islamophobia-filled times, it also renders them silent (Shams, 2018). For the participants in the current study, the fear of being subjected to potential Islamophobia was a source of anxiety which led them to try to portray the image of a model minority, but it ultimately worked to silence them in public spaces.

Participants also spoke about how particular sport spaces amplified their awareness of the need to modify their behaviour to positively represent Islam. In my second interview with Maia, I asked her if she ever felt that she had to modify her behaviour because of her identity as a Muslim woman. She replied:

It honestly depends on what crowd I'm with. If I know I'm in a crowd that doesn't necessarily see Muslims all the time, say I go to Northern Michigan. I'm obviously gonna modify my behaviour there. (Maia, 16, Interview 2)

Maia talked about visiting more rural towns for soccer tournaments and becoming more alert as she interacted with people who may not know many Muslims personally. In those environments, she felt it was more imperative to modify her behaviour to leave a positive impression of Islam that those people may not get otherwise. Once again, the participants of this study illustrated their awareness of being on front-stage and needing to perform their identity as “good” Muslims. They seemed to be high self-monitors and picked up cues from their social surroundings to help guide their performance.

Goffman's analysis of impression management is a particularly useful lens through which to understand these quotes. Goffmanian theory posits that life, and our construction of the self, is a series of performances. Through our body language, our facial expressions, our word choice, our dress, we attempt to control the impressions that other people have of us (Goffman, 1959). These impressions are managed within various contexts and to particular audiences (Goffman, 1959). Due to their perception of being constantly under surveillance, the participants of this study were keenly aware of being on stage and needing to perform their identity at all times. They engaged in self-monitoring and were very attuned to the reaction of others, and they described adjusting their behaviour accordingly to embody the notion of being a “good” Muslim in particular sport settings. Understandably, this behaviour modification occurred depending on their audience.

#### 4.3.2 Performing “athlete” in Muslim spaces

يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّنْ نِّسَاءٍ  
عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَرُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْإِسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ  
بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١١﴾

*“O’ you who have true faith! Do not let men make fun of other men – perhaps they may be better than the other (group of men). Also, do not let women make fun of other women, as it may be that they are better than the other (group of) women. Do not find faults in yourselves and do not defame one another by using bad names. How bad it is after having true faith that a person (does these acts) but does not turn in repentance (to Allah) so then surely it is these*

*people who are the oppressors.” (49:11)*

Participants also described modifying their behaviour when they were among other members of the Muslim community as a way to fit in or avoid judgment. Within one of her audio diary entries, Laila talked about playing with a co-ed Muslim volleyball team for the first time:

It's the first time I'm playing co-ed in so long. So actually playing with guys, when the game's done, that awkwardness of do you shake the other guy team's hands if they're a guy and there's also a sense of, because I don't know the girls too well, I also feel like I'm worried, if I do shake their hands and then they don't, then I might receive some judgement on their end. (Laila, 20, Audio diary)

Although Laila would usually shake hands with the opposing team at the end of a match, she felt uncomfortable because she did not know how she would be perceived by her Muslim teammates. Therefore, she refrained from initiating physical contact with the male players to prevent any negative judgment. In the audio diary she went on to state that the other Muslim girls shook hands with the male players, which then made her feel comfortable to also do so. Thus, behaviour modification occurred in order to behave appropriately while in the presence of other Muslims and to avoid their judgment. This quote highlights that young Muslim women may feel on front stage when they are in their Muslim community. This suggestion is supported by literature that Muslim women in North America negotiate their sense of self in a politically charged context, containing intolerance from both outside and within their communities (Sirin & Fine, 2008). This also highlights Foucault's notion of the panopticon as Muslim women perceive being under surveillance at all times, and are subsequently forced to behave in ways that are socially acceptable to avoid punishment (Foucault, 1979).

Maia also described modifying her behaviour in the Muslim community when she talked about “appropriate” clothing within different Muslim spaces:

If I'm hanging out with my older relatives - I'll wear a longer shirt.... Like, if all my grandmother's sisters and all my aunts and stuff were all wearing the traditional clothes and I walk in in a tight shirt and skinny jeans, which I don't, but like say I did - that would look different and that would just attract more attention. So I definitely think that girls who wear hijab know this. And they're like, “Okay, if you're going to this person's house you can wear stuff between this and this. And if you're at this person's house then it's okay, they're a bit more chill. (Maia, 16, Interview 1)

In this quote, Maia talked about an unspoken rule among Hijabis regarding attire. More traditional and modest clothing were deemed acceptable around certain family members,

particularly older relatives, whereas more form-fitting clothing was not acceptable. It is interesting that Maia felt that modifying behaviour in this regard was important to avoid attracting “more” attention. For these young women, who often felt that they were under surveillance, avoiding additional attention seemed preferable whenever possible.

Participants often felt that their sport identity directly increased the judgement they experienced by members of the Muslim community. When asked about how people reacted to her fighting, Sarah said that her identity as an athlete, and specifically as a fighter, opened her up to a lot of criticism from other Muslims:

I’ve had it said a few times to me outside of my Muay Thai that I shouldn’t be training, and I shouldn’t post videos and stuff on Instagram because it could prevent me from getting a husband, “No man is gonna want a woman who’s that aggressive.” (Sarah, 24, Interview 1)

The criticism Sarah faced came from people she knew personally as well as strangers online. When asked to elaborate on this criticism, she mentioned that other Muslims were quick to provide advice because they think they can help. However, she also said “A lot of times I’ve been advised by people who I know have good intentions, but their way of talking is really negative and it doesn’t actually inspire you to do anything differently” (Sarah, 24, Interview 1). Although she acknowledged that the comments about an inability to get a husband because she fights were “ridiculous”, she believed that people were trying to look out for her. In addition to illustrating the online surveillance that these young Muslim women experienced, this quote highlights the gendered way in which they navigated sport. As a Muay Thai fighter, Sarah was participating in a sport that transgressed cultural ideals of femininity. The aggressive nature of fighting was deemed to masculine and therefore held repercussions regarding future marriage prospects. As the family is central to Islamic life, this was viewed as an important concern. This supports past research, which has noted parents’ fear of masculinization when their Muslim daughters participated in sport (Walseth, 2006a). However, it is important to note that Sarah mentioned being extremely proud of being strong and “aggressive”. She also stated, “If a man is intimidated my being strong, then why would I want him?” (Sarah, 24, Interview 1).

Joy also talked about the comments she received from Muslim neighbours in Dubai when coming home from soccer practice: “So when I go for soccer or whatever in my shorts and

come back and everyone is like you know, ‘Oh haram, why are you walking around showing people’ You know, that kind of thing” (Interview 1). Even before she wore the hijab, her neighbours reprimanded her for showing more skin than they deemed acceptable in her soccer shorts. Joy also talked about how her family members would try to get her to wear more feminine clothes instead of her sport attire:

Even when I go back home and I would be in my jeans and stuff, my aunts would all be like, “Why are you always wearing jeans, why don’t you wear a dress” and I’m like “I don’t want to. Like you can buy them for me, I’m not gonna wear them. I’ll wear them if we’re going for Jumaa or something but that’s it.” Obviously, I’m not gonna walk into the mosque with jeans on, but I’m not going to walk around the house with [a dress] when at any moment in time my cousin can call me and say there’s soccer outside. I’m not gonna be good running around in a dress. (Joy, 26, Interview 1)

She would often conform to wearing more feminine clothes when going to the mosque for Jumaa (Friday prayers) but wanted to wear clothes that were more comfortable and conducive to playing soccer. Joy frequently described her extended family’s frustration with her clothing in both of her interviews. Once again, it seemed that the Muslim community heavily monitored and surveilled young Muslim women for any sign that they were transgressing cultural and/or religious boundaries.

Laila also described how she faced criticism within the Muslim community due to her sport attire: “At mosque once, I was praying and my pants – I guess my pants had rolled up and someone said something to me... [They were] a little bit condescending about it” (Laila, 20, Interview 2). Although Laila understood that the individual in question was trying to let her know that her lower leg was exposed, she felt that their condescending tone implied that she did not understand her religion or the fact that she needed to cover her legs to the ankle when praying. As Laila often describes herself as “White-passing”, she also felt that this woman assumed that she was a new convert to Islam or somehow less knowledgeable because she was White.

Mel described the criticism she has faced in the Muslim community in relation to the clothes she wore when playing basketball. However, she was also quick to point out that it was a symptom of a larger problem, regarding judgement and strict clothing guidelines in the Muslim community:

A lot of people are taking it off, the hijab... I think society like, the Muslim community for example, they put too much pressure, like ISNA [Islamic Society of North America] for example. Either you wear an abaya or that's it... So then when people wear skinny jeans or something, they're like "oh what are you doing? That's hijab and skinny jeans? You can't do that." So then they feel discouraged. They just take off the whole hijab, like, "okay I'm not even wearing it right I might as well take it off so that I don't make the Muslims look bad" or whatever. (Mel, 20, Interview 1)

It is important to note that Mel went to an Islamic middle school and high school, and she often talked about the pressure she felt to wear an abaya and more modest clothing. This extended into her sport experience and contributed to her decision to stop playing sport for a number of years. She talked about how she felt she could not wear modest enough clothing when competing and receiving comments about how form fitting they were which led her to feeling discouraged. In the quote above, she highlighted that this was not simply an issue for female Muslim athletes, but for Muslim girls more generally who feel they do not live up to traditional Muslim standards of modesty. While Sarah shrugged off the potential impact that competing would have on her reputation, and ability to find a partner, Mel took this much more seriously and refused to engage in behaviours that transgressed these cultural boundaries.

#### 4.4 Out of Place

The final theme, related to identity, that the participants of this study described was feeling out of place. As Mel stated in our second interview "We have a lot of ridicule and judgement from the non-Muslim community, but from the Muslim community as well. So it's like you can never really win" (Mel, 20, Interview 2). It seemed that surveillance, the need to represent more than oneself, and the complicated tensions between their identities as Muslims and athletes resulted in feelings of alienation in both sport and Muslim contexts. In my first interview with Laila, she talked about her experiences belonging to these different communities and said, "I think that I always kind of had to prove that I was the same. I always kind of had to prove to everyone - maybe I'm kind of getting tired of that" (Laila, 20, Interview 1).

Specifically, feeling out of place was most commonly described in relation to their sport community. Khadija talked about feeling out of place in her early experiences at the gym when she was "trying out" her sport identity:

I'm always the only one. I mean the ratio of guys to girls is pretty huge. And then add the fact that I'm a Hijabi and then it's like oh she's the only one here. (Khadija, 19, Interview 1)

Tasnim, who was been playing rep basketball for years, talked about how the feeling of being out of place has lessened but she is still aware that her presence draws attention:

I kind of think whenever I go on for the first time in a game ... it's just a subconscious thing that's like, "Oh people are just gonna like see you for the first time." And obviously, you're gonna stand out. (Tasnim, 16, Interview 2)

Mel also talked about being the odd one out in her basketball team, despite being friendly with her teammates: "Even though I'm still like friends with everyone on the team- I still stand out a lot. So they don't treat me differently. But I just like feel like the odd one out, right?" (Mel, 20, Interview 2)

Joy also talked about feeling very visible and out of place when she said:

So along with the nerves that come before the start of the game, I always feel like the oddball, you know? I'm stepping on the field with all this gear on me, you know? I've got my hijab on, I've got my tights on. The long sleeves, everyone has the long sleeves, but you know like - I'm always a little conscious in the beginning but then once the game starts it's like, 'You know what, whatever, you know?' (Joy, 26, Interview 2)

Similarly to Tasnim, Joy talked about becoming more comfortable when the game started and she can focus on being an athlete. However, she cannot help but feel different and on display. This feeling of being uncomfortable on the field is especially interesting in Joy's case because she has been competing in soccer for most of her life and has played at an elite level. She considered soccer one of the most important aspect of her life, yet she still begins each game feeling like an "oddball." These quotes illustrate how identity and exclusion based on identity are dynamic constructs, and how belonging to a particular group changes depending on the context. When training or practicing with their team, participants' identities as athletes take centre stage and they often do not perceive any conflict. However, when stepping out to play at the beginning of a game, they become more aware of the different positions and multiple identities they carry. The audience, the crowd, serves to highlight the multiple roles that they need to simultaneously perform. The athlete, the Muslim woman, the model minority. They are forced to negotiate different aspects of identities that are constructed within specific discourses and are meant to be performed to different audiences (Ramadan, 2004; Goffman,

1959). This experience seems to highlight the differences between their teammates and themselves and contribute to their feeling like an “odd ball”.

In addition to talking about how they felt out of place in their sport community, participants also talked about not fitting in with their Muslim community. For example, Laila said:

I also go to a mosque with a very Indian and East African community. And so like, I also really feel out of place there a lot of the time. But I really enjoy going to the mosque and being a part of that. So I like push myself to go, but I still – I am very aware that people are like looking at me, especially if I go with my mom, that you know, we look different. (Laila, 20, Interview 1)

Laila talked about being half-White, half-Indian, and feeling out of place at her mosque because she is White-passing. She also expressed her discomfort growing up in a White neighborhood and feeling that she did not completely fit in there because she was Muslim. In the following quote she discussed this complicated tension:

Actually in grade ten we had to do a project that we make a slogan for a life challenge we went through or something. And I remember I chose, “Buried between two worlds” or something very melodramatic like that. Basically me realizing I have all these really different parts of my life. Like, two very different families, two parents who came from very very different backgrounds and understandings of the world. And sort of trying to reconcile all these pieces of my identity. (Laila, 20, Interview 1)

Sarah echoed this sentiment of always feeling out of place, but she did so in a positive light. This last quote highlights and sums up the complex reality at living at the intersection of competing identities:

I’m half white, half black, and my mom is white. She’s the one that I’ve always like looked up to the most in life - But she has had a very different life than me, because she was white and Catholic until she turned 30. So she doesn’t know what it’s like to be a Muslim teenager, a Muslim child and a Muslim young adult. And I’m not black, and I’m not white, so I’ve never felt like I fit in exactly with white people or black people. Then I went into Muay Thai, and I was one of the only girls, one of the only girls who wanted to fight, and then I’m a Hijabi. So I just have always kind of felt out of place, so I’m comfortable feeling out of place. (Sarah, 24, Interview 2)

All these quotes highlight the way in which these young Muslim women felt alienated and dissimilar from both their sport and Muslim communities. In Durkheim’s description of anomie, individuals experience unhappiness, stress and unrest when there is a weakening of social bonds and the collective conscience of the social group (Durkheim, 1897). This

collective conscience refers to the ideological values, beliefs and norms of a social group (Durkheim, 1897). For Muslim women, this alienation can be understood in two contexts. Firstly, the participants of this study continuously referred to differences in values and ideological differences between themselves and their sport communities. Social activities that contained alcohol, visibly looking different due to alterations to sport uniforms, and being asked to leave a game due to wearing the hijab all contributed to participants' feelings of weakened social bonds and belonging to their sport team. Participants also felt dissimilar from their ethnic and religious communities due to their sport involvement. As athletes, they sometimes dressed and engaged in behaviours that were considered taboo by their Muslim communities. For example, wearing leggings to practice or engaging in aggressive sports like Muay Thai were deemed problematic in the Muslim community. Similar to the idea of organic solidarity, the Muslim community in Canada is extremely complex which has led to a decrease in the collective conscience of the Ummah (Durkheim, 1897). As these young Muslim women are performing roles that were not traditionally held in the Ummah, they begin to experience alienation from the community as they struggle to maintain a social bond with their community. For the participants of this study, it appeared that they were experiencing alienation as they challenged what it means to be an athlete in a Western sport context and what it means to be a Muslim woman in the Ummah.

#### 4.5 Islamophobia

يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

*“O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient.” (Qur’an, 2:153)*

Participants reported that issues of Islamophobia and a negative portrayal of Islam in the West affected their sport experiences, and it is important to situate the participants' experience within these experiences that occurred in the broader context of their lives. Joy recounted an Islamophobic event that occurred with a teammate after a social event:

She was really, really drunk. So I'm like, “Okay, let's go, I'm taking you home.” Put her in my car, I dropped her to the station and then one of my teammates went with her. Then, in the night, everyone was talking about, ‘I hope everyone got back okay.’ And

and then [the drunk teammate that I dropped off] said “Yeah, thanks to the Muslim terrorist ‘that dropped me home. I got home okay. Thanks.” Something like that and she used a bunch of profanity in there. And I’m thinking, “where did that come from?” So my friends started texting me, like the other people on the team. This was in the group chat, right? So, they started texting me on the side like, “Are you okay?” I’m like, “Yeah, I’m fine she’s drunk. Just leave her. It’s not, like, she’s not affecting me. She is what she is.” And she’s like the whitest of white like she’s from- Sudbury and she’s just used to small town, you know? (Joy, 26, Interview 1)

Despite this blatant Islamophobic attack, Joy was quick to make excuses for her teammate. Once again, it seems that these young Muslim women found it easier to ignore Islamophobic speech and practices than address them full on and have to deal with the consequences. It may also be that it is easier to downplay these hurtful comments than assuming the role of victim or acknowledging the pain that these comments cause. It is important to note that Joy was a recent immigrant to Canada and assumed that these Islamophobic comments were “normal” for Muslims in the West. She recounted her experience with a summer placement:

The office was here and we had the shop out back, where trucks would park. On the corner of the complex, there was an Islamic school - and the teachers were all in their hijabs... They would wear their abayas and they would have their ninjas on. And [my supervisor] found it absolutely ridiculous. I found myself having lots of conversations with them about it, I was like “Yes, it’s a little extreme - but it’s what they’re comfortable with. This is where it comes from. It’s about being modest you cover this blah blah blah”. So I was like I was giving them these Islamic lectures almost every other day.... I would be out with these other white guys during our lunch break, when we were not doing stuff, we’d sit at the back of the truck and they’re eating. And they’re like, “Would you like something?” I’m like, “No no no, I’m good,” because it’d be like meat and stuff... Then Ramadan kicked in. And I couldn’t eat and they’re like, “Why are you doing this to yourself? Have some water it’s really hot outside.” I’m like, “I know it’s summer, I can feel the heat. Thank you. But I can’t, this is why I’m doing this blah blah blah”. So I felt like that year was a test for me. (Joy, 26, Interview 1)

This placement experience occurred during her first year in Canada. For Joy, she felt that she had to assume the role of patient educator to the older White men that she worked with. She felt that it was her responsibility as a Muslim to be patient and kind when dealing with their ignorance and intolerance. It is interesting that she described this experience as a “test” for herself. As noted in the Quranic verse at the beginning of this section, being able to deal with injustice and hardship while maintaining patience and dignity is a fundamental value of Islam. Therefore, Joy began to understand her role as a Muslim woman in the West as an educator, which aligns with her Islamic values but also the need to be the model citizen in her new

country. The participants of this study seem to adopt this role as educator in sport settings, even in the face of Islamophobic incidents with teammates, coaches and referees.

For Laila, talking about Islamophobia was difficult because she did not know what could be considered an Islamophobic incident. She recalled a moment where her father was asked to speak on a panel about Islamophobia:

When my dad was preparing for the talk the night before, I was saying, “You know, [Islamophobia] is more implicit” and he was like, “Yeah, okay.” And I know my dad has faced Islamophobia. He just like constantly pretends like he hasn’t. ... I was like, “Dad, your speech was such BS... ‘Cause I know you have like bosses that have been racist, I know you experienced that.” But he’s like, “Yeah, but if I say something and my boss gets a hold of that, like that’s my company, that’s my reputation, so I can’t say anything”. [People in the audience] knew that my dad was a panelist and they were asking me like, “Oh, so how do you experience Islamophobia?” And I felt like they were waiting for [something blatant]. But I think the way that – not just Islamophobia, but any sort of discrimination that usually works in Canada, is more like subliminal, more implicit. (Laila, 20, Interview 2)

As Laila had started wearing the hijab only two years ago, she was keenly conscious of the different and often subtle ways that people began to treat her differently. This echoes previous literature which has explored the way in which the veil makes Muslim women, particularly in Western societies, more susceptible to targeted victimization due to their hypervisibility (Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012). This victimization occurs in the form of verbal or even physical assaults that target an individual’s “core identity”. It is interesting to note that despite her frustration with her father for not calling out and condemning racist and Islamophobic comments as such, she was often quick to discount Islamophobic events in her own life. When recounting an instance where a soccer opponent kept giving her dirty looks and making rough plays, she stated, “You can’t assume someone was mean to you because they know you’re Muslim, but you can’t assume that they weren’t either” (Laila, 20, Interview 1). There has been some evidence in the literature on Muslim women in the West that describes the way in which individuals protect themselves from the painful reality of discrimination they are facing by downplaying or minimizing these incidents (Sibai, 2015). This serves as a defense mechanism and allows individuals to explain away Islamophobic events as a result of ignorance or fear rather than discriminatory xenophobia and hatred. Or, in Laila’s case, to focus on the possibility that the aggressive behaviour was not a result of her identity as a Muslim. When I asked her on how she responded to these looks, comments and aggressive

behaviour that she has begun experiencing since wearing the hijab, she commented:

I still don't know what the appropriate response is for me. Like, should I ignore it? But I feel like ignoring it isn't like addressing it. But to address it, I don't want to escalate it. (Laila, 20, Interview 1)

Laila was very cautious about addressing Islamophobia in her day-to-day life because she was worried about confrontations getting out of hand. She was also aware that as a Muslim woman, under surveillance, she needed to be the model citizen. Once again, it seemed that a culture of surveillance and a need to prove oneself to be the innocent or unthreatening Muslim citizen in the West rendered young Muslim woman silent and powerless in the face of adversity.

Khadija recounted an incident where a man stopped her mother at a line in Starbucks:

She was in line for Starbucks and this guy kept glancing at her apparently, and then he was like "oh nice weather isn't it?" And my mom's like "yeah, it was, it's amazing weather". And then he fully turns to her, he was behind and then he fully comes around and he was like "oh, I'm not supposed to talk to you otherwise your husband or your brother will come and kill me." He was a fairly older man and so she knew she couldn't rant, and so she had to take it step by step and be logical with his arguments. (Khadija, 19, Interview 1)

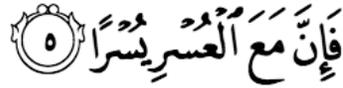
Once again, in the face of Islamophobia, these Muslim women forced themselves to be patient and educate the individuals who were attacking them. Khadija, an international student, noted that despite understanding the need to be level-headed because she did not believe people in Canada were as accustomed to Muslim people, she did not think she would have been able to remain calm in that moment. Although she had "weird" conversations and comments from teammates about Islam, she did not believe she had ever faced obvious Islamophobia. She did note that she has had positive comments from strangers:

I've also had a positive experience after the Manchester attacks, six months ago I think. Some guy came up to me and my cousins and my sisters while we were at Shoppers and he was like, "just so you know, you are welcome here, you're part of the community." (Khadija, 19, Interview 1)

It is interesting to note that although the comments were kind, they still serve to highlight the tension that exists for Muslim women in the West. Strangers understand that women who wear the veil are publicly labelling themselves as Muslim in a time where that identification leaves them susceptible to victimization (Afshar et al., 2005). Although people may be making kind gestures to make Muslim women feel more "welcome", doing so further highlights their

Otherness in public spaces.

## 4.6 Safety



*Indeed, after hardship there is ease. (94:6)*

Participants were often very cognisant about issues of safety. They understood that veiling in Western societies rendered them more vulnerable to victimization. Khadija talked about her fear of coming to Canada as an international student. She explained that she felt safer back home in Dubai:

[I felt] safer, yeah. I mean, physically. I could walk around the mall and be one hundred percent more comfortable because I know that no one's gonna step out of line. And the authorities would back me up in two seconds. Here, I mean I'm on my own a lot more here, which also adds to that whole, in general, scared-ness. (Khadija, 19, Interview 2)

It is interesting that for some participants, including Khadija, sports culture was considered an inherently unsafe environment. Khadija stated:

With sports, my mom's like "just be careful." 'Cause there's that whole sports culture that she is aware of and doesn't really like. For example, in hockey, there's a reputation that comes with the players and she wants me to like steer clear of that. She knows I'm on a co-ed team and the majority of them are guys and she just says, "be careful" because as a girl, that in itself is crazy. I'm a pretty small girl and then add to the fact that I'm a Muslim Hijabi, that kind of ups the stakes and the chances of something bad happening, like a bad experience or a rival team member coming up to me and not being the politest. That just ups the chances of that. (Khadija, 19, Interview 1)

For Khadija and her mother, there were multiple layers of safety issues that needed to be addressed in sport. As a woman, there was a fear of sexualisation and sexual violence that Khadija and her mother associated with Western sport culture. When combined with potential Islamophobia and a sport environment of hockey that was perceived to promote aggressive behaviour and a culture of drinking, sport was deemed as an unsafe place for Muslim women. This speaks to broader issues of violence and sexualisation of women in sport (Frisby, 2017). However, this research contributes to that work by demonstrating the intersection of Islamophobia and Orientalization that these women also experience when navigating sport

spaces. This also highlights the way in which media coverage that provides a sexualized portrayal of sport, and stresses high visibility of the female body, may work to drive Muslim women away from mainstream sport. The fear of safety issues can lead to parental withdrawal of support.

Although Maia did not understand sport as an unsafe venue in general, she did note that she became heavily aware of safety issues when travelling for sport tournaments:

For [directions], like I lean more towards [asking] women as opposed to men, just because of the nature. And I know women can be racist too - But I'd rather ask like a young girl or like a teenager that maybe looks my age or in her twenties. As opposed to asking like, a forty year old man in Northern Michigan (Maia, 16, Interview 2).

Maia would often avoid asking middle aged, White men for directions or instructions because she felt unsafe. It is interesting to note that despite her admission that anyone could potentially be racist, she backtracked and stated that this may just be her perception and a result of her heightened awareness of being an outsider in certain spaces. Again, participants hesitated to call out Islamophobia or racism, but still behaved in ways that illustrated their awareness of this reality.

Perhaps the most striking feature of living with systemic Islamophobia was the nonchalant manner in which the participants recounted their experiences. Joy shrugged off her teammate calling her a terrorist, laughing it off as a silly, unimportant moment. Tasnim passingly remarked about a previous coach questioning her choice to wear the hijab. Laila considered it normal to be vigilant and practice arguments should an Islamophobe berate her about her identity as a Muslim woman. For these young Muslim women, feeling unsafe and facing Islamophobia in sport spaces was accepted as normalized in the current social and political climate.

As stated in the literature review, the experiences of Muslim women in the West are complicated due to geopolitical and ideological discourses that frame them as “other” and “alien” (Yegenoglu, 1998; Chakraborti & Zembpi, 2012). These alienating and potentially violent discourses are integral in understanding the lived experiences of Muslim women in the West. An examination of the sport experiences of Muslim women in the West cannot be adequately conducted if removed from this broader understanding. These Islamophobic encounters that occurred both in and out of sport settings, influenced how the participants of

this study understood their place in the West and consequently conducted themselves in public. For many of the participants, such as Joy and Laila, negative past experiences pushed them to be the moderate educator and model citizen. When interacting with teammates, coaches and referees, these young Muslim women were consciously on guard and prepared to defend themselves from Islamophobic attacks.

## 4.7 Muslim Women in the Mainstream Media

A final theme that was identified as contributing to the women's sport experiences was the representation of Muslim women in the mainstream media. For the participants of this study, the way Muslim women were represented was a source of frustration. Sarah highlighted her dissatisfaction with being used as a tool to demonstrate a nation or often a corporation's "multiculturalism":

In the media, I feel like Muslim women are treated as - I can't think of the word I want to use, but it's like when they want to display multiculturalism, throw a Hijabi in there. Like in a commercial or whatever. In the Cover Girl commercials, where it's like, "We're all about multiculturalism", and there is a gay guy wearing their mascara, and a Hijabi wearing the mascara. We're shown as some symbol of multiculturalism, you know and nothing else. Like no, we're not athletes, we're not businesswomen, lawyers or anything else. We're just multicultural. (Sarah, 24, Interview 1)

Although Sarah thinks there has been a subtle increase in the representation of Muslim women in mainstream media, she noted that this portrayal is flat and does not adequately cover the diverse roles and social identities that Muslim women hold. As noted in the results of this study, there is a great deal of heterogeneity in the experiences of Muslim women, although Muslim women are often portrayed as a homogeneous group in research and in the media. Sarah also felt that Muslim women were being used by companies to gain economic and social capital, rather than a sincere desire to give them a platform. She went on to state: "I don't go looking for Muslim women in the media" (Sarah, 24, Interview 1).

Laila echoed this sentiment when she stated:

I feel like media is trying to do a better job of being more politically correct and trying to be more inclusive. I don't know if they're genuine in that, but I think they're trying. And I follow a lot of social media that is more inclusive and so it represents Muslim women in a more positive light. But I think traditionally, and like growing up, ... I don't know why Muslim women would be on news story other than you might see for something to do with terrorism. Like there wasn't really – There's never really any

Muslim women in movies or TV shows that you watch. (Laila, 20, Interview 1).

Once again, participants were quick to acknowledge that mainstream media was “trying” to provide more representation of Muslim women, but they seemed distrustful of the intentions behind doing so. For Laila, the xenophobic, Islamophobic, and Orientalized portrayals of Muslim women as oppressed or terrorists was much more commonplace and salient and she had a difficult time coming up with a scenario where she would see Muslim women portrayed in any other way. She noted that a lack of representation regarding Hijabi athletes in the media affected her own opinions on Muslim athletics. In one of her audio diaries, she stated:

This week, I was at a dodgeball tournament and it was me and my team – I was the only Hijabi here, and it’s a packed tournament... It was kind of just like, “Oh, that’s kind of crappy.” I was just thinking there’s no way that every single Muslim girl is bad at sports. Or like doesn’t wanna do sports. There’s no way. (Laila, 20, Audio-diary)

The idea that Muslim women are inherently incompetent or “bad at sports” is a frequently used trope within sport media coverage. In the media analysis of the London 2012 games, it was noted that sport journalists in the West often focused on Hijabi athletes who were novices in their sport to demonstrate how they were “out of place” (Samie & Sehlkoglou, 2015). This study referenced an article in the Chicago Tribune entitled: “You Shaherkani, You Go, Girl . . . But not too far!” and a National Post article which referred to one of the Hijabi Saudi athletes as a “naïve kid” (Samie & Sehlkoglou, 2015). This representation of Hijabi athletes as incompetent serves to perpetuate the idea that sport is not a space for Muslim women and the idea that being a Hijabi athlete is an oxymoron. For the young Muslim participants in the current study who already described feeling out of place in sport, this misrepresentation is even more hurtful and damaging.

Samie and Sehlkoglou’s (2015) analysis of mainstream media coverage at the London 2012 Olympic games found that in addition to Orientalist, Islamophobic and nationalist framings of Muslim women competing at the games, the plain “desire to see” was an argument used by media outlets in objection to the hijab. The following is a direct quote from a conversation on BBC Radio 4 that occurred with the lead author:

JM: “When will we see Muslim women running in the courts without veils?”

<sup>1</sup><sub>SEP</sub>Sehlkoglou: “We already did” (alluding to more than a dozen Muslim women who competed without head veils).

JM: “I mean, Saudi women . . . when will we see them running without veils?”

Sehlikoglu: “Why do you want to see them without the veil?”  
 JM: “So that they will look like everyone else.”

As the authors noted, this argument against the hijab has nothing to do with safety or feminist readings of the veil as oppressive (as is usually the case). This is simply a yearning to see Muslim women without their hijab so that they are more “normal” and familiar to Western audiences. This has profound implications because these young Muslim women desire media representation that adequately reflects their lived experiences as athletes, rather than an Orientalized and fetishized image of what dominant western media expects of Muslims.

However, not all participants viewed the media representation of Muslim women negatively. For example, Mel appreciated seeing recent Nike commercials featuring Muslim women and was looking forward to purchasing the Nike hijab:

They’re starting to show more representation, like the Nike pro hijab. I don’t know if that’s just for some opening, like demographics for business or what, but I don’t mind it. (Mel, 20, Interview 1)

Although she acknowledged that although Nike’s intentions may be profit driven, she viewed the change as a good one overall because it had the potential to bring more attention to Hijabi athletes. She also explained that although she did not like the design of the Nike hijab, she would buy one to encourage them to continue providing hijabs and modest clothing options for Muslim women. However, it is important to note that Muslim companies such as Capsters, Asiya Sport, and Raqtive have been creating sport hijabs, swimwear, and attire for over ten years.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

### 5 Conclusion

#### 5.1 General

The purpose of this research study was to explore how young Muslim women who wear the hijab experience inclusion or alienation within their sport involvement in Canada. The specific research questions addressed were: 1) How do young Muslim women negotiate their identity in relation to their sport involvement? 2) How does social support, or lack thereof, from teammates, coaches, and parents affect the sport experiences of young Muslim women? and 3) How does the place of Islam in the West affect the ways in which young Muslim women navigate their sport experiences in Canada?

The findings demonstrated that athletes often experienced inclusion and alienation from both their sport and Muslim communities. The participants of this study often described feeling out of place as they tried to negotiate their identities as Muslims in sport spaces and as athletes in Muslim spaces. As analyzed through a Durkheimian lens, the young Muslim women who participated in this study experienced alienation from their sport and Muslim communities as they challenged the boundaries and norms of those communities (Durkheim, 1897).

Differences in values, ideas, and behaviours led to a weaker collective conscience and identification with both communities. Interestingly however, sport was also reported as a catalyst to increase feelings of inclusion in the Muslim community, when carried out in ways that conformed to Islamic values and standards. Therefore, it seems that for these participants, their sport involvement led to feelings of both inclusion and alienation in their respective communities.

Regarding social support, parental influence was shown to be an integral source of support and influence for these young Muslim women. As reported by previous literature, parents served a key decision-making role in the lives of Muslim women regarding their sport experiences (Kay, 2006). However, the parents of participants of the current study were all avid supporters of sport and physical activity. They provided their daughters with emotional and instrumental support to ensure they were able to pursue their goals in sport. Many of these parents were also physically active, which may influence their decision to push their daughters into sport. For

first generation immigrants and people from lower socioeconomic classes, sport is often viewed as a luxury and a potential waste of time when juxtaposed with school or work life (Benn, 1998). Many of the participants in the present study had parents who were second-generation immigrants and/or had the financial resources available to participate in sport programs outside of school. This research study has extended previous literature on the social support of young Muslim women and demonstrates how Muslim parents negotiate supporting their daughter's in non-normative sport spaces. Future research should involve parents and caregivers to better understand their feelings about sport participation as well as the barriers and facilitators they face when supporting their children's activities.

The participants of this study had very complex relationships with their non-Muslim teammates. For some of the younger participants, especially those whose parents were very involved with their sport team life, the relationship was easy and extremely important to their sport experience. They considered their teammates to also be friends, and one participant even described them as her "sisters". Other participants described their relationship as friendly and important to their success as a team, but were conscious of differences in religious values and social activities outside of sport. Team social events that involved alcohol or nightclubs were often cited as reasons why participants felt excluded and unsure that they could maintain a close relationship, outside of a sport setting. It is important to note that participants' decisions around developing relationships with their teammates was driven by their Islamic values. This has profound implications for research and sport organizations that aim to promote social integration through sport (Spaaij, 2015; Walseth, 2008). Islamic values shape the way many Muslim women, and the participants of this study in particular, participate in sport. Although Muslim women may build relationships through sport that can help foster social inclusion in particular communities, they are unwilling to give up their values and beliefs to become more integrated in Western societies. Therefore, it may be more beneficial to address and highlight the diversity of values that exist within Western sport and societies and promote inclusion rather than "integrate" religious and ethnic minorities into a Western sport structure.

The experience of surveillance within sport and Muslim communities proved to be one of the most significant findings of this study. Participants often described their actions and behaviour modification in relation to others, and their awareness of being under surveillance was central to their performative identity. I use that term purposefully, for their identity often was a fluid

and dynamic performance. Participants would prepare for their roles by choosing the appropriate outfit, deciding on the suitable setting, and even rehearsing potential arguments in case of Islamophobic encounters. They perceived being under surveillance in all aspects of their daily functions but it became even more pronounced in sport spaces. The dominant, Western sport culture for them is one that they understood as emphasizing high visibility of the body, alcohol consumption, and mixing between the sexes – all issues which are highly contested and frowned upon in Islamic cultures. For Muslim women, issues of surveillance became more intense and significant as they tried to navigate these sport spaces and prove they were Western enough to be accepted by their teammates, referees, and coaches. They also simultaneously needed to prove they were Muslim enough by not transgressing religious or cultural boundaries set by their parents and community.

Issues of gender normativity in sport played a central role in how participants understood, and challenged, their identity as sporting women. It is important to note that these issues of hypersexualization of women's bodies and the fear of masculinization are not unique to the Muslim population. It is well noted in the sport literature that women more generally deal with sexism in sport as their athletic contributions are often trivialized or sexualized. However, Muslim women are uniquely positioned as they deal with oppressive forces of Islamophobia, racism, and patriarchal interpretations of Islam, in addition to sexism from a mainstream, Western perspective. As visibly Muslim women, their experience of sexism becomes more complicated as we begin to consider the Orientalized, politicized, and racialized nature of the hijab. In a recent study, Samie (2018) highlighted how the same issue of revealing sport uniforms were simultaneously portrayed as an issue of sexism when reported by White, Western women, and as an issue of problematic, restrictive Islamic principles when reported by Muslim women. Therefore, it is clear that Muslim women athletes face a unique challenge in Western sport spaces. As stated in the beginning of this thesis, no discussion on the experience of Muslim women in sport can be had without considering the status of Islam in the West. The participants' narratives of this study frequently demonstrated how Orientalized assumptions of Muslim women as simultaneously oppressed and weak, yet enticingly dangerous by their association with Islam, affected their lived experiences. In sport settings, they attempted to show their strength and athletic prowess while being aware of surveillance and the need to be a model minority and representative of Islam. As a result, they were often silenced and cautious about appearing too aggressive in arguments with referees or opponents.

Intersectionality, the concept that some individuals are positioned differently and must navigate multiple oppressive forces, is a particularly helpful lens to understand these participant's experiences (Crenshaw, 1991). As evidenced by these participants, their experience of sexism is complicated, and often heightened, by their experiences of Islamophobia and racism within sport spaces.

Political, social and cultural practices do not cease to exist when one steps on a basketball court. Presumptions do not disappear when one puts on a uniform. Sport cannot and does not erase the values, stereotypes and discriminatory biases that one holds. It does not operate in a vacuum – it is value-laden and complex, just as human beings are. It is imperative that in attempts to understand and read about sport, that the broader social, political, cultural, racial and gendered discourses that exist in and shape participants' environments be centred. For Muslim women who are navigating sport spaces that highlight political or religious “neutrality” or “passivity”, this ignorance can be hurtful and dangerous. Their embodied faith, often outwardly expressed through their wearing of the hijab, makes it impossible to be religiously neutral. The highly politicized nature of the hijab also makes it impossible for Muslim women to be regarded, by some, as politically neutral. However, one thing that has become abundantly clear in this current research study, and previous work, is that Islam is central to the lives of Muslim participants. If they are not able to participate or compete in sport in a way that satisfies their Islamic values, they will not participate. For the participants of this study, some expressed a desire to fight the system that aimed to exclude them, as evidenced by speaking out against policies regarding the hijab. Others expressed a desire to find Muslim sport spaces and organizations, while others still considered dropping out of sport. None of the participants mentioned, or even considered, removing the hijab to satisfy the demands of Western sport rules and conditions. I hope that these findings have profound implications for international sport associations, community-level organizations and researchers alike: Islam cannot be separated from the sport experiences of Muslim women, and the sport experiences of Muslim women cannot be separated from Islam. Whether the discussion concerns creating policies within sport federations, administering sport programs in Muslim-majority neighborhoods, or trying to understand the sport experiences of Muslims, it is important to recognize that Islamic values and principles are often at the core of how Muslim women make their decisions and affect their day-to-day interactions with coaches, teammates, referees, parents, and members of their Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

## 5.2 Methodological Implications

As a Muslim woman, my insider position proved to be both valuable and a challenge as I conducted this research study. Throughout this project, I grappled with the issue of reflexivity and how my positionality affected the data being produced with my participants. Prior to beginning the data collection phase, I wrote a reflexive statement that highlighted my own sport experiences as a Muslim woman and the reasons behind my desire to research this topic. I initially kept a reflexive journal that I wrote in but subsequently switched to recording audio-diaries as a way to experience this process along with my participants and keep track of my thoughts. The following are some reflections that emerged from this practice.

### 5.2.1 Researcher positionality

The topics of surveillance and judgement from the Muslim community were the first major themes that I began to think about during the data collection phase. As early as my first interviews with the participants of this study, I realized that they often felt on display and as though they had to perform the role of the “perfect Muslimah”. This became especially evident when they talked about being in the presence of other Muslims. I began to worry that participants may be only sharing particular experiences or aspects of their personality that they deemed Islamically acceptable. As a researcher operating from a social constructionist paradigmatic position, I acknowledged that I would be playing an active role in constructing the knowledge generated in this research study (Schwandt, 2003). However, I was initially uncomfortable with the thought of my participants only sharing specific experiences with me and hiding others. Through conversations with my thesis supervisor and as the data collection phase progressed, I realized that all data and meanings constructed in qualitative research are actively being constructed in specific contexts. Therefore, my job as a researcher was to understand and (re)present the experiences of the participants of this study and how they described them to *me* rather than try to remove myself from the data. That being said, I realized that establishing a strong, trusting relationship with my participants was vital to having honest conversations about their experiences. The longitudinal nature of this study was helpful in this regard. For example, in our initial interview Joy mentioned that she never attended team social events where alcohol was present. However, in a later meeting, she admitted that she had once gone to a party where her teammates were drinking. It was absolutely crucial that Joy and I had built a relationship, or she would not have felt

comfortable sharing this information with me. The use of multiple interviews and the audio-diaries being collected longitudinally over a span of at least 4 weeks proved to be extremely helpful because it allowed the participants to get to know and trust me. Much of this data would not have been produced if the research designed had relied on a one-off interview.

Due to my insider position as a Muslim woman, I often found that participants would not elaborate on particular topics because they assumed that I inherently understood what they were talking about. Although it was a benefit to be able to understand and use Arabic phrases, “Muslim slang”, and share similar experiences with my participants, I often had to step back and ask them to clarify or elaborate in order to obtain rich, in-depth accounts of their experiences. Despite my initial wariness that this would disrupt the flow of conversation, the discussions we had were enriched by not glossing over what we as Muslim might consider mundane, or the ordinary. For example, Mel would frequently say, “You know how it is” when talking about wearing tight clothes in the Muslim community. It was only after I asked her to explain what this felt like, as if she were explaining it to someone who was not Muslim, that she described her negative experiences in a past Islamic school with me. Yet again, this highlights the importance of acknowledging one’s position within one’s research and how that will affect relationships with research participants and consequently, the data that one creates with them.

It was also important for me to recognize that this reflexivity needed to continue into the data analysis and writing phases of this thesis. My participants often talked about how important it was that I was a Muslim woman, doing this research. In one of our interviews, Laila stated:

Again like with representation - I feel like I really like your study, like it’s a good thing to like get our voices out there and do a study on Muslim women where we’re given our side of it... you’re Muslim like, you can relate to everything we’re saying.  
(Interview 2)

They felt that aspect of my identity was significant and would help me “accurately” describe and shed light on their experiences. Mel, in particular, spoke about how White/Western feminists often thought of Muslim women as individuals in need of saving. She stated:

Every Muslim is like portrayed as a terrorist, obviously like this is like the long story like I don’t know, from how long, but I mean like Muslim men are portrayed as terrorists or like violent or whatever. And then Muslim women are like submissive, oppressed, and all that. And then umm, one weird thing like all the feminist movements

and stuff, like umm they try to like, liberate you like, a lot of people are saying ‘take off your hijab’, like ‘you don’t need it, you don’t need to like conform, you don’t need to be like oppressed by the men and stuff’. But they don’t understand like, it’s not for the men. (Interview 2)

In light of these conversations with participants and noting the overwhelming persistence of White, Eurocentric feminist frameworks used in sport literature on Muslim women, I felt that it was imperative to centre Islam in my analysis and representation of this data. For the participants of this study, Islam is the lens through which they view their experiences. Their Islamic values shape their decisions, regarding where they go, what they wear, and with whom they formed meaningful relationships. It is an essential aspect of their lived experiences and for that reason, I could not justify pushing it to the periphery as simply a “theme”. Instead, I decided to use Quranic verses and hadiths in my analysis to better understand how my participants may be ascribing meaning to various situations and contexts. Indeed, in many of my conversations with participants, they quoted or alluded to some of the same verses I have included in the discussion section.

I believe these issues have important methodological implications for researchers conducting sport research with Muslim women. Data generation is a two-way process where data are produced through a dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee, rather than something that is simply collected (Schwandt, 2003). Therefore, the data produced will be influenced by the researcher’s background, experience, and location. All knowledge is produced from a position. Therefore, I believe it is critical for researchers to acknowledge their location within their research, especially when conducting research with marginalized populations. This is particularly critical when conducting research with Muslim women who have been historically silenced and/or represented in a homogenous, Orientalized manner. These women often do not view themselves or their experiences through a Western lens or frame of thinking, yet researchers have continued to highlight the voices of Western feminist researchers in this work (Harkness, 2012; Walseth & Fasting, 2004; Dagkas & Benn, 2006). I believe it is crucial for Western researchers to not only acknowledge their positionality and be reflexive, but also to look towards post-colonial or Muslim feminist theories when trying to give voice to their Muslim participants.

### 5.2.2 Reflexivity – an ongoing process

In addition to acknowledging my multiple roles and positions within this research, it is important to discuss how I practiced reflexivity. I understood reflexivity to be an ongoing process that began prior to data generation – hence, the inclusion of a reflexive statement to better understand the underlying assumptions that I brought with me into this work. I also acknowledge that it was important to be reflexive in understanding my positionality and the power I held as a Muslim woman and researcher during the interview process. However, perhaps the greatest instances and challenges of doing “reflexive research” came about in the analysis and writing stages of this project. I began to question the ways in which inserting myself into this research affected the knowledge being produced and how it was (re)presented in this document (Day, 2012). Despite my identity as a Muslim woman, my training (as a student and researcher) has been conducted in Canada. Many of the theories and concepts that I considered “legitimate” and appropriate for conducting research in this field privileged Eurocentric, Western understandings of identity, community, and sport. Although it may seem natural that a Muslim woman would choose to center Islam within such work, I found this process to be quite uncomfortable and foreign to me, as I have been accustomed to separating those two aspects of my life: faith and academia were not two areas that I felt comfortable intertwining. However, the conversations that I had with my research participants pushed me to think more critically about who has traditionally been allowed to “know” and whose voices have been represented in the literature. Therefore, I began to feel that I had an ethical and moral obligation to my participants to portray their experiences using the language that they used to understand their lives. My inclusion of Quranic verses and Hadiths to understand and represent various themes in this research was the outcome of engaging in this reflexive questioning.

### 5.2.3 Audio diaries

Audio-diaries as a method of data collection proved to be extremely valuable because it allowed participants to reflect on their experiences in a private, comfortable space without the presence of a researcher. Although, of course, they knew that I would eventually be listening to what they recorded, it allowed them to speak freely without being given immediate feedback by my facial expressions and reactions. In Goffmanian terms, they were able to speak without an (immediate) audience, which may have provided a safe space for them to reflect

and disclose their private thoughts (Goffman, 1959). They did seem to speak more freely and frankly in the audio-diaries. In Khadija's case, I noticed that she cursed quite a bit in her audio diaries, which she did not do in our initial interview. Perhaps, she felt that I was the "older" Muslim woman to whom she needed to portray her most Islamic self when we were face to face, but felt free to be more herself when she was recording the audio-diary. I also noted that she was a bit more relaxed and comfortable using curse words in our second interview, once she realized that I did not react negatively to them.

The use of audio-diaries was also a valuable method of data collection in that they helped to generate data on everyday, ordinary situations that participants may not have deemed important to mention in an interview setting (Monrouxe, 2009). For example, Laila recorded an audio-diary about worrying that her Muslim teammates would judge her for shaking her male opponents' hands at the end of a game. This situation was likely not one that she would have recalled or deemed significant in an interview setting, but was brought to her attention due to the audio-diary prompts. The immediacy and fluid nature of recording audio-diaries helped to capture phenomena as they unfolded, which was particularly important when exploring the social interactions that participants had with their teammates and coaches during practice (Bernays, Rhodes & Terzic, 2014).

### 5.3 Strengths and Limitations

There were a number of strengths of this research. Firstly, this study adopted a multiple case study approach to explore the sport experiences of seven participants. This approach allowed the researcher to gain a more in-depth understanding on how young Muslim women negotiated their identity in various spaces. Due to the multiple interactions between participants and the researcher, a more trusting relationship was formed. The use of audio-diaries was also a strength of this study. This method of data collection allowed participants to capture and self-reflect on meaningful experiences as they occurred. In this way, ordinary social interactions that participants may have considered insignificant in an interview setting were captured and became part of the discussion in subsequent interviews. Keeping a reflexivity journal and having frequent conversations with my supervisor, who acted as a critical friend, was also a strength of this study. These practices helped establish methodological rigor by ensuring that I maintained a "disciplined subjectivity" and that data collection and analysis were congruent with my paradigmatic position (Wolcott, 1995; Sparkes & Smith, 2014).

Another strength of this research study is the culturally rich and diverse sample. Much of the sport literature on Muslim women to date has focused on culturally homogenous samples. For example, studying the experience of South Asian Muslims or East African Muslims. In this research study, Muslims from any denomination or cultural background were recruited. The participants of this study included Shiaa and Sunni Muslims as well as individuals from many different ethnic backgrounds. This provided for rich data that is reflective of the highly diverse Muslim Ummah.

This research study aimed to address a number of gaps in the current literature on Muslim woman. Firstly, this study explored the role of non-Muslim teammates and coaches on the sport experiences of Muslim women. Past research on social support has tended to focus on parental and family influence (Kay, 2006). Secondly, this study provided new insight by focusing on the experiences of young Muslim women who are actively engaged in competitive sport in Canada rather than focusing on community level sport and/or physical activity (Palmer, 2009; Walseth & Fasting, 2004). Finally, this research study also explored how Orientalized views of Muslim women may contribute to inclusion or alienation for young Muslim women competing in a Western sport structure. This was important in order to shift the conversation away from social integration and how identification with Islamic and cultural values may restrict young Muslim women from being more active in the West (Walseth & Fasting, 2004; Walseth, 2006a).

There are a number of limitations of this research study. Firstly, I did not conduct a class analysis in this research study. The role that classism and socio-economic status plays on the sport experiences of ethnic minorities is well documented and would have been an interesting lens through which to understand my participant's experiences. Although I did not explicitly ask questions related to class during my interviews, I acknowledge that my participants were middle class and talked about their parent's ability to provide them with access to elite opportunities, hijab-friendly sport attire and training. Young Muslim women who are from a lower socio-economic class group may have experienced other challenges that I did not explore in this research study because it was not accounted for in my inclusion criteria. Future research should take classism into consideration, both in sampling and analysis, of this work.

Methodologically, the audio-diary prompts that were provided to the participants may have been too general, and more specific questions or self-reflective prompts may have been helpful

to ensure participants had a starting point for their audio-diary entries. Another potential limitation was the retrospective nature of this study. Some of the research questions asked in the interview related to experiences in the past (childhood and adolescence) that they may have had difficulty recalling. The audio diaries were used to better understand participants' experiences as they occurred, but this limitation needs to be considered as most of the data was constructed during the interview phase. Another limitation of this study was the fact that I only spoke with the young Muslim women themselves. It may be beneficial to interview other people (parents, coaches or teammates) to help shed light on the environment and overall experiences of the participants. The final limitation of this study was the lack of member checking. Although the second interview was used as a mid-way member check to involve the participants in the interpretation of the data, it may have been helpful to include a member check when the study was completed. It is important to note that the function of this member check would not have been to check for the accuracy of the data, but to help elaborate and include participants in the research study.

## 5.4 Future Directions

There are a number of possible directions for future research. First of all, this research study demonstrated some of the ways in which sport participation of young Muslim women can affect their parents' lives. Future research should involve parents to better understand the barriers and costs they experience as support providers. A second possible direction for research is to better understand the role that referees play in the sport experiences of young Muslim women. Although referees were not a main focus of this study, it quickly became apparent that they had a considerable influence on the participants' experiences. Referees act as the maintainers, or gatekeepers, of the sport community. Unfortunately, for Hijabi soccer and basketball players who have had hijab bans issued by FIFA and FIBA respectively, being questioned about their hijab or even asked to leave a game by a referee was a common occurrence. Future research could explore the role of referees, being asked to act as enforcers of sport policy, guarding against the overexpression of Muslim symbols (hijab) in sport.

This research has also shown the way in which social activities outside of the sport context led to feelings of social exclusion for the participants. Future research should explore how accommodation of values is reflected in the broader aspect of sport organizations and the effect that this has on the sport experiences of young Muslim women. This is particularly

relevant when considering research studies that aim to promote social capital within ethnically and religiously diverse societies (Maxwell et al, 2013; Palmer, 2009).

It is also important to note that much of the research to date has focused on the sport and physical education participation of school-aged Muslim girls (Benn & Pfister, 2013; Walseth, 2015). The understandings and meanings that older Muslim women attribute to physical activity and sport have been greatly overlooked. This is problematic because the family, and mothers in particular, have often been cited as having a key decision-making role in their daughters' sport participation (Walseth, 2015; Kay, 2006). However, few studies to date have focused on the mothers' understanding of sport but rather have explored the girls' perceptions of those attitudes. This is particularly important within a Canadian context where the Muslim population is largely comprised of immigrants (Chui, 2013). It is well documented that there can be significant differences in identity and cultural ideals between first and second-generation immigrants (Ramadan, 2004). Therefore, it is important to engage older members of the family who may have different values and beliefs in order to gain a holistic understanding of the Canadian-Muslim sport experience. Future research should seek to better understand the family and generational differences by centering Muslim mothers and examining the attitudes and beliefs that they hold with regards to physical activity and sport. It is also important to recognize that there are multiple ways that Muslim women can experience sport. As Toffoletti and Palmer (2017) noted, it is important to broaden the focus and better understand the experiences of Muslim women as sports writers, sport policy makers, and fans.

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## Appendices

### **Appendix A: Informed Consent Form**

**Primary Investigator:**

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***Study Overview:***

You are invited to participate in a study about the sport experiences of Muslim female athletes in Canada. The purpose of this present study is to explore how young Muslim women who wear the hijab may feel about their sport experiences in Canada. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Feel free to ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

***What is involved in the study?***

We are asking female Muslim athletes aged 18-25 who wear the hijab to participate in our study. Our study consists of pre-and post- interviews as well as keeping an audio diary for 4 weeks. The interviews will be audio-recorded and will last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. During the interview, we will ask questions about your past sport experiences, the social support you receive from parents, teammates and/or coaches, as well as your identity as a Muslim female athlete. You will then be asked to record two diary entries per week, after a practice or game for the span of one-month. The total time commitment is approximately 3 hours.

***What are the benefits of this study? Are there any risks?***

Participants may experience a therapeutic effect through reflecting on their experiences. They may gain new knowledge and insight on their emotions, identity and social relationships. We hope that the results of this study will lead to a greater understanding of the feelings of inclusion or alienation that Muslim women may experience due to their sport involvement. We hope that this information will lead to interventions that help promote and facilitate a more positive sport experience for young Muslim women in Canada.

We may discuss potentially negative interactions that you have faced during your sport experience. This may cause some psychological discomfort. You do not have to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable. You may also request that any information, whether in written form or audiotape, be omitted from the project.

Your responses during the interviews and audio-diaries will be confidential. Your identity will only be known by the members of the research team and we will assign a pseudonym (of your choice) to your interviews and audio-diaries so that you cannot be identified. You have the option of withdrawing from the study up until the data is analyzed (up until February 1, 2018). If you would like to withdraw from the study, you can contact the research supervisor, Dr. Katherine Tamminen or the primary investigator, Asma Khalil.

***What will happen with the information I provide?***

All of the interviews and audio-diaries will be recorded and then later transcribed. All audio recordings will be deleted after transcription. The information obtained in the interview will be kept in strict confidence and stored on a secure computer at the University of Toronto in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education. Only the researchers will have access to information collected from the interviews and audio diaries. The Human Research Ethics Program (HREP) may have to access study-related data and/or consent materials to review the study for quality assurance. However, all information will be reported in such a way that individual persons and communities cannot be identified. All raw data, such as transcripts and memos, will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. Once we have completed the study, members of the research team will present the results at a conference. They may also write a paper, which will be published in an academic journal. If the results are presented at a conference or in a paper, you will not be identified by name. A summary of the results and copies of any resulting publications will be provided at your request.

If you have questions about this study, or about the information used for research purposes, you may contact Dr. Katherine Tamminen, an assistant professor at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Kinesiology, and Physical Education, as well as the primary investigator for this study. You may also contact the Office of Research Ethics at [ethics.review@utoronto.ca](mailto:ethics.review@utoronto.ca) or 416-946-3273 if you have questions about your rights as a participant.

***Compensation:***

Participants will be offered \$20 (\$5.00 per week for 4 weeks of data collection) as a token of appreciation for their time and participation. Compensation will be given at the end of each week of audio-diary collection. If you choose to withdraw prior to the completion of that week, you forfeit compensation for that week.

***Consent:***

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B: Interview Guides**

*Athletes will be asked to read and sign a consent form prior to beginning the interview.*

### **Initial Interview**

I am interested in asking you about your experience as a Muslim athlete here in Canada. I want you to know that if you don't know how to, or would rather not, answer a question, that is completely fine. I am interested in your personal experience, so please know that there are no right or wrong answers. Your participation is also completely voluntary, so you may withdraw from the study at any point. Your information will be kept confidential and we can choose a pseudonym to ensure that you feel comfortable. Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?

#### **1. Icebreaker Questions**

- a. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? (ex. hobbies, interests)
- b. Inquire about physical activity level of other family members

#### **2. Background Information**

- a. How did you get involved with \_\_\_\_\_ (insert sport)? How long have you been competing?
- b. Do you play other sports?
- c. What is your favourite thing about your sport?
- d. What is your least favourite thing about your sport?
- e. Does playing \_\_\_\_\_ ever impact your life outside of sport?

#### **3. Identity**

- a. If you were to use a few keywords to describe yourself, what would they be?
- b. What does it mean, to you, to be a Muslim woman?
- c. What does it mean, to you, to be a Muslim athlete?
- d. Have you had any positive experiences/comments from people about being Muslim?
  - i. Negative experiences/comments?
- e. Have you had any positive experiences/comments from people about being an athlete?
  - i. Negative experiences/comments?

#### **4. Space**

- a. Do you train or compete in a sex-segregated environment?
  - i. How does that feel? Do you feel comfortable?

#### **5. Social Support**

- a. What are your relationships like with your teammates?
  - i. Can you tell me about a positive experience that you've had with any of your teammates?
  - ii. Can you tell me about a negative experience that you've had with any of your teammates?
- b. What are your relationships like with your coaches?

- i. Can you tell me about a positive experience that you've had with any of your coaches?
- ii. Can you tell me about a negative experience that you've had with any of your coaches?
- c. How do your parents feel about your sport participation?
- d. Are your relationships with your sport friends different from your relationship with friends outside of sport?
- e. Have you ever experienced negative comments about your sport participation?

**6. Policy/Broader Discourses**

- a. How do you feel about the portrayal of Muslim women in the media?
- b. Does the media portrayal influence your experience when competing in sport?
- c. Are you aware of any rules that would prevent you from participating in sport?

**7. Wrap Up**

- a. Is there anything else you would like me to know?

## **Final Interview**

I am interested in asking you about your experience as a Muslim athlete here in Canada. I want you to know that if you don't know how to, or would rather not, answer a question, that is completely fine. I am interested in your personal experience, so please know that there are no right or wrong answers. Your participation is also completely voluntary, so you may withdraw from the study at any point. Your information will be kept confidential and we can choose a pseudonym to ensure that you feel comfortable. Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?

### **1. Introduction**

- a. How has the season been going since I last saw you?
- b. Can you tell me how it felt to complete the audio-diaries?

### **2. Identity**

- a. In our first interview you mentioned \_\_\_\_\_. Can you tell me more about that?
- b. In your audio diary, you mentioned \_\_\_\_\_. Can you tell me more about that?

### **3. Social Support**

- a. In our first interview you mentioned \_\_\_\_\_. Can you tell me more about that?
- b. In your audio diary, you mentioned \_\_\_\_\_. Can you tell me more about that?

### **4. Policy/Broader Discourses**

- a. In our first interview you mentioned \_\_\_\_\_. Can you tell me more about that?
- b. In your audio diary, you mentioned \_\_\_\_\_. Can you tell me more about that?

### **5. Wrap – Up**

- a. Is there anything else that you think I should know?

## **Appendix C: Audio-diary Guide**

### **Audio-diary Guidelines**

**Purpose:** I am interested in learning about your experiences in sport, as well as your relationships with your teammates and coaches.

**Information:** You will be given an audio-recorder for the duration of this study. The purpose of the audio-recorder is for you to reflect on your experiences shortly after they occur. I am interested in hearing and learning about your sport experience from your perspective. You are asked to record two audio-diaries per week, after a practice/game. The diary can be as long or as short as you would like. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. Feel free to reflect and express yourself as you wish. These audio-diaries will be kept confidential. Do not feel that you need to answer these questions in any particular order. They are merely here to spark some thoughts and reflections.

- How was practice today? Where did you practice? Describe the setting.
  - Who was there? What did you do?
- Did anything interesting happen?
- Did you have any positive interactions with your coaches and teammates?
- Did you have any negative interactions with your coaches and teammates?
- Did you have any interactions or conversations with anyone during practice about Islam or the hijab?

## **Appendix D: Recruitment Script**

Assalamu Alaikum,

My name is Asma Khalil and I am a Master's student at the University of Toronto. For my Master's thesis, I am conducting research on the experiences of young Muslim women in sport. The purpose of this study is to explore how young Muslim women who wear the hijab may feel about their sport experience in Canada.

I am asking female athlete to participate in two interviews and to record audio-diaries for four weeks. I will be inquiring about their sport experience, identity as a Muslim female athlete in a Western sport context as well as the social support they receive from parents, teammates and coaches. Participants will receive \$20 as a token of appreciation for their time and contribution. This study is open to any Muslim woman between the ages of 18-25 who is actively competing in sport within a league or environment that is not exclusively-Muslim.

If you, or anyone you know, would be interested in being a part of this research, please contact me.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could circulate this information to your constituents. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Asma Khalil

Master's student  
Sport and Performance Psychology Lab  
Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education  
University of Toronto

## **Appendix E: Mental Health Resource List**

### **Islamic Social Services and Resources Association**

(416) 767-9358, [www.issra.ca](http://www.issra.ca)

Individual, family and youth counselling; support groups; food assistance program.

Languages: English, Arabic, Punjabi, Urdu, Farsi.

### **Naseeha: Muslim Youth Healthline**

1-866-627-3342, [www.naseeha.org](http://www.naseeha.org)

This organization provides a confidential helpline for young Muslims to receive anonymous, immediate and confidential support over the phone.

### **Family Services Association - Counselling Services**

(416) 595-9230, <https://familyservicetoronto.org>

Individual, group, couple, and family counselling, education for living and culturally sensitive services focused on a range of issues including anxiety, depression, separation and divorce, family violence, adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, and parenting.

### **Across Boundaries**

(416) 787-3007, [www.acrossboundaries.ca](http://www.acrossboundaries.ca)

51 Clarkson Ave., Toronto, ON M6E 2T5 (Eglinton & Caledonia)

Across Boundaries is an ethnoracial mental health centre. Services include:

individual/community support (case management); support groups for consumer/survivors and family members; antiracism education, training and research in mental health; consumer/survivor and family initiatives to address economic and social barriers; community outreach; alternative models of support and services; art therapy; and a drop-in program.

### **Multicultural Women's Wellness Program, Canadian Mental Health Association**

(416) 789-7957 ext. 259, [www.toronto.cmha.ca](http://www.toronto.cmha.ca)

700 Lawrence Avenue West, Suite 480, Toronto, ON M6A 3B4

Multicultural Women's Wellness Program provides groups for immigrant and refugee women to come together and discuss topics they feel are important to their wellness in their own language. The program incorporates a holistic framework and advocates for women helping women.