SHAME, MODESTY, IDENTITY: LIVED RELIGION IN ATHLETIC SPACES

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Abstract

This doctoral dissertation examines the intersection of lived religion with sport and fitness, and in particular how fitness facility users navigate modesty values, shame, and identity. How individuals experience fitness spaces and engage in fitness in keeping with their religious practices and beliefs is often unexplored in scholarship about religiosity in sport. This research examines the experiences of individuals who hold intersecting religious and sport identities and whose full inclusion in sport may be affected by their religious beliefs and preferences, such as for same-sex fitness spaces. Using qualitative sociological methods, this study addresses the following questions: How do individuals navigate their religious identities in athletic spaces, and what limitations to full accessibility do they experience? How do fitness space users interpret and live their religious commitments? This thesis argues that athletic space limitations include physical and mental barriers. These barriers are not solely tied to the physical construction of the space itself, nor do they centre solely on religious identity. Facilities can improve accessibility by addressing both kinds of barriers through recommendations derived from this research.

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Chapter 1 Introduction: Locating Religion in Fitness Spaces

"Who do I work out with at the gym? Females only, always. I don't know how to explain it… it's just natural. It's comfortable. It's just important to me as a Muslim." -Leila

People experience varying degrees of accessibility in fitness spaces. One factor that defines accessibility of these spaces is religion. Religion can shape perceptions of modesty, body, and social belonging. As fitness spaces bring these perceptions to the fore, religious practitioners may encounter unique difficulties in navigating such spaces. This thesis explores how religious and non-religious individuals navigate identity when practicing fitness. Understanding accessibility barriers in fitness spaces can help those in charge of designing gyms create more inclusive environments that will appeal to a wider range of gym-users.

1.1 Researcher Interest in the Topic

I first began to think about these issues when I was involved in university fitness, both as a practitioner and a facilitator. I worked at the Wilfrid Laurier University athletic complex in various roles from 2012 to 2015; I was also a varsity athlete.[1] During that time, I learned that religious accessibility in sport was a controversial topic often at the forefront of sensational media discussions. Despite the media attention, I did not hear much about fitness accessibility in

[1] During my four years working at the gym, I filled various roles: desk attendant, fitness centre attendant, concession clerk at the stadium, fitness instructor, athletic desk coordinator, and athletic club's coordinator.

my roles as a fitness instructor, desk attendant, or varsity runner prior to the gym I worked at adding a women's only section.[2]

This change occurred in my third year of working at the facility when the athletic complex underwent an expansion that doubled the square footage of the recreational space. The addition was necessary because the gym was struggling to meet the needs of the ever-growing student body. Before the expansion, the facility manager solicited student input about their fitness requirements. Students identified a need for a women's-only fitness space.[3] The athletic complex subsequently integrated a designated women's-only space into the design of the building expansion. This women's-only space constituted a small section on the upper floor. During scheduled women's-only hours, this section could be temporarily walled off with a sliding door. This design allowed the space to revert for general use outside the appointed women's-only times.

1.2 Student Justifications for Women's-only Spaces at Wilfrid Laurier University

Students provided various rationales for their desire to have a women's-only fitness space. Their reasoning included aspects of religious modesty; safety; security for survivors of gendered violence; low confidence or self-esteem; and a desire to perform exercises that focused on frequently sexualized areas of the body without additional scrutiny.

Students who felt uncomfortable with the co-ed gym environment did not find the gym accessible prior to the expansion, yet still had to pay a mandatory gym fee in their tuition. The

[2] Due to gender diversity in my study, I am defaulting to the language of gender over sex in my analysis and discussion. When participants used sex-based language within their interviews I honor the language they used.
[3] Among other needs, such as an increase in cardio equipment and squat racks. Provision of this equipment in a women's-only space would have freed up said equipment in co-ed spaces, arguably benefiting everyone.

intent of expanding the gym was to better serve as many students as possible.[4] Women in the university community who felt uncomfortable exercising around men, made suggestions for a women's-only space. With this feedback, directors of the fitness facility decided that creating a women's-only space was one way to serve more students.

1.3 Spotted at Laurier: Online Controversy Towards the Women's-only Space

Despite the university's desire for inclusion, implementing a women's-only section of the gym resulted in significant negative social media attention. When the facility announced the women's-only section, vocal detractors in the Wilfrid Laurier Facebook community asserted opposition to the proposed changes. "Spotted at Laurier," a popular Facebook group, was the source of particularly strong opinions.[5] One anonymous person submitted the original post to the group:

> Addressing the women's-only section of the gym:
>
> It's not fair to restrick [sic] gym use based on gender. Wer'e [sic] all paying the same amount for the gym. It's discrimination (and dare I say sexist)
>
> Going to the gym is intimidating for MEN who have never worked out before or are inexperienced. Talk to somebody who you're trying to convince to take up weight lifting in order to better themselves, most of them are afraid of going into a gym and looking like a chump with 5 lbs on the bar. Why don't these people get restricted time to themselves away from experienced lifters, or women who they might feel intimidated in front of due to lifting such paltry amounts of weight?
>
> If you're a girl, (or a guy for that matter) and people staring at your physique makes you uncomfortable, put on a hoody and track pants… That's a much easier resolution than cutting off the gym to the rest of the student body for long periods of time. Realistically, there's maybe a 14 hour window that people have to work out in during the day. So cutting off a part of the gym for about a quarter of that is a huge chunk of time.

[4] Other needs were also identified, such as more lockers, studio spaces for dance and fitness classes, cardio equipment, and more squat racks.

[5] See Appendix B for screenshots of the comments retrieved on July 31, 2020, from the Spotted at Laurier Facebook Page.

> Ps. Not mad. Yes I have inquired about setting up "mens-only" times at the gym. I was told it would be looking into. LOL let's see if anything comes from that…[6]

This post precipitated many similar responses about gender roles and sexism in the gym. Likewise, women who voiced support for the women's-only space received misogynistic responses referring to them as "fucking feminist sluts."[7]

What ultimately inspired this dissertation were comments introducing religion into this online discussion. For example, one individual challenged the notion that women who desire a women's-only fitness space should go to "Zumba," which is perceived as a women-dominated space:

> Ok, no. Zumba is nothing like the gym, I don't know why you are comparing the two it is not an alternative… it is not an alternative for any of the gym equipment, and you didn't even bother to consider people who don't like directed classes and prefer to work out on their own schedule.
>
> Yes, the gym is busy but it also got larger so it can accommodate more people and they can actually try this, before there would have been no room and it would be impractical.
>
> Also consider this: there are women that can't work out in the gym for religious reasons and have never had the chance to until now. They also pay gym fees and should have the option of using the space.[8]

Following this response, an individual questioned which specific religious practices would necessitate a woman working out in a single-gender fitness space. He queried:

[6] Anonymous, "Addressing the women's-only section of the gym," posted to "Spotted at Laurier" Facebook group, February 11, 2014, https://m.facebook.com/SpottedWLU/posts/484880001622817. Page expired, see appendix B for screenshot.
[7] Zeuz Umirino, comment on post "Addressing the women's-only section of the gym," posted to "Spotted at Laurier" Facebook group, February 11, 2014, https://m.facebook.com/SpottedWLU/posts/484880001622817. Page expired, see appendix B for screenshot.
[8] Rayna Veleva, comment on post "Addressing the women's-only section of the gym," posted to "Spotted at Laurier" Facebook group, February 11, 2014, https://m.facebook.com/SpottedWLU/posts/484880001622817. Page expired, see appendix B for screenshot.

> I'm sorry can you please quote the religious issue we have at hand here? I keep hearing about it [sic] but no one has said what it is. All your arguments are based off nothing, it's literally garbage being spewed out at this point.[9]

One Muslim man responded with potential "religious" grounds for why a woman would prefer a women's-only space. He commented:

> For a women [sic], in Islam they wear the head scarf to not be looked at in "that way" and lets [sic] be honest it's not ideal for anyone to be wearing head scarves as well as being fully covered when theyre [sic] sweating. They aren't allowed to be seen without it infront [sic] of men unless they're their husband or family. By having a womens [sic] only time, it allows them to work out without being fully covered and not boil under their clothes when they work out. Don't know why so many guys are making a big deal out of this, its [sic] only 4 hours[10]

This comment introduced Muslim practices around modesty into the conversation. Notably, the voices of women who practiced modesty values—Muslim or otherwise—were absent throughout the discussion.

This dialogue surrounding a women's-only gym section captivated me. I wanted to understand how fitness intertwines with religious practice and what challenges (if any) religious individuals face in pursuing fitness.

1.4 Inclusion in Practice: Imagining Equal Benefits to Single-Gender Spaces

Many Students commenting on Facebook opposed the women's-only gym space. Student commentators levelled accusations of sexism, sex-favouritism, and assimilation against the decision (detailed below). Some arguments, meanwhile, were functionally oriented—for example, that there were not enough squat racks in the previous gym and that the space of the women's-only section could house more squat racks, benefiting all. While this argument seemed

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[9] Mark Onany, comment on post "Addressing the women's-only section of the gym," posted to "Spotted at Laurier" Facebook group, February 11, 2014, https://m.facebook.com/SpottedWLU/posts/484880001622817. Page expired, see appendix B for screenshot.

[10] Rizwan Alimohamed, comment on post "Addressing the women's-only section of the gym," posted to "Spotted at Laurier" Facebook group, February 11, 2014, https://m.facebook.com/SpottedWLU/posts/484880001622817. Page expired, see appendix B for screenshot.

reasonable, the management responded that the second floor did not have the structural integrity for more squat racks. Instead, any new squat racks would need to remain on the first floor.

The backlash was interesting especially since Wilfrid Laurier University was not a forerunner as far as university gym inclusivity was concerned; some universities had begun implementing women's-only spaces much earlier such as the University of Toronto. Those who argued for gender equality and strictly co-ed fitness spaces did not understand the perspectives of women who felt uncomfortable for "whatever" reason. While women raised religious modesty values during the fitness centre's feedback period, they were not the sole factor nor the deciding one.

If the expansion's main goal was for the facility to be as inclusive as possible, what did this inclusion look like in practice? For the Wilfrid Laurier University fitness centre, it meant the equipment in the women's-only space was a microcosm of the equipment in the main gym. It meant adding a few cosmetic changes to the space to increase the privacy of users, such as frosting the windows so that the space was not viewable from outside the section[11] and including a sliding door to wall off the space for the women's-only times. Important to note, too, that the "women's-only" space would only be a single-gender space for four hours per day; the space itself was, in this way, conceptually inclusive of gym users of any gender who wanted to use the area outside these hours. However, Facebook commenters were not convinced and called the policy exclusive in myriad ways.

[11] There was a controversy in Montreal between a YMCA and an Orthodox Jewish Synagogue whereby the synagogue requested the gym's windows be frosted because they felt that the young male students were being distracted by the bodies of females exercising. A few women at the gym had complained about "peeping toms" as well, so the YMCA obliged, and the synagogue paid for the windows to be frosted. Several years later, a petition went around, and 100 signatures from YMCA users signed requesting the windows return to their natural state. They cited a desire to have sun in the space and positioned the synagogue's argument for the frosted windows as a form of veiling non-Jewish women and their bodies. The gym subsequently returned the frosted windows to their natural state. This is notable because such accommodations are not always perceived as positive and can be complicated by passing time and religious versus non-religious concerns. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/montreal-ymca-drops-tinted-windows-after-members-protest-1.657915

1.5 Eventful Commentary: Uneventful Opening of a Women's-only Space

The Facebook responses to the university gym's women's-only section provoked instances of "othering" and public shaming through social media. Those women who desired a single-gender space were deemed atypical of the university undergraduate norm by the Facebook group's vocal commentators. Commenters directed the term "feminazi" and comparisons to Hitler towards women who supported the women's-only section. For example, in response to a female student who voiced feeling sexualized at the current gym, another female student commented: "You're hating and blaming men for things they didn't do. You want to ban them from going places! Pretty sure Hitler did the same thing with Jews…"[12] Some comments brought gender-based violence to the forefront of the conversation. One male student commented, "fucking feminist sluts and wks [sic] [weaks]. Nothing worse than these type of people."[13] A female student argued that women were responsible for the harassment they received based on what they wore, parroting common victim-blaming rhetoric[14]: "It's just common sense though, don't wear something that's going to draw attention. You can exercise perfectly comfortable in a regular t-shirt and shorts that cover your ass…"[15] Some comments called for a potentially violent intervention over the women's-only space: "Let's have an all Male [sic] sit in until we 'workout' [sic] our problems peacefully. And if that fails lets [sic] have a huge civil conflict! Woohoo liberate the gym."[16] The threat of occupation by male protesters may have deterred women from

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[12] Laura Jany, comment on post "Addressing the women's-only section of the gym," posted to "Spotted at Laurier" Facebook group, February 11, 2014, https://m.facebook.com/SpottedWLU/posts/484880001622817.

[13] Zeuz Umirino, comment on post "Addressing the women's-only section of the gym," posted to "Spotted at Laurier" Facebook group, February 11, 2014, https://m.facebook.com/SpottedWLU/posts/484880001622817.

[14] A 2015 issue brief from Status of Women Canada highlighted that in 99% of sexually violent acts, the accused perpetrator is male; I use this majority statistic to guide my commentary. See Cecilia Benoit et al., "Issue Brief: Sexual Violence Against Women in Canada," Status of Women Canada (2015), https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/svawc-vcsfc/issue-brief-en.pdf.

[15] Laura Jany, "Spotted at Laurier," https://m.facebook.com/SpottedWLU/posts/484880001622817.

[16] Tai Hynzie, comment on post "Addressing the women's-only section of the gym," posted to "Spotted at Laurier" Facebook group, February 11, 2014, https://m.facebook.com/SpottedWLU/posts/484880001622817.

utilizing the women's-only section. In this way, the discourse around gym inclusivity ironically functioned as a method of exclusion.

Despite this heated discourse, the opening of the women's-only section at the gym was uneventful. No one showed up to protest; no men "occupied" the women's-only section. As a regular core group of women began using the space day after day, week after week, the controversy related to the women's-only section fell off the online radar.

1.6 Purpose of the Study: Accessibility and Inclusivity in Fitness Spaces for Religious Users

Based on real-life experience working in a gym as it implemented a women's-only section, and from the dialogue taking place in real time on social media, I decided to focus my doctoral research on what I term "modesty values" in relation to religion. Several significant events in sports were transpiring at the time and inspired me to delve into this issue further. The first event was when the hijab, as a religiously and culturally affiliated garment, became the subject of controversy in 2007 after the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) implemented a hijab ban on players within its organization.[17] This ban was applied under the amended equipment rules implemented by the International Football Association Board (IFAB), which stated: "Basic compulsory equipment must not have any political, religious, or personal statement," and that "A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous to himself or another player."[18] IFAB amended the hijab ban to allow a cap that covered the players' heads to the hairline, but did not allow the fabric to go below the ears to cover the

[17] Douglas W. McLaughlin and Cesar R. Torres, "A Veil of Separation: Intersubjectivity, Olympism, and FIFA's Hijab Saga," *International journal of applied philosophy* 28, no. 2 (2014): 353.
[18] Awista Ayub, "A Closer Look at FIFA's Hijab Ban: What it Means for Muslim Players and Lessons Learned," *The SAIS Review of International Affairs* 31, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 43-44. doi:https://doi.org/10.1353/sais.2011.0010

neck.[19] This amendment did not fully satisfy all hijab-wearing players excluded by the ban. As a result, hijab-wearing players were prevented from full participation in qualifying matches for the 2012 Olympic games while the ban was in effect.[20]

The media's coverage of athletic hijab bans focused significant attention on Wodjan Shaherkani leading up to the 2012 London Summer Olympics.[21] Shaherkani was the first female athlete from Saudi Arabia to be sent to the Olympics.[22] In her sport of judo, as a hijab-wearing Muslim, she faced the issue of judo's regulatory body prohibiting head coverings.[23] If she was not permitted to wear a head covering, Shaherkani said she would not participate. The personal boundary Shaherkani set put significant pressure on the International Judo Federation and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to amend their regulations. The IOC, Judo Federation, and Shaherkani eventually came to a compromise on a style of head covering for her match, resolving the issue.[24]

After these two high-profile conflicts were covered surrounding wearing a hijab in sport, I became interested in religious modesty. Modesty in dress is an expression of religious belief and commitment among many Muslims, Jews, Christians, and other faith traditions. This study focuses on how those who consider modesty values important may feel deterred from using co-

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[19] Kevin Moore, "Football and the Olympics and Paralympics," *Sport and Society* 17, no. 5 (2014): 651.

[20] Manal Hamzeh, "Jordanian National Football Muslimat Players: Interrupting Islamophobia in FIFA's Hijab Ban." *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy* 20, no. 5 (2015): 520.

[21] Dierdre O'Neill, and Matt Mulready, "The Invisible Woman? A Comparative Study of Women's Sports Coverage in the UK National Press before and after the 2012 Olympic Games," *Journalism Practice* 9, no. 5 (2015): 654. Web.

[22] Sarah Attar is a dual Saudi Arabian/American citizen who trained and lived in the USA. She also chose to represent Saudi Arabia at this Olympics. However, there is a distinction in that Wodjan Shaherkani grew up, lived in, and trained in Saudi Arabia—a state largely hostile to women in sports.

[23] Ester Addley, "Saudi Arabia's judoka strikes blow for women's rights at Olympics," *The Guardian,* August 3 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/sport/london-2012-olympics-blog/2012/aug/03/saudi-wojdan-shaherkani-women-olympics. Accessed August 1, 2020.

[24] Liz Clarke, "Wojdan Shaherkani, first Saudi Arabian woman to compete in Olympics, loses in 82 seconds," *The Washington Post,* August 3, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/london-2012-olympics/wp/2012/08/03/wojdan-shaherkani-first-saudi-woman-to-compete-in-olympics-loses-in-about-90-seconds/. Accessed August 1, 2020.

ed recreational facilities. In addition, this research studies how the physical aspects of these spaces, such as open showers and co-ed fitness rooms, may impede inclusion of these individuals.

I designed this study to consider the organization of recreational spaces, with particular interest in whether and how these spaces may present barriers to the full participation of religious individuals who adhere to modesty values. I chose to study university students since university gyms have recently been sites of religious accessibility controversies, as outlined by my experience at Wilfrid Laurier University.

1.7 Significance of the Study—Diversity in Canada

Understanding potential barriers to full access and comfort in recreational spaces for religious minorities is becoming increasingly pertinent as the Canadian population continues to diversify. Statistics Canada reported that: "In 2019, over two-thirds (68%) of the population in Canada reported having a religious affiliation." Further, in 2016 foreign-born Canadians made up 21.9% of Canada's population, a significant increase from 16.1% of Canadians being foreign-born in 1991.[25] Statistics Canada projects that "immigrants would represent between 24.5% and 30.0% of Canada's population in 2036… These would be the highest proportions since 1871."[26]

This increase in foreign-born Canadians entails an increase in diversity as well. Some scholars have described this acceleration in diversity as "new diversity." New diversity is a phrase used across various social sciences and humanities fields to describe diversity in relation to freer migration and transnational social spaces. In *The New Diversity of Family Life in*

[25] Statistics Canada, "Table 1.1 Number and percentage of the foreign-born population, Canada, 1871 to 2016." Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census, 2016, https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/desc/Facts-desc-imm-eto.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CAN&GC=01&TOPIC=7&
[26] Statistics Canada. "Immigration and Diversity: Population Projections for Canada and its Regions, 2011 to 2036" Catalogue no. 91-551-X (January 2017) https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2017001-eng.pdf?st=wqn3a2Lx

Europe: Mobile Ethnic Groups and Flexible Boundaries, Banu Çitlak et al. explore transnationality as it affects families, including children of former immigrants, persons holding two citizenships, or being a citizen of a member state and living within more than one European country. [27] Other scholars have researched similar trends and evolutions from a Canadian perspective. Beyer and Beaman discuss how religion contributes to new diversity:

> …this new diversity included a decreasing commitment to traditional majoritarian religion (Christianity), an increase in the number of people who self-describe as having no religion, an increased number and more visible presence of religions other than the majoritarian one, and a greater presence and acknowledgment of Indigenous spiritualities brought about in part by the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its resulting Calls to Action.[28]

Beyer and Beaman identify two camps of thought within the literature on new diversity. One camp perceives conflicts between certain religions and the values of multicultural host countries create social problems, while the other finds that diversity improves the host country. They expand:

> …the greater part of the literature that actually examines the new religious diversity, above all in so-called Western countries, focuses rather on how the new migrant populations, and their second-generation descendants, are establishing their respective religious institutions and practices as they adapt to the new societies. By and large the dominant question informing this literature is not how these establishments may be creating problems in the host society, but rather the opposite: how the religions are helping the new populations with their religious diversity to successfully integrate into those societies.[29]

Sport and fitness potentially play an essential role in newcomer integration and social inclusion. Participants of this study who were recent immigrants or international students described sport as one aspect of their integration into Canadian society, as we see in Chapter 7.

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[27] Banu Çitlak, ed., *The New Diversity of Family Life in Europe: Mobile Ethnic Groups and Flexible Boundaries* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer VS, 2017).
[28] Peter Beyer and Lori Beaman, "Dimensions of Diversity: Toward a More Complex Conceptualization," *Religions* 10, no. 559 (2019): 4.
[29] Beyer and Beaman "Dimensions of Diversity," 4.

A study of sport and fitness also offers the opportunity to look at differences not only across demographics, but within demographics. Steven Vertovec coined the term "superdiversity" to describe the current dynamic of diversity in the United Kingdom, whereby scholars can no longer view diaspora communities as homogenous.[30] Vertovec uses the Somali community to demonstrate the different statuses that can occur within an ethnic group:

> … a key feature of super-diversity [is that] there may be widely differing statuses within groups of the same ethnic or national origin. For example, among Somalis in the UK and in any single locality we will find British citizens, refugees, asylum-seekers, persons granted exceptional leave to remain, undocumented migrants, and people granted refugee status in another European country but who subsequently moved to Britain. This fact underscores the point that simple ethnicity-focused approaches to understanding and engaging various minority 'communities' in Britain, as taken in many models and policies within conventional multiculturalism, is inadequate and often inappropriate for dealing with individual immigrants.[31]

This study explores whether fitness facilities are able to address the needs of an increasingly diverse clientele in a way that respects their dignity and religious commitments. As inclusion and diversity are presently key policy cornerstones for the federal Liberal government, my doctoral research vitally contributes to Canada's current sociopolitical concerns. One example of this policy focus is found with the federal Liberals' "Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan,"[32] which seeks to improve inclusivity for women, disabled individuals, Indigenous individuals, and visible minorities within publicly funded institutions.

Merli Tamtik and Melissa Guenter's research discusses the implementation of this diversity and inclusion policy mandate by comparing over 50 strategic documents from Canada's research-intensive universities to ascertain how equity and diversity policy is defined,

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[30] Steven Vertovec, "Super-diversity and its implications," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, no.6 (2007): 1025.
[31] Vertovec, "Super-diversity and its implications," 1039.
[32] Canada Research Chairs, "Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan," Government of Canada, 2018, http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/action plan-plan action-eng.aspx.

implemented, and measured.[33] Their findings indicate that diversity is not uniformly defined the same way across universities, nor defined at all in some cases.[34] The approaches taken to increasing diversity and inclusion within universities are varied, with some strategies being more successful than others. One of Tamtik and Guenter's recommendations is to incorporate the lived experiences of persons within equity groups when creating these definitions:

> Additional insights from university unions and student and faculty associations would provide valuable information on the topic. Furthermore, lived experiences of people would allow for examining of intangible factors such as the institutional culture, power relationships, behaviour, and overall campus climate, all of which are difficult to detect through document analysis. It would also allow for providing of additional perspectives on the overall motivations and rationales for universities engaging in the EDI agendas.[35]

My research undertakes some of this work by focusing on students' diverse lived religious experiences within the fitness sphere. This thesis focuses on women and visible minorities and the reader will hear the voices of these two equity groups currently targeted by the Government of Canada's inclusion plan. Some participants occupy several of these equity categories. To explore how different identities affect how fitness spaces are experienced, I define intersectionality in Chapter 2 and discuss how people navigate these intersecting identities in Chapter 6. Bearing these axes of inclusion in mind, my research findings have applicability in equity, diversity, and inclusion discussions beyond the specific focus of my research.

[33] Merli Tamtik and Melissa Guenter, "Policy Analysis of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategies in Canadian Universities—How far have we come?" *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 49, no. 3 (2019): 44.
[34] Tamtik and Guenter, "Policy Analysis," 52.
[35] Tamtik and Guenter, "Policy Analysis," 52.

1.8 Sport and Fitness as a Public Good

Organized sport is widely regarded as a public good that aids in maintaining health,[36] promotes values such as dedication to skill development,[37] and facilitates the creation of new social ties and community trust through social capital.[38] To paraphrase Eric M. Uslaner, sport builds social capital by instilling self-confidence, tolerance, and respect for rules while also building social connections.[39] These social benefits are not always the main objectives of sport, but they are natural by-products that make positive contributions to society.[40] To maximize these benefits to society, sports and fitness facilities must be inclusive of diversity.

To achieve this inclusivity, identifying barriers is the first step to removing them. Gaining a better understanding of how university recreational facilities may inadvertently limit access to significant portions of the student body could inform future initiatives that seek to develop and implement user-centred and perhaps even user-sourced designs for increased accessibility.

1.9 Sport as a Tool for Global Unity

Sport is a means of bringing people together across differences. When people contemplate sport, they often envision multinational events such as the World Cup for soccer or the Winter and Summer Olympics. The International Olympic Committee describes Olympism as a means "to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through

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[36] Alex Donaldson and Caroline F. Finch, "Sport as a Setting for Promoting Health," *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 46, no.1 (2012): 4–5.
[37] R.J. Rotella et al., "Burnout in youth sports," *The Elementary School Journal* 91, no.5: 421–428, https://doi.org/10.1086/461664.
[38] Ørnulf Seippel, "Sport and Social Capital," *Acta Sociologica* 49, no. 2 (June 2016): 169–183, doi:10.1177/0001699306064771.
[39] Eric M. Uslaner, "Democracy and Social Capital," in *Democracy and Trust*, edited by Mark E. Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 134.
[40] Uslaner, "Democracy and Social Capital," 133.

sport practiced without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play."[41]

The Olympics does not erase conflicts between countries with tenuous diplomatic relations. Rival narratives have historically continued into the games. One example is the 1980 hockey match dubbed the "miracle on ice,"[42] where the favoured-to-win Soviets faced off against the American team. Despite the perceived advantage for the Soviets, the underdog Americans won. The American view of this win was of an ideological victory of democracy over communism.[43] Yet, despite the continuation of diplomatic rivalries between countries throughout the games, the Olympics offered an arena (literally and figuratively) for promoting national unity and the opportunity to engage with the "other" on common terms.

The spectacle of sport also allows for vulnerability and the humanity of the "other" to be observed by a larger audience and can increase global empathy. For example, in 2016, amid the growing refugee crisis, the Olympic Committee permitted stateless individuals to qualify and compete in the games. People like Yusra Mardini, who fled Syria in an overcrowded boat and had to tread water for hours when the boat's engine failed, had her story broadcast over international networks. [44] In many ways, the inclusion of stateless individuals humanized the plight of refugees on a global scale and interrogated limitations of nationalism in its competition.[45]

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[41] International Olympic Committee, "Beyond the Games," IOC, last modified 2021, https://olympics.com/ioc/beyond-the-games.
[42] Mike Lopresti, "Miracle on Ice," *Indianapolis Business Journal* 40, no. 52 (2020): 31.
[43] Chad Seifried, "An Exploration into Melodrama and Sport: The 'Miracle on Ice' and the Cold War Lens," *Olympika* 19 (2010): 114.
[44] Janine Di Giovanni, "Free Style," *Vogue (New York)*, April 1, 2017, 261.
[45] Stateless individuals were permitted to compete under the Olympic flag. See Natasha Saunders and Faye Donnelly, "The Refugee Olympic Team at Rio 2016: rallying around which flag?," *Open Democracy*, March 10, 2017, https://www.opendemocracy.net/faye-donnelly-natasha-saunders/refugee-olympic-team-at-rio-2016-rallying-around-which-flag.

The participants of this study are not Olympic-caliber athletes. Most sports participation is in the day-to-day recreational activities undertaken by the general populace to maintain mental and physical health or body image. The participants in this study reflected on what sport and recreation meant to them as everyday practitioners, and what role religion played in their practice of sport and recreation. How these individuals navigated their intersecting identities to express themselves in fitness, and the barriers they encountered, tells us about the importance of proactive policies of inclusion at all levels of sport and how sports and fitness institutions can improve accessibility at any scale, from the everyday to the professional.

1.10 Research Questions: Accessibility in Athletic Spaces

Initially, my research questions were: how are individuals navigating their religious identities in athletic spaces, and what limits full accessibility in these athletic spaces? The first research question proved fruitful in learning about experiences relating to intersecting identities. As my research evolved, I realized that the limitations to athletic spaces included both physical and mental barriers and were not solely defined by the physical construction of the space itself.

My research involved listening to student experiences firsthand to consider how the spatial configuration of exercise rooms and changerooms within university athletic facilities affected the user's comfort. Some of the spatial features I explored comprised of whether changerooms had mirrors, shower curtains, or private changing stalls. I discovered that access to private and semi-private spaces for changing clothing correlated positively to an individual's comfort level in the facility. Whether fitness centers offered women's-only sections and whether those sections offered separate access points and privacy initiatives, such as frosted windows, provided insight into the perceived accessibility as discussed by participants.

In exploring religion-related obstacles to accessibility in fitness spaces, I learned a great deal about the resilience of people navigating their various identities in sport and fitness. To my surprise, shame was a common theme. Participants discussed body shame, identity shame, and religious shame, experienced in both overt and nuanced manners, as related to their pursuit of fitness. I explore how shame acts as a mental barrier to full participation in fitness for some individuals, especially focusing on it in Chapter 6.

1.11 Researcher Positionality

My positionality informs my interest in conducting this research and reflexively impacts my research approach, which centres on lived experiences. I am a female and a Canadian citizen of predominantly Eastern European heritage. I identify as a pacificist and a vegetarian for ethical reasons. I hold feminist views and am non-religious.

Since religion is the primary focus of this thesis, I must locate my religious life experience as a researcher. Although I am non-religious now, I was raised within the Eckankar religion as a child and, at one point, attended weekly gatherings with other Eckists[46] within my rural hometown. Eckists practice the singing or chanting of Hu,[47] and my most vivid memories of Eckankar involve sitting in a circular formation with others and singing Hu for extended periods. My mother and aunt would travel to Minnesota to the Temple of Eck[48] to attend seminars and would return with religious literature for my siblings and me.

[46] How most followers of Eckankar refer to themselves.
[47] Eckists believe that "Hu" is an ancient name for God and sing Hu as a sacred chant.
[48] The Temple of Eck is the center of the Eckankar faith in the United States. The building is located in Chanhassen, Minnesota.

I was also exposed to Catholicism early on through my stepfamily. I would attend a Roman Catholic church with my step-grandmother occasionally. There was tension between my stepfamily's belief in Catholicism with my mother's belief in Eckankar.

Having belonged to Eckankar, which is a little-known minority religious group, informs my positionality as a researcher. During my undergraduate studies, I learned that Eckankar is considered a new religious movement, a "cult,"[49] and a part of "American Counter-Culture"[50] by writers and scholars. When taking a university course titled: "Cults, Sects and New Religious Movements," I learned Eckankar was one of the religions we would be studying. It was an uncomfortable experience to hear my peers call the religion I was raised within "backward" and the followers "crazy" and "brainwashed" in class discussions. I felt like an outsider among my classmates, who were predominantly Christian or non-religious. Growing up in a new religious movement and having experienced the feeling of being on the outside of a Christian-centric society situates me closer as a researcher to those who practice religions, rituals, and observances that fall outside the dominant Christian hegemony in Canada.

Additionally, I have experienced gender-based violence. My experience is not uncommon in our society. Lots of women share the same experience, and this trauma bleeds into how many women live their lives. These experiences shape my perspective as a researcher and are relevant to my motivations for studying fitness spaces. I strongly empathize with the desire to feel comfortable, safe, and secure in your body while working out. In my life, access to sports has allowed me to excel and reclaim my body. Indeed, many women who experience gender-based

[49] Ronald M. Enroth, *A Guide to Cults & New Religions* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 10.
[50] Gina Misiroglu, *American Countercultures: An Encyclopedia of Nonconformists, Alternative Lifestyles, and Radical Ideas in U.S. History* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 226-227.

violence are also religious, and their experiences may impact religious practices involving the body.

My positionality informs my interest in the intersection of religion, fitness, and identity and my decision to make it the subject of this study. My experience of belonging to a minority religious group and my lived experience with gendered violence equips me with a versatile and compassionate lens to consider the research topic.

1.12 Chapter Overviews

When structuring this dissertation, I sought first to lay the foundation of where this research fits in the literature and previous research. I do this in Chapter 2, which explores historical literature within the field and addresses the contemporary literature where my research is positioned. I also explore research within the subfield of religion and sport that inform my study. After the literature review, I explore the theoretical and conceptual framework of my thesis, where I consider broader themes from the contemporary field of sociology of religion as they apply to religious identity. The following chapter, Chapter 3, delves into the methodological underpinnings of my research.

The analysis chapters of my thesis are organized thematically. I opted for this style because the chosen themes and subthemes were organically presented in clusters while coding participant interviews. Chapter 4 explores how Muslim, Christian, and non-religious participants frame their understanding of modesty in life, faith, and fitness. These three distinct groups provide significant insight into how they navigate their religious (and non-religious) understandings of modesty in situations and spaces that seem to conflict with their values.

Chapter 5 explores Christian, Muslim, and Jewish participants' understanding of the role of fitness in their lived religious practices. In this chapter, I examine how scripture, faith

messaging, and religious socialization in sports were interpreted by participants and incorporated into their lived experiences.

Chapter 6 explores how participants interpret the configuration of fitness spaces. This chapter builds on Kim Knott's spatial analysis, which considers physical and mental aspects of fitness spaces, such as how the designs of changerooms create reactions in the people using them. For example, I analyzed how participants described the emotions evoked when they viewed their bodies in a mirror as they exercised or how the presence or absence of scales affected their fitness objectives and confidence.

Chapter 7 considers the construction of identity through the lens of hockey, which participants frequently raised as a topic in interviews. This chapter considers how communities are imagined around central themes such as nationalism. This chapter highlights how our understandings of identity are constructed in relation to one another, and how hockey (among other sports) is one place where this occurs.

Lastly, Chapter 8 revisits the key themes and discoveries from the analysis chapters about how modesty values —both religious and non-religious— affects accessibility to fitness spaces. I also identify the limitations of my research and propose potential areas for future study.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Historical Review

In this chapter, I explore the literature and historical background foundational to this doctoral research. The scope of the literature pertinent to my research initially consisted of two broad themes: (1) sport and religion; and (2) contemporary sociology of religion. As my research evolved, I realized that the notion of shame was an emergent third theme that warranted consideration, largely because of the frequency with which participants in the study evoked and referenced shame. Within each of these three broad themes are multiple interconnected sub-themes that illuminate the complexity that intersectional identities add to research on religion, sport, and fitness in Canada.

Within my first theme of sport and religion, there were several bodies of literature crucial to contextualizing my research findings. These areas include the history of sport and religion, the muscularization of religion (originating with Muscular Christianity), sport accessibility, and gender in religion and sport. Three themes within sport accessibility are particularly relevant to the framing of this research: respectable femininity, gender dynamics, and masculinity in athleticism.

In the theme of sociology of religion, there were several concepts that were essential to framing and analyzing the data collected in this study. These concepts are David Hall's lived religion, the literature on religious nones, religious identity, and theories of secularization and the secular.

As my research progressed, shame became an increasingly important lens to consider in my analysis. I returned to the literature to research shame and contextualize my findings. I have

categorized the exploration of how shame plays a role in participants' lived experiences into three areas: the body and shame, primitive shame, and shame and punishment.

In conducting this research, I also determined I could not ignore an undeniable need for intersectional considerations in my analysis, as the participants' identities in the study span various social categories. Understanding the dynamic interplay of religion with gender, race, disability, queer identities, and socio-economic class is critical to understanding religious diversity in Canada. To do this, I use Kimberlé Crenshaw's lens of intersectionality, explained later. I will begin this literature review exploring my first subfield sport and religion.

2.2 Sport and Religion as a Subfield

Access to sport and fitness has far-reaching impacts on health, social well-being, public policy, community organization, and identity perception and construction. Sport is also a source of social capital.[51] Despite these societal benefits not all angles of how sport functions in society have been studied.

Much of the early research in the field of sport and religion was Christian and male-centric, dominated by an American focus. Contemporary studies have shifted towards alternative viewpoints, inclusive of a wider spectrum of people such as non-Christian religions, racial diversity, women, children, and people with disabilities. To contextualize my research, I looked first to the history of religion and sport in North America, focusing on Muscular Christianity. Examining the historical Christian and male-centric focus in the study of sport and religion made it abundantly clear that there are significant gaps in the study of non-Christian identities, gender in religion and sport, and research on sport accessibility. My research seeks to address some of

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[51] Kristin Walseth, "Bridging and Bonding Social Capital in Sport-Experiences of Young Women with an Immigrant Background," *Sport, Education and Society* 13, no. 1 (2008): 15. https://doi.org/10.1080/13573320701780498.

these gaps by applying different conceptual lenses than those historically used, such as lived experience and qualitative analysis. This study is part of the evolution of research toward the inclusion of women and historically marginalized communities.

Understanding that these research gaps exist within the sport and religion subfield helps contextualize why certain groups are less represented in the literature on the subfield's history. With this context, I will next explore the body of works and themes most prominent in foundational research on religion and sport in North America.

2.2.1 The History of Sport and Religion in North America

The development of sport and religion has unique contours in the North American context. Three research areas in sport and religion are significant in this doctoral study: sport as religion, Muscular Christianity, and the contemporary era of post-Muscular Christianity scholarship. I elaborate on each of these below.

2.2.2 Sport as Religion

There is a large body of literature on sport as a type of religion. This literature fits, for the most part, in the broader field of implicit religion as coined by Edward Bailey "…based on the idea that 'there is an irreducible spiritual or religious dimension within human existence—that everybody has some, ultimate' or set of ultimates, even if it be self."[52] This framing situates this study within definitional debates around functionalism.

A large component of the debate for or against viewing sport as religion centers around contentious definitions of what constitutes religion in the scholarship. Drawing on older

[52] Edward T. Uszynski, "Implicit Religion and the Highly-Identified Sports Fan: An Ethnography of Cleveland Sports Fandom." ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2013. 9.

definitions of religion by, for example, Emile Durkheim,[53] Thomas F. O'Dea,[54] and Talcott Parsons[55] scholars like Brian Gerard Milton argue that—following those definitions—sport can function as religion.[56]

Scholars fall into two schools of thought when viewing sport through the lens of religion. The first, championed by scholars like Milton, argues sport is an institution that serves the purpose of functioning as religion. In the conclusion of his dissertation on sport as a functional equivalent to religion he states:

> …that in contemporary Western society… 'civil religion' may be the 'real' integrating mechanism for the majority of people. It was proposed that sport forms part of this phenomenon and as such acts to integrate in a manner similar to that of sectarian religions.[57]

The second, championed by scholars like Shirl Hoffman, sees sport as integrated into the larger framework of religious practice.[58] I explore the first framework in this section, and the second in the following section.

When Milton began to argue in the early 1970s that sport was analogous to functional religion, he contended that sport had established institutional standing in North American culture, much like religion, and had gathered followers,[59] as evidenced by large crowds at sporting events and the prevalence of sports fanwear worn by mainstream society. Scholars such as Daniel L. Wann and Mary E. Goeke have also examined the role of superstition, ritual, and the subsequent emotional responses such as anxiety associated with sports fans toward their

[53] Brian Gerard Milton, "Sport as a Functional Equivalent of Religion," (School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, University of Oregon, 1972), 10.
[54] Milton, "Sport as a Functional Equivalent of Religion," 13.
[55] Milton, "Sport as a Functional Equivalent of Religion," 17.
[56] See Brian Gerard Milton, "Sport as a Functional Equivalent of Religion," 9-21.
[57] Milton, "Sport as a Functional Equivalent of Religion," 125.
[58] Shirl Hoffman, "Evangelicalism and the Revitalization of Religious Ritual in Sport," In *Sport and Religion*, edited by Shirl J. Hoffman (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 1992), 111.
[59] Milton, "Sport as a Functional Equivalent of Religion," 125.

team's success. In a recent study, Wann and Goeke identified a desire by fans to be involved (or perceive involvement) in the outcome of sporting events: Sporting events "often have powerful implications for fans' social identity, yet [fans] have little control over the outcomes of the contests. As a result, fans resort to actions such as superstitions to increase perceptions of control."[60] Many scholars have argued that sports fandom and the associated behaviours described by Wann and Goeke, such as rituals and superstition,[61] could be congruent with a functionalist definition of religion.

Another aspect of sport that requires consideration is its role in reinforcing power. Scholars have argued that sport can reinforce the power of the state or the church—or at times, both. Michael Novak asserts that "the ceremonies of sport overlap those of the state on one side, and those of the churches on the other," noting the Olympics once served the dual purpose of worshipping both the gods and state.[62] I further analyze the link between state, religion, and sport in Chapter 7, which focuses on sport as a function of national identity.

With this background provided on scholarship that considers sport as functional religion, I will next explore the approach that sees sport as part of religious practice. The next section considers proselytization movements that utilize sport in their evangelizing.

2.2.3 Proselytization Movements Using Sport

The second framework—of sport integrated as one element of religious practice, rather than sport as religion itself—itself holds within it two separate schools of thought. The first is sport as part of religious practice through proselytization movements, which I explain in this

[60] Daniel L. Wann and Mary E. Goeke, "Sport Fan Superstition: The Importance of Team Identification, Sport Fandom, and Fan Dysfunction," *Journal of Sport Behavior* 41, no. 2 (2018): 241.
[61] Daniel L. Wann and Mary E. Goeke, "Sport Fan Superstition," 240-241.
[62] Michael Novak, "The Natural Religion," in *Sport and Religion,* edited by Shirl J. Hoffman (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 1992), 37.

section. The second is practice of sport as religiously prescribed behavior, which I explore in the subsequent section.

Steven Fink's research on Dawah in Islam is one example of proselytizing in sport. [63] He interviewed 85 people, including sports administrators, educators, instructors, and Muslim athletes actively involved in the sports community.[64] Fink's work demonstrates how Muslims at the local level used sport to invite non-Muslims into dialogue to understand their religious identities and possibly convert them. Notably, some of my study's participants also used sport to expose people to religion. We will meet them in Chapter 5 and see how they view their healthy lifestyle as a signifier of the benefits of Islam to others.

Another example of proselytizing in sport is through "sport ministry." In the latter half of the 20th century, some United States evangelicals began to expand on the opportunity to showcase morality by utilizing sport as a missionizing tool to witness —a practice often called "sport ministry."[65] Annie Blazer followed women's evangelical sports teams around the United States to study this in practice. Through her research with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and the Charlotte Lady Eagles, Blazer observed the team's attempts to spread their message through sportsmanship, success, and witnessing to the broader public. Blazer found that sport ministry was not only promoting religion but also served as a reflexive religious practice for the athletes: "combining evangelicalism and sport … gave athletes the opportunity to think about the embodied experiences of sport as a way to experience intimate connection with the divine."[66]

[63] Steven Fink, *Dribbling for Dawah: Sports Among Muslim Americans* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2016).
[64] Fink, *Dribbling for Dawah*, 5.
[65] Annie Blazer, *Playing for God: Evangelical Women and the Unintended Consequences of Sports Ministry* (New York; New York University Press, 2015), 29-30.
[66] Blazer, *Playing for God*, 3.

Many participants in this thesis research articulated the concept of embodied experience in sport, which I explore in Chapter 5. Sport ministry has continued to grow in North America, remaining a significant missionizing strategy.

2.2.4 Religiously Prescribed Athleticism

Interconnection between the body and religion is important in religiously prescribed athleticism. Muscular Christianity is a type of religiously prescribed athleticism, from which Muscular Hinduism, Muscular Judaism, and Muscular Islam follow. In this section, I explore Muscular Christianity before moving on to muscular forms of Judaism and Islam.

The concept of Muscular Christianity originated in England in the 1850s to describe the writings of Thomas Hughes, a lawyer and author, and Charles Kingsley, an Anglican priest and university professor, who were concerned about the feminizing of men in their churches.[67] Muscular Christianity emerged in practice as a Protestant moral asceticism and disciplining of the body, relying on rigorous training and moral discipline as a sign of appropriate religious conduct.[68] Muscular Christianity focuses on a commitment to physical health and specific ideals of masculinity that became responsible for infusing sport with moral implications in the American context.

This type of religiously prescribed athleticism in Christianity emerged in the United States in the 1880s as a response to the imbalance of most congregants being female in Protestant churches as well as the perception of physical weakness of males in America.[69] As Putney writes, this perception of weakness may have been justified: "American Protestant churches in

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[67] Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 11.
[68] Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 1.
[69] Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 2.

the colonial and antebellum period may have indeed fostered ill-health since they tended to view artificial exercise as an immoral waste of time."[70] The introduction of Muscular Christianity in the 1880s shifted the doctrinal perspective from exercise being a waste of time to a moral obligation.

Further, the focus of Muscular Christianity is not entirely on the masculine, as it influenced conceptions of the feminine within a patriarchal lens. Women in Protestant churches were encouraged by religious leaders to be physically active within the patriarchal hierarchy implicit in Muscular Christianity.

What fitness practically looked like for women was contested. On one end were arguments for encouraging fitness for women, such as "the strengthening of women's defense against 'spiritual disaster.'"[71] Protestant women viewed the benefits gained through fitness to remedy perceived weaknesses, such as a lessening of "nervousness."[72] On the other side of this debate, fitness for women was seen as decadence. A popular child rearing expert named William McKeever stated, "training girls to be anything but mothers was not only futile; it was also immoral."[73] In the end, women's physical fitness was deemed akin to moral fitness by mainstream Protestants, and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)—an organization focused on the health and well-being of females—flourished as a result.[74] Those who disagreed with the "Strenuous Life" fractured from the mainstream movement in the 1870s and created new religions such as the women-led Christian Science movement, Theosophy, and

[70] Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 2.
[71] Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 148.
[72] Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 148.
[73] Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 148.
[74] Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 148.

the Church of the Higher Life.[75] Thus, ideals of appropriate gender roles and body ideals plagued both men and women within this movement.

Sport and fitness became a conceptual space where these ideas on the body played out, reinforcing body ideals in the daily lives of Americans. This reinforcement subjugated men viewed as feminine or weak and oppressed women who fell outside feminine ideals. The legacies from these ideals persist in gender roles in North America today. Since Muscular Christianity, Muscular Islam,[76] Muscular Judaism[77] and Muscular Hinduism[78] have sprung up, mirroring Muscular Christianity in many ways—though each with their distinct rules and justifications.

Religions that adopt a "muscular" form of practice do so in response to real or perceived threat, much as Muscular Christianity emerged from a perception that men were being "feminized."[79] The response by Protestant churches to this threat was to increase body asceticism through rigorous training and, in the American context, raise morale with nationalistic undertones. In two examples I explore below—of Muslims in mid-twentieth century South Africa and Jews facing antisemitism in the early half of the 1900s—the threat was more real than perceived, resulting from being a persecuted minority group. From these examples, we can deduce that muscularization occurs when an affected community perceives or observes threat or danger lobbied against them.

In John Nauright's research on an Islamic communities' rugby culture in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, he argues that the muscularization of Islam was a response to the

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[75] Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 150.
[76] See John Nauright's study, "Masculinity, muscular Islam and popular culture: 'coloured' Rugby's Cultural symbolism in working-class Cape Town c.1930–70," *The International Journal of History of Sport* 14, no. (1997): 184-190, for one example.
[77] See Todd Samuel Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* (London: Routledge, 2007), for one example.
[78] See Joseph S. Alter, "Yoga at the Fin de Siecle: Muscular Christianity with a 'Hindu' Twist," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 23, no. 5 (2006): 638-651, for one example.
[79] Putney, *Muscular Christianity,* 11.

threat from the majoritarian Christian population.[80] Naurigh explains the significance of rugby and the muscularization of Islam in the community to survival:

> District Six and Bo-Kaap were tightly-knit communities where people lived in close proximity and where survival for working class males often meant developing a sense of toughness centred on physical abilities. School teachers recognized the need for such toughness and both Muslim and Christian teachers stressed the significance of rugby as a game that created physical and mental toughness and group solidarity.[81]

Rugby became a regulated physical outlet and a teaching tool that reinforced masculine identity. Nauright's research shows that the muscularization process was protective in this Cape Town example.

Next, I will consider the muscularization of Judaism due to the threat of antisemitism in the 1900s. The notion of community protection through religious muscularization can also be found in this example. Muscular Judaism arose from Max Nordau's 1898 speech at the Second Zionist Congress in Basel.[82] This push towards the "muscular Jew" corresponded with the Zionist goal of a home state for Jews.[83] Muscular Judaism, operating as one tool of Zionism, sought to improve the status of Jews suffering antisemitism, poverty, and poor quality of life in European states.[84] Todd Presner highlights Nordau's argument from the first and second Zionist Congresses that "Jewish suffering—like anti-Semitism—knew no borders" and that Jews of muscle working together could defend themselves.[85] The protective role muscular Judaism plays in the Zionist movement is inextricably linked to the threat Jews faced as minority populations in nations worldwide.

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[80] Nauright, "Masculinity, muscular Islam and popular culture," 189.
[81] Nauright, "Masculinity, muscular Islam and popular culture," 185.
[82]Presner, Todd Samuel. "Clear Heads, Solid Stomachs, and Hard Muscles: Max Nordau and the Aesthetics of Jewish Regeneration." *Modernism/modernity* 10, no. 2 (2003): 269. https://doi.org/10.1353/mod.2003.0045.
[83] Presner, Todd Samuel. *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration*. (London: Routledge, 2007,) 11.
[84] Presner, *Muscular Judaism*, 53.
[85] Presner, *Muscular Judaism*, 1.

The muscularization process of religious communities contributes to our understanding as scholars of the power dynamics in diverse, multicultural societies like Canada. It also aids in our understanding of Canada's sporting past.[86] Understanding how muscularization is embedded in some religious understandings' sheds light on how people who identify as religious participate in sport, understand their bodies, and even conceptualize their own identities.

Muscularization emphasizes a particular physical ideal that is not attainable for all. As I expand upon below, people—especially women—view their bodies in diverse ways and develop varied fitness goals. Accessibility in fitness relies on gym administrators focusing on user-centred inclusion to maximize the space's potential to accommodate these different goals and values. Below, I expand on how conceptions of modesty affect how people approach fitness spaces like gyms and what barriers to access exist for different sets of values.

2.2.5 Sport Accessibility

Before the early 2000s, much scholarship in religious studies primarily operated within an orientalist framework, and one that centred white males, particularly when discussing accessibility.[87] More recently, some critical scholars have endeavored to shift away from the field's bias towards white males, emphasizing a greater qualitative component to research when studying marginalized groups. My study is part of this movement towards centring the voices of those we study. There is a gap in research on women, children, queer identities, and non-Christian religions in sport. This doctoral research seeks those understudied perceptions of

[86] Paul W. Bennett, "Training 'Blue-Blooded' Canadian Boys: Athleticism, Muscular Christianity, and Sports in Ontario's 'Little Big Four' Schools, 1829–1930," *Journal of Sport History* 43, no. 3 (2016): 253–71.
[87] In Edward W. Said. *Orientalism.* 25th ed. (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2014,) 94-96. Said argues that the West constructs tropes, imagery, and fantasy around the East—that is, harmful orientalist constructions—that serve the continuation of Western hegemonic power while inaccurately representing the inhabitants of the East. Orientalist frameworks maintain Western power while broadly framing the East as the lesser-than and backwards other.

fitness and health. To understand the links between religion, sport, and accessibility it is essential to consider sport accessibility for all, not just for Christian males, as the historical scholarship has tended to spotlight.

Sport institutions frame modesty values in some situations as a barrier to full participation, particularly when creating exclusionary policy. An example of this is FIFA (discussed in the first chapter) restricting religiously significant clothing under the guise of safety or tradition despite the argument being unfounded.[88] Often, religious adherence is not in conflict with sport, but as sport operates under the guise of secularism in the West, sport institutions introduce the perception of conflict with, for example, headwear bans that do not impede the sport. This "created conflict"—created, that is, by institutions enacting top-down regulations—commonly affects Muslim women who veil in sport.

Whether sport is or is not accessible to religious individuals, particularly religious women is increasingly relevant in the ever-diversifying world. Gender segregation, modesty, and clothing restrictions in a globalized context are of particular interest to me, and are foregrounded through this study. The dimensions of women's modesty values are varied, and affect women differently in how they approach fitness. The following sections will explore Muslim women and their challenges, agency and freedoms, in the pursuit of sport.

2.2.6 Islam and Women

Because religious garments for Muslim women in sport are so policed and sensationalized, there is subsequently a fair amount of scholarship dedicated to sport accessibility and Muslims. The culture versus religion debate over garments women may wear as

[88] Hamzeh, "Jordanian National Football Muslimat Players," 517.

part of their adherence to modesty values is also discussed in the literature. The success of these discussions in advocating for increased accessibility for these women is mixed. Tracey Taylor and Kristine Toohey, for example, refer to religious modesty practices in their 1998 study as cultural rather than religious.[89] While Taylor and Toohey's work aims to increase the accessibility of sport for Muslim women, they approach this goal without explaining whether their participants see their practice as cultural or religious. Susan Tirone's 1997 doctoral research similarly dichotomizes certain practices as cultural rather than religious, without positioning whether the women they interviewed felt the same way about such distinctions. [90] The construction of this distinction between culture versus religious practice can fall into the trap of Orientalism if practices are stereotyped as culture by outsiders.

Tansin Benn, Gertrud Pfister, and Haifaa Jawad's edited volume, *Muslim Women in Sport*,[91] actively shift away from orientalist assumptions by offering a holistic view of accessibility challenges for Muslim women in sport on a global and local scale. The authors of this anthology enact this shift without ascribing practices as either religious or cultural, but through discussion with their participants on the origins and shape of those values.

Low participation rates for Muslim females in sport have generated discussion of sport's potential incompatibility with Islam among some scholars, but other research—such as Walseth et al.'s 2014 study—complicates such discursive assumptions.[92] Yuka Nakamura studied Canadian second-generation Muslim and immigrant women and found that Muslim women were

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[89] Tracy Taylor and Kristine Toohey, "Negotiating Cultural Diversity for Women in Sport: from assimilation to Multiculturalism," *Race Ethnicity and Education* (1998): 75-90.
[90] Susan Claudia Tirone, *Balancing leisure, community and cultural traditions: South Asian adolescents in Canada*, Phd diss. University of Waterloo, 1997.
[91] Tansin Benn, Gertrud Pfister and Haifaa Jawad, *Muslim Women in Sport*, eds. (London: Routledge, 2011).
[92] Kristin Walseth et al., "Young Norwegian-Pakistani Women and Sport: How Does Culture and Religiosity Matter?," *European Physical Education Review* 20, no. 4 (2014): 489-507.

indeed carving out a space for themselves in sport “on their own terms.”[93] Nakamura suggests that the Western world’s sporting culture is different from Muslim societies, where modesty in dress, controlled access points to facilities, and gender segregation in sport is commonplace.[94] The difference in the organization within Western gyms may result in the space having exclusionary properties towards modesty practices embedded in its design.

Despite these potential spatial barriers, Hamzeh and Oliver’s study on Muslim girls who did not wear a western-styled swimsuit found there was a constant negotiation of access to swimming by participants. They found that by offering flexibility in supporting varied and often fluid interpretations of modesty, the girls could swim on their and their family’s terms.[95] Their research challenged the argument that Islam is incompatible with sport and fitness, as does the research in this dissertation.

Athletes marginalized due to their religious practices often become agents of change by challenging what excludes them. They do this by finding ways to compete and participate despite limitations put on them by social and institutional regulations. This perseverance is explained in Mahfoud Amara’s research on veiled women competing in the Olympics.[96] Athletes also negotiate and carve out a space for their inclusion, as highlighted by Beckie Supiano, who studied women’s-only hours in gyms and the challenges women encountered in advocating for that accommodation.[97] Dagkas et al., who looked at ways of increasing participation among Muslim girls, suggested that many driving factors for increasing participation in sport originates

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[93] Yuka Nakamura, “Beyond the hijab: female Muslims and physical activity,” *Women in Sport & Physical Activity Journal* 11, no.2 (2002): 21.
[94] Nakamura, “Beyond the hijab: female Muslims and physical activity,” 46.
[95] Manal Hamzeh and Kimberly L. Oliver, “Because I am a Muslim, I cannot wear a Swimsuit,” *Research quarterly for exercise and sport* 83, no. 2 (2013): 337.
[96] Mahfoud Amara, “Veiled Women Athletes in the 2008 Beijing Olympics: Media Accounts,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 4 (2012): 638-651.
[97] Beckie Supiano, “In College Gyms, a Time for Women Only,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 54, no. 28 (2008): A19.

from the Muslim community itself.[98] This included parents encouraging daughters to participate in sports and Muslims supporting their peers in sport.[99]

Complicating these arguments, Amara raises an issue with sport accessibility for Muslims through her analysis of a French case study.[100] She argues that sport acts as another highly politicized space for Muslim athletes to be judged on their level of integration into the French community. She says,

> Sport is becoming the space to test the success of "integration" policies of minorities into the host society and to question the loyalty of Muslim minorities to the "host" nation. Muslims of immigrant origin are caught between affirming their (multiple) identities while avoiding and combating stigmatisation both in their country of birth and country of origin.[101]

Muslim athletes are faced with the undue task of being judged on their ability to navigate the identities of the host culture in sport, which may discourage engagement in sport.

Additionally, expression of religion other than Christianity is often frowned upon by sports institutions and the dominant Christian culture on the field, pool, and court in the West, as exemplified by professional sports. For example, in 2014, the National Football League (NFL) penalized Husain Abdullah of the Kansas City Chiefs[102] for unsportsmanlike conduct after he intercepted the ball and, in celebration, went down on the ground and prostrated.[103] Critics of the NFL's penalty against Abdullah cited examples of Christian players dropping to one knee

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[98] Symeon Dagkas, Tansin Benn and Haifaa Jawad, "Multiple voices: improving participation of Muslim girls in physical education and school sport," *Sport, Education and Society* 16, no. 2 (2011): 231.
[99] Dagkas et al., "Multiple voices," 237.
[100] Mahfoud Amara, "Sport, Islam, and Muslims in Europe: in between or on the margin?," *Religions* 4, no. 4 (2013): 644-656.
[101] Mahfoud Amara, "Veiled Women Athletes in the 2008 Beijing Olympics: Media Accounts," (2012) 654.
[102] Some Indigenous peoples find this team name offensive due to the appropriation of the term "chief" and use of racist iconography and chants related to the sport franchise.
[103] Cindy Boren, "NFL Penalizes Muslim Player for Praying; League Says It Was Wrong (updated)," *The Washington Post*, September 30, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/early-lead/wp/2014/09/30/nfl-penalizes-muslin-player-for-praying-after-chiefs-touchdown/.

without being punished as evidence of unfair bias against Abdullah's mode of celebrating.[104] These discriminatory outcomes for Muslim ways of celebrating may also discourage Muslim participation in sport.

In the West, Christianity frames accepted rituals so those not expressing Christian values are sanctioned. Participants of this study challenge such dominant structures by asserting their belonging in fitness spaces not made with their values in mind. To support my analysis of how they do this, it is important to consider participants' experiences through the lens of intersectionality.

2.2.7 Intersectionality

Intersectionality considers the interrelated ways experiences of class, race, gender, sex, education, employment, language, religion, immigration status, and disability pose privileges or barriers for individuals or groups as they move through society. Kimberlé Crenshaw conceived the term "intersectionality" to describe the overlapping challenges Black women faced as a result of race- and gender-based marginalization:

> One of the very few Black women's studies books is entitled All the Women Are White; All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us are Brave. I have chosen this title as a point of departure in my efforts to develop a Black feminist criticism because it sets forth a problematic consequence of the tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis.[105]

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[104] Timothy Richard Tebow provides a prominent example of Christian prayer on the field. Tebow is a professional baseball player with the New York Mets and a former professional football player in the NFL with the Denver Broncos and New York Jets. He is well known for taking a knee in prayer on the field, which became known as "tebowing." He has been outspoken about his Christian faith throughout his professional sport careers in football and baseball.

[105] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, Article 8 (1989): 139. http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8.

Crenshaw recognized that while there were ways to frame gendered and racial discrimination on their own, nothing framed how these two forms of discrimination (as well as others) interacted when combined:

> In other words, in race discrimination cases, discrimination tends to be viewed in terms of sex- or class-privileged Blacks; in sex discrimination cases, the focus is on race- and class-privileged women. This focus on the most privileged group members marginalizes those who are multiply-burdened and obscures claims that cannot be understood as resulting from discrete sources of discrimination.[106]

Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality encourages us to engage with hybrid identities. The participants in this research hold multifaceted identities, and experience marginalization on multiple axes.

While intersectionality is a useful framework for considering the different ways that individuals are disadvantaged through systems of social organization, there are also critiques of the approach. Walby et al. highlight challenges in how intersectionality is often applied in research, noting in particular the significance of class in the framework. [107] I discuss other challenges later in the religious identity section, as intersectionality struggles to account for identity categories that are unstable.

Another relevant challenge to intersectionality as voiced by Walby et al. is "how to conceptualize the intersections so that bringing the agency of the disadvantaged into focus does not leave the actions of the powerful out of sight?"[108] This is challenging when highlighting the positive examples of negotiation and agency that occur in sport by marginalized people. Often these positive forms of negotiation and agency receive little attention. Many Muslim women negotiate their identities in ways that are simply part of everyday life—what Selby et al. describe

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[106] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 140.
[107] Sylvia Walby, Jo Armstrong, and Sofia Strid, "Intersectionality: Multiple Inequalities in Social Theory," *Sociology (Oxford)* 46, no. 2 (2012): 228. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038511416164.
[108] Walby et al., "Intersectionality" 228.

as “nonevents.”[109] Indeed, paying attention to nonevents can illustrate how Muslim women exercise agency. The fact that these challenges need to be negotiated at all is often a result of structural racism, misogyny, Christian dominance, or prejudice. How do we balance highlighting the agency of people facing barriers without minimizing the effects of power structures that disadvantage? I will revisit this question throughout this dissertation.

In the next section I focus on how gender intersects with religious identities in the context of sport, paying particular attention to the different socialization of men and women into sports and gendered body ideals.

2.2.8 Gender Socialization and Construction in Sport

Gender, religion, age, and race play a major role in social constructions of physical activity. Women are socialized into sports differently than men. Park and Mangan historicize cultural perspectives on women in sport in different locations, discussing sexual fears around women as athletes, the morality of female athletes, ideals around women as feminine and soft, and the creation of women’s physical education.[110] Park and Mangan highlight that “it has been social convention, not biological potential, which has constrained women’s participation in sports, active leisure pursuits, and even healthy exercise.”[111]

We see the lingering effects of such social conventions as women continue to break into what were once seen as hyper-masculine male-dominated sports, such as mixed martial arts (MMA). It was only in 2013 that the Ultimate Fighting Championship, the largest MMA sports

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[109] Jennifer A Selby, Lori G. Beaman, and Amélie Barras. *Beyond Accommodation: Everyday Narratives of Muslim Canadians*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018), 5.
[110] J.A. Mangan and Roberta J. Park, *From “Fair Sex” to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Eras* (London: Routledge, 1987). While the edited volume outlines the realities of female socialization in sport in different regions, it predominantly focuses on white British, Commonwealth and American perspectives. There are gaps left to be filled in the literature on how regions outside these areas socialize girls into sport.
[111] Mangan and Park, *From “Fair Sex” to Feminism*, 7.

franchise in the world, added a female division.[112] A female participant in my study raised the lingering stigma about women in MMA, saying her interest in the sport had led people to call her "butch," presumably because many viewers of the sport still frame MMA within the masculine domain.

Contemporary mainstream media perpetuates gender stereotypes and ideals, aiding in this socialization. Nisara Jiwani and Geneviève Rail, who studied young Shia women in fitness, found that "the participants construct physical activity mostly in terms of fitness activities that are accessible to them as Muslim women, in terms of feeling good about themselves, and in terms of losing or maintaining weight."[113] Weight loss plays a role in the prevailing diet discourse that delegitimizes fat women's bodies. Jiwani and Rail note that the "the young women in our study tend to reproduce dominant messages about fat bodies."[114] They found that young women were informed through media messaging on the "ideal" body.

Zeina Abou-Rizk and Genevieve Rail build on this idea of the media presenting gendered ideals in sport through their study that considers how Lebanese-Canadian Muslims construct their ideas of good health from within their hybrid identities.[115] Abou-Rizk and Rail's findings highlight that, to these women, to be feminine and physically fit was to be thin and have little body fat.[116] According to the women they interviewed, fitness was not so much a reflection of

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[112] Jennifer McClearen, *Fighting Visibility: Sports Media and Female Athletes in the UFC* (Urbana, Chicago; Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2021), 1.
[113] Nisara Jiwani and Geneviève Rail, "Islam, Hijab and Young Shia Muslim Canadian Women's Discursive Constructions of Physical Activity," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 27, no. 3 (2010): 263. https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.27.3.251.
[114] Jiwani and Rail, "Islam, Hijab and Young Shia Muslim," 257.
[115] Zeina Abou-Rizk and Geneviève Rail. "'Judging a Body by Its Cover': Young Lebanese-Canadian Women's Discursive Constructions of the 'Healthy' Body and 'Health' Practices." *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* 16, no. 1 (2013): 150. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-012-9757-5.
[116] Abou-Rizk and Rail. "Judging a Body by Its Cover," 154.

one's strength and bodily capabilities as it was the aesthetics of the body. Joy M. Kozar and Mary Lynn Damhorst found something similar in their study on views of the ideal body through different age groups: Younger age groups in their study—which spanned the age range 30 to 80—were more inclined to compare their bodies to fashion models and were more dissatisfied with their body's appearance.[117] The possibility that many women draw their views on their ideal body from fashion images rather than through athletes shows a discrepancy between the realities of a fit body versus media images of bodies aesthetically chosen with the intent to sell clothing.

Embedded ideals based on the Protestant Ethic and Muscular Christianity are also important to consider. To essentialize the Protestant Ethic as theorized by Max Weber in the nineteenth century, success is the by-product of hard work; to be poor or unsuccessful is a moral failing; subsequently to be excessively overweight is a moral failing, because the individual is viewed as lazy, having not put in the work to achieve a "healthy body."[118] Some proponents of Muscular Christianity idealized female forms that were soft-featured yet strong for childbearing, reflecting depictions of femininity in Christian religious texts. Clifford Putney highlights a quote from YWCA worker Abbey Matthews that "'degeneracy applied more to the limp anaemic maiden' of yesterday than it did to 'the ruddy cheeked, full-limbed girl of to-day.'"[119] We can see how in the late 1800s and early 1900s the ideal female body shifted from strong to weak through the instrumentalization of these ideals.

In contrast to the thin bodies marketed in fashion, we are currently seeing a hybridization of thinness with voluptuous curves as an emergent challenge to Muscular Christianity. This

[117] Joy M. Kozar and Mary Lynn Damhorst, "Comparison of the Ideal and Real Body as Women Age: Relationships to Age Identity, Body Satisfaction and Importance, and Attention to Models in Advertising," *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 27, no. 3 (July 2009): 207. doi:10.1177/0887302X08326351.
[118] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Stephen Kalberg, 3rd Roxbury ed. (Roxbury Pub. Co., 2002).
[119] Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 148.

concept of "thickness" is a beauty standard that developed from Black body ideals that "challeng[e] white body standards."[120] This new hybridized "thickness" diverges from the original Black beauty standards associated with thickness in that feminine curves are contrasted with very thin waists.[121] This ideal also differs from the bodies of many female athletes, who strive for muscle functionality over aesthetics. Female athletic bodies that do not meet the ideal of soft femininity are often characterized negatively as masculine or manly. Athletes who have been judged negatively on the musculature of their bodies by spectators despite otherwise being "thick" include tennis stars Serena Williams and Mary Pierce.[122]

These contrasting body ideals of thinness in fashion, the soft femininity of the Protestant ethic, and an awareness of the societal judgement that occurs for women that are perceived as too muscular or too fat, create a dilemma for women when considering what their "ideal" body is and how to attain it: to be thin but still have curves, to be muscular but not so muscular as to look masculine, or to be "thick" but not fat.

The ideal male body in North American culture contrasts quite strongly with the ideal female body. Societal preference for largeness and bulky muscles reflects ideals situated within a gender-binary framework. In a study conducted by Richard A. Leit et al., one group of male participants were exposed to media depictions of muscular men, while another only viewed neutral images. The study found that men who had been exposed to images of muscular men perceived themselves as less muscular and needing more muscle to reach their ideal body

[120] Elizabeth Hughes, "'I'm Supposed To Be Thick': Managing Body Image Anxieties Among Black American Women," *Journal of Black Studies* 52, no. 3 (2021): 313. doi:10.1177/0021934720972440.
[121] Katherine Appleford, "'This Big Bum Thing Has Taken over the World': Considering Black Women's Changing Views on Body Image and the Role of Celebrity," *Critical Studies in Fashion & Beauty* 7, no. 2 (2016): 195. https://doi.org/10.1386/csfb.7.2.193_1.
[122] Buster Mottram, "The Wrong Kind of Girl Power," *The Spectator (London. 1828)*, June 26, 1999, 17.

goals.[123] Male body ideals are socialized at a young age, just as they are for women through social depictions favouring certain body types. Even young boys are aware that a thin body is less preferable than a muscular body. Magdala Peixoto Labre found in her research that boys as young as 5 and 6 years old showed a preference for a muscular male body.[124]

It is important to acknowledge the role that gender plays in perceptions around ideal body types and modesty, particularly when conducting qualitative research with an intersectional approach. Religiously influenced modesty values and/or ideas of femininity often conflict with—or lack clear integration into—institutional understandings of sport spaces as secular. The literature reveals that sport is not a neutral space in relation to gender. Gender norms create power dynamics between people with different religious and cultural identities. I will explore these dynamics further in Chapters 6 and 7, discussing how sport spaces such as changerooms and gyms can generate both shame and belonging. Fitness culture, in many ways, weaponizes shame—particularly body shame—through the gendered ideals explored above.

2.2.9 Sport and Religion Conclusion

The study of sport and religion analyzes intersections between gender ideals, sport socialization, marginalization, shifting body ideals, and accessibility. Understanding these junctures is necessary because they bleed outside the parameters of sport and religion as a subfield. We will see overlap between these concepts in the next few sections in the literature on the sociology of religion, particularly within the sections on identity, negotiation, and shame.

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[123] Richard A. Leit, James J. Gray and Harrison G. Pope Jr., "The Media's Representation of the Ideal Male Body: A Cause for Muscle Dysmorphia?" *The International Journal of Eating Disorders* 31, no. 3 (2002): 337. https://doi.org/10.1002/eat.10019.
[124] Magdala Peixoto Labre, "Adolescent Boys and the Muscular Male Body Ideal," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 30, no. 4 (2002): 234. doi:10.1016/S1054-139X(01)00413-X.

Foundationally, it is important to understand that in the early stages of research on sport and religion, a disproportionate amount of the scholarship was centred on Christian males. As time passed, the field has become increasingly interdisciplinary and intersectional, including a wider variety of identities. While women are receiving increasing attention from scholars of religion, there is still a dearth of inquiry into religion and sport pertaining to children and LGBTQ+ identities. By considering where the field originated and recognizing the gaps, the field can be directed towards where we want to collectively go—towards more representative research.

2.3 Sociology of Religion

The sociology of religion has undergone developments in recent decades that have generated a necessary differentiation between historical sociology of religion and contemporary work in the field. My focus is on the contemporary sociology of religion and, in particular, lived religion, religious nones, and notions of the secular. These areas interrogate how we study, classify, and identify religion and those who are religious in sociology. These lines of inquiry set the foundation for understanding participants' lived experiences.

Studying people who do not locate their religiosity in institutions or who have no religion at all has become important in contemporary society and the sociology of religion. This study of non-institutionalized religion has become a topic of inquiry termed "lived religion."[125] Those who do not locate themselves within a religious framework are often referred to as religious nones. The undercurrent of the secular is important because participants frequently invoke it, and what they mean by "secular" is context-dependent.

[125] David D. Hall, *Lived Religion in America Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1997).

Identity is constructed in relation to various lived experiences and influences from peers, family, and community. In this section, I will explore the instability of identity categories and the navigation of identity by those whose lived experiences may not align with institutional ideas of religion.

2.3.1 Religious Identity

A person's identity is frequently conceptualized in relation to lived experiences with peers, family, and community. This relational context was evident in the people I interviewed for my research. This section will explore the instability of identity categories and the navigation of identity.

Categories of self-conceptualization that previously were perceived as binary are routinely fracturing into, and becoming recognized as, complex identities. As Rogers Brubaker describes:

> This [fracturing] has been most spectacular in the domain of sex and gender; but as the literature on superdiversity suggests, it has been striking in the domain of race and ethnicity as well, and in the related domains of religion and language. In all these domains, the landscape of identity categories has become much more complex, fluid, and fragmented. Uncertainties and ambiguities in identifying oneself or categorizing others have been thematized and highlighted, and prevailing practices of counting, categorizing, and classifying have been challenged. New categories have proliferated; old categories have come to seem ill-fitting; and the very act of categorization itself has been challenged.[126]

The splintering of various identity categories creates boons and barriers in research, with the barriers described in the excerpt above. On the one hand, scholars are newly able to gain insight into how individuals view themselves based on how they identify. New conceptions of identity provide greater choice and autonomy in self-identification, which is important when we consider

[126] Rogers Brubaker, "The Dolezal Affair: Race, Gender, and the Micropolitics of Identity," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39, no. 3 (2016): 416. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2015.1084430.

the authority and power dynamics outsiders inflict when constructing the imagined identities of others, as argued by Edward Said in *Orientalism*.[127]

New conceptions of identity and the splintering of previous identity categories seem to arise naturally out of an increasingly superdiverse world. As Brubaker describes:

> Prevailing frameworks governing racial and ethnic diversity (and religious and linguistic diversity as well) presuppose a population neatly segmented into a small number of clearly bounded, easily identifiable, relatively stable categories. But changing immigration (and post-immigration) patterns, rising intermarriage rates, and increasingly fluid practices of self-identification have generated a much more complex, less stable, and less easily "legible" pattern of racial and ethnic heterogeneity.[128]

Peter Beyer and Rubina Ramji's research is helpful for understanding the complexity of how identity categories vary based on geography. Their comparative study on Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist 1.5 and 2nd generation immigrants describes ways of identifying, relating, and constructing personal religious identity in the diaspora complemented by the construct of glocalization.[129] For their sample population, identity is not a static enterprise, but rather subject to local, global, and individual considerations.

As unstable categories are best studied by allowing participants to self-identify as they choose, I took this approach when constructing my study. This self-identification began with the call for participants, which listed that the study required "religious" individuals. As originally conceived, to participate, one would have to self-identify as religious.[130] Self-identification continued when participants expressed their own understanding of their religious identity, gender identity, and racial or ethnic identity. Self-identification was useful when a participant identified

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[127] Edward W. Said. *Orientalism.* 25th ed. (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2014,) 22-23.
[128] Brubaker, "The Dolezal Affair," 418.
[129] Peter Beyer and Rubina Ramji, *Growing Up Canadian: Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 54. "Glocalization" refers to the practice of doing business by respecting both local and global considerations.
[130] Despite seeking religious participants, the call-out resulted in some non-religious individuals participating. This is discussed further in the demographics section of Chapter 3.

as Muslim despite drinking alcohol, not attending mosque, or praying. This is because scholars can learn why a person identifies as Muslim, rather than eliminating them from the category of Muslim based on sweeping assumptions of what it means to be Muslim.

Ultimately, how individuals categorized themselves was not the crux of this research, but rather how individuals navigated through fitness spaces and how their intersecting identities impacted that negotiation. Many individuals in this study negotiated their identities through what Selby et al. call nonevents: "We analyze and situate moments in which religiosity is 'worked out,' sometimes so casually and subtly that we have described them as 'nonevents' because they are not memorable or remarkable."[131] I would consider many negotiations described by participants to fall into this category of nonevent, for example selecting a women's-only space over a co-ed space or changing in a toilet stall instead of the general changeroom for modesty reasons.

The ability to study these moments of negotiation relies on shifting research focus away from what Courtney Bender et al. identify as the four main "edges" underlining the contemporary and historical field of the sociology of religion. The case made throughout Bender et al.'s edited volume is for moving sociology of religion away from Christian, Western-centric, congregation-adhering populations, towards other less studied groups and new conceptual directions. [132] This shift of focus away from Christian, doctrine-based religion towards other beliefs is done in my study with the purposeful and proactive inclusion of non-Christian people. Bender et al. suggest "following where religion goes,"[133] which in the case of this study is fitness

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[131] Selby et al., *Beyond Accommodation*, 5.
[132] Courtney Bender, Wendy Cadge, Peggy Levitt and David Smilde. "Introduction Religion on the Edge: De-Centering and Re-Centering." In *Religion on the Edge*. Edited by Courtney Bender. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199938629.003.0001.
[133] Courtney Bender, Wendy Cadge, Peggy Levitt and David Smilde. "Conclusion: Working the Edges." In *Religion on the Edge*. Edited by Courtney Bender. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 290.

spaces. They also encourage scholars to conduct "research on nontraditional religions, nontraditional religious spaces, and questions beyond their own national or cultural tradition," which in turn results in a greater diversity in identities captured.[134]

Throughout this thesis, I explore different kinds of identity and how they are navigated in fitness and society at large. There is a particular emphasis on identity in Chapter 7, which considers how communities are built around a sense of shared identity, sometimes through the practice or appreciation of sport. Though community can be constructed through a shared sense of identity, many participants voiced shame arising from navigating within a society that at times seems hostile to their values. In the next section, I explore concepts of shame as it relates to fitness and the body in the context of religion.

2.3.2 Shame

The open-ended questions I asked my study participants about their practice of fitness allowed themes to emerge organically from their responses. As I analyzed my interviews, the theme of shame was impossible to ignore. Shame was not an area I originally set out to explore, so I went back to the literature to consider how to conceptualize shame and its role in my participants' lives.

Shame permeates spaces where the body is on display. Many participants expressed shame about their bodies and a desire not to be naked in public changerooms. Participants also described how they responded to body shame through changing their behaviours, such as changing in stalls to avoid real or perceived judgement towards their bodies from others.

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[134] Bender et al., "Conclusion: Working the Edges," 290.

Scholars distinguish between two main types of shame: primitive shame, and pure shame. Primitive shame, as introduced by Martha Nussbaum, is the "demand for perfection and the consequent inability to tolerate any lack of control or imperfection."[135] Primitive shame invokes disgust and points to an irrational desire to avoid vulnerability. On the other hand, pure shame—as conceptualized by Jean-Paul Sartre—is shame that exists naturally without social conditioning. As described by Sartre, "Pure shame is not a feeling of being this or that guilty object but in general of being an object; that is, of recognizing *myself* in this degraded, fixed, and dependent being which I am for the Other."[136] Pure shame can be essentialized as an awareness of our existence.

Drawing on Nussbaum's work on primitive shame and Sartre's work on pure shame, Luna Dolezal argues that the need for belonging drives shame.[137] In particular, "what gives shame its significance is the human need for connections to others through the physical body, or what we can understand as a form of primary belonging."[138] Dolezal distinguishes a positive and negative aspect of shame, in that shame is both a painful understanding of one's flaws situated in their social context and serves as a way to use the physical vulnerability to relate to others in our social context.[139] Dolezal's framing of shame seems plausible when considering the sphere of sports and fitness as a space where individuals wish to feel a sense of belonging. In the course of my study, I heard a number of stories of shame from my participants that drove them to avoid the gym or alter the way they did fitness.

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[135] Martha Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 271.
[136] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Estella Barnes, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), 312.
[137] Luna Dolezal, "Shame, Vulnerability and Belonging: Reconsidering Sartre's Account of Shame," *Human Studies* 40, no. 3 (2017): 422. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-017-9427-7.
[138] Dolezal, "Shame, Vulnerability and Belonging," 422.
[139] Dolezal, "Shame, Vulnerability and Belonging," 422.

Dolezal also explores the significance of body shame in identity formation, recognition, and social relations.[140] Dolezal views shame as a significant emotion and the core of what makes us human, something that links our bodies with the social world. Body shame plays a significant role in forming identity and interpersonal relations in social spheres. Many individuals in my research highlighted occasions when shame became oppressive. Oppressive shame was a particularly prominent subject among participants when discussing body ideals and what falls outside of those ideals.

Lisa Guenther in "Shame and the Temporality of Social Life" follows similar logic, highlighting that while shame can be destructive in the way it isolates whoever is being othered, it can also be helpful for interpersonal relationships.[141] Guenther explores interrelational aspects of shame through an exploration of the works of Jean-Paul Sartre, Emmanuel Levinas, and Simone de Beauvoir. Guenther's position that "shame may even function as a protective defense against the contingencies of social life," rings true in my own research, as participants predict the reaction of others to their own actions.[142] We will see through the analysis chapters how participants in my study protect themselves from and respond to shame.

Nussbaum sees primitive shame as the backdrop of a more acceptable form or display of shame. An example of a more acceptable display of shame is the shaming of others. Throughout my interviews many individuals described how they have been on the receiving end of shaming. Some examples include shaming for maintaining long hair as a male for religious reasons, not

[140] Luna Dolezal, *The Body and Shame: Phenomenology, Feminism, and the Socially Shaped Body* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2015).
[141] Lisa Guenther, "Shame and the Temporality of Social Life," *Continental Philosophy Review* 44, no. 1 (2011): 24. doi:10.1007/s11007-011-9164-y.
[142] Guenther, "Shame and the Temporality of Social Life," 24.

wearing a hijab or wearing a hijab, not wearing modest enough clothing or clothing that is too modest, and not wearing a purity ring.

Agnes Heller proposes another wide-ranging theory of shame in her research on shame regulation.[143] Heller's position on shame regulation is that the combination of social norms an individual needs to adhere to is not rational, but that we partake in social norms to be accepted. Heller outlines the irrationality of social norms with the illogical and sometimes contradictory views of what is or is not modest and how it varies across culture, religion, and geography. However, she highlights that the *observance* of such norms is rational because the societal pressures people experience when going against them can be detrimental. An example is how individuals do not walk naked in the streets during hot summer days despite how "no one can reasonably convince us why we should not do so. Anyone who walks naked in the streets is considered mad."[144] This concept of shame regulation is particularly prominent in this dissertation's exploration of situations involving changerooms.

If shame regulation operates to prevent negative social feelings for the individual, how then is shame reinforced externally? Phillip Wüschner describes an "economy of guilt" as a societal explanation for the reinforcement of shame by a collective group.[145] Wüschner's research draws on Michel Foucault's punitive models, alongside Sara Ahmed's work on "affective economy,"[146] to argue that modern forms of punishment have not replaced shaming as a form of punishment; rather, they have been "transformed into an economy of guilt where it lives on as micro-political shame or embarrassment."[147]

[143] Agnes Heller, *The Power of Shame: A Rational Perspective*, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 2018). https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203710975.
[144] Heller, "The Power of Shame," 13-14.
[145] Phillip Wüschner, "Shame, Guilt, and Punishment," *Foucault Studies* 23 (2017): 90.
[146] Ahmed, Sara. "Affective Economies." *Social Text* 22, no. 2 (2004): 121.
[147] Wüschner, "Shame, Guilt, and Punishment," 87.

The "Spotted at Laurier" Facebook posts presented in the introduction exemplify this economy of guilt, particularly in the labelling of women who desired a women's-only space as "feminazis." The use of a derogatory term invoking a political regime responsible for millions of deaths is punitive and embarrassing, meant to silence and prevent further engagement on the topic.

I found in this doctoral study that, though many participants alluded to feelings of shame, they avoided naming it outright. Thomas Scheff's research proposes that this hesitation to name shame weakens shame literature and shame-focused research.[148] Scheff points out that there are many synonyms for shame that participants in studies often use: "there are hundreds of words and phrases in English that can be used to refer to shame without naming it. For example, one can say, 'I fear rejection,' or 'This is an awkward moment for me,' and so on."[149] This phenomenon occurs throughout my interviews, with phrases like "I am intimidated" used frequently. Ray, a trans participant who feared scars on his chest from a top surgery[150] would make people uncomfortable stated in our interview, "I don't want people to stare." These responses refer to shame without naming it, thus highlighting its taboo in everyday speech. People are more comfortable alluding to shame obliquely or using euphemisms or synonyms.

When scholars write about stigma, self-consciousness, and embarrassment, they also often do not use the word "shame." One possible reason I did not recognize the significance of shame in this study until I began the process of theme coding and analyzing the transcripts was due to this shrouding. I will revisit shame and its related themes in Chapters 4 through 7.

[148] Thomas Scheff, "The S-Word is Taboo: Shame Is Invisible in Modern Societies," *Journal of General Practice* 4, no. 1 (2016): 2-6.
[149] Scheff, "The S-Word is Taboo," 3.
[150] Top surgery refers to a gender affirming procedure that removes breast tissue.

Shame plays an important theme within this dissertation, and I would not have discovered its significance without the recounts of lived experiences and unique practices shared with me by participants. In the next section I will turn to lived religion which is a useful conceptual lens for exploring religious practices.

2.3.3 Lived Religion

Conceptualized by David Hall,[151] lived religion is a concept that has been refined by scholars to define non-institutional manifestations of what we might think of as religious behaviour. Lived religion is a conceptual tool for exploring practices often overlooked or dismissed as unorthodox by religious authorities. As summarized by Winnifred Fallers Sullivan:

> Lived religion is not conceived in opposition to the elite religion. Lived religion shifts the focus to the local, a local that is increasingly also transient. Integration happens temporarily and at the instigation of individuals and families, and even occasionally local congregations, but is spectacularly resistant to hierarchical control.[152]

The research on lived religion—that is, on lived practices or embodiments of belief and faith that occur in everyday life outside of organized religion—holds great contemporary relevance. Religion is not only formal rituals and institutional belonging, which is where early work in religious studies is situated. Instead, as Robert Orsi argues, lived religion is “the work of social agents/actors themselves as narrators and interpreters (and re-interpreters) of their own experiences and histories, recognizing that the stories we tell about others exist alongside the many and varied stories they tell of themselves.”[153] This position moves focus away from religious dogma toward the individual practitioner.

[151] David D. Hall, *Lived Religion in America Toward a History of Practice*.
[152] Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 140.
[153] Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community In Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (Cambridge: Yale University Press, 2002), xxxviii-xxxix.

Orsi applies the concept of lived religion in his research on the variation in practice within an Italian Catholic diaspora community in Chicago.[154] He observes a sensual Catholicism, where beliefs and practices are less Orthodox and quite individualized, with figures such as St. Jude having greater resonance with certain people and groups but not others. My research includes consideration of this personalized way of practicing religion. Indeed, there are several examples of this diversity of thought within the various religious communities studied herein.

Like Orsi, Meredith McGuire's[155] writing on lived religion brings rituals and practices previously excluded from academic scrutiny to the forefront of her book. The difference in how people self-identify and live their day-to-day beliefs and practices as articulated by McGuire opens the field to an area of the unknown. McGuire provides a helpful term for describing such practices, as "embodied practices":

> Daily life is filled with routine practices—ways of doing tasks, of walking and sitting, of talking and gesturing, of showing emotions, and so on. Although the tasks, the walking, the conversation, and the like are typically practical ends, the practices themselves can, over time, affect physical, emotional, and spiritual developments for the individuals who engage in them.[156]

McGuire's work showcases how individuals find religious meaning, purpose, and embodiment in somewhat mundane day-to-day activities.

This diversity in personal practices within religious communities is expanded upon in Nancy Ammerman's edited collection, *Everyday religion: observing modern religious lives*. Ammerman labels the work of her contributors as "dispatches from the field."[157] The fieldwork conducted by those contributors counters the narrative of religion's decline, offering a new

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[154] Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars who Study them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
[155] Meredith McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[156] McGuire, *Lived Religion*, 14.
[157] Nancy T. Ammerman, "Introduction: Observing Religious Modern Lives." In *Everyday Religion: observing modern religious lives*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4.

perspective on where people find religion in untraditional places. This research makes visible the hidden ways people do religion. An example is "vicarious" religion's role in times of national tragedy.[158]

In a more recent articulation of the contours of lived religion, Ammerman maps the subfield's history, with a call to expand the field to include understudied geographic and religious landscapes. She describes how the field has grown in recent years:

> The emphasis on lived religion has been incredibly fruitful. Drawing on a range of methods already at our disposal—ethnography, interviews, analysis of documents and archives—we have gathered data that has expanded our understanding of what religion is and where it occurs. We have added new attention to visual evidence (Williams 2015) and material culture (Vasquez 2010; McDannell 1995), as well.[159]

Additionally, Ammerman raises the challenges inherent in studying lived religious practices, such as definitional issues, disciplinary differences, and what "counts" as lived religion.[160]

Winnifred Faller Sullivan's research echoes the issues highlighted by Ammerman. Her study entitled *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom* provides a legal analysis of how lived religious practices are often disvalued in legal settings because so-called experts on religion do not recognize them. The *Warner* Trial was a case where the limits of religious freedoms were explored over burial and monument practices.[161] Sullivan explains the challenges lived religious practices encounter in legal frameworks, noting, "Each person is entitled to his or her own beliefs. Yet, legally defined orthodoxy, not sincerity, was the final standard used in the Warner trial."[162] This discrepancy between legally defined orthodoxy and lived religious burial and mourning practices in the *Warner* trial she analyzed prioritizes what experts define as religion

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[158] Grace Davie. "Believing Without Belonging. A Liverpool Case Study / Croyance Sans Appartenance. Le Cas de Liverpool." *Archives de Sciences Sociales Des Religions* 81 (1993): 83. https://doi.org/10.3406/assr.1993.1636.
[159] Nancy T. Ammerman, "Lived Religion as an Emerging Field: An Assessment of its Contours and Frontiers," *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 29, no. 2 (2016): 84. https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1890-7008-2016-02-01.
[160] Ammerman, "Lived Religion as an Emerging Field," 84.
[161] Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*, 19-21.
[162] Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*, 7.

while dismissing personal practices. Rabbi Katz, one expert in the trial, stated, “If it is purely personal, I’m suggesting it is not religious. It may be strongly felt, it may be sincere, it may be emotional, it may be aesthetic, it might have great psychological meaning. But I would hesitate to say it has religious meaning.”[163] The hierarchy of religion presented by several experts in the *Warner* trial articulated a distinction between “high” and “low” religion.[164] High religion is hierarchical, male, and “looks institutional and authoritarian.”[165] So-called “low” religion is often synonymous with “folk” religion and is comparable to lived religious practices where “religious people use the materials at hand to create religious meaning.”[166]

Lived religion provides me with the conceptual lens required to focus on the ways people live religion in their everyday life, in unremarkable places such as the gym. Throughout the analysis chapters, we will see how participants in my study live their religion using the situations and materials they have on hand to derive religious meaning. Yet not all my participants were religious. The following section considers how scholars conceptualize the secular compared to how my participants understand and use the word “secular.”

2.3.4 Understanding the Secular

The secularization thesis has been a major area of study for scholars of religion. The secularization thesis is typically defined as a historical process of modernity that led to (1) the structural differentiation of social spheres, which removed religion from public spaces, and (2) religion becoming increasingly privatized, leading to a gradual decline[167] in belief and

[163] Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom,* 77.
[164] Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*, 78.
[165] Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom,* 148.
[166] Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom,* 87.
[167] Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000). 20.

practice.[168] Although this thesis has dominated across disciplines since the 1960s, increasing criticism and scrutiny towards it began in the 1980s. Some have criticized the thesis as unfounded, such as Rodney Stark[169] and Peter Berger,[170] while others such as Steve Bruce have continued to defend the thesis by offering a more nuanced understanding.[171] Despite this backdrop of scholars rejecting and re-articulating the thesis, the comparative theoretical frameworks around the secular operate to explain variation.

One of the most referenced examples of variation is the glaring contrast between how the secular is understood in many European countries compared to the United States. David Martin introduces a model that attempts to account for different patterns of secularization by focusing on the structural conditions under which secularization occurs. In locations where there are strong church–state ties, or a monopoly of one religion, patterns of secularization will occur differently than in locations marked by a sharp divide of religion and state, and where pluralism defines the religious landscape. To summarize, Martin argues that in locations where there are religious monopolies, secularization will progress more strongly than in locations of pluralism, where secularization will occur more slowly.[172] Martin's contribution seeks to explain the patterns of variation, such as the case of the United States' difference from Europe.

Charles Taylor[173] has furthered this line of thinking on religious pluralism and has challenged the understanding of secularism as having to do with the relationship between religion and the state. He instead argues that secularism has to do with the responses that the state takes to managing diversity. Taylor challenges the difference between "closed"

[168] David Burlington Martin, *On secularization: Toward a Revised General Theory* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005).
[169] Rodney Stark, "Secularization, R.I.P.," *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (1999): 249–73. doi:10.2307/3711936.
[170] Peter L. Berger, "Reflection on the sociology of religion today," *Sociology of Religion* 62, no. 4 (2001): 443-454.
[171] Steve Bruce, *God is dead: secularization in the West* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).
[172] Martin, *On secularization,* 111.
[173] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

secularism,[174] which attempts to forcibly remove religion from the public sphere, and "open" secularism,[175] which attempts to manifest the greatest level of religious freedom by not privileging one religion over another. Taylor's work on secularization has contributed to a revisionist reading of secularization that recognizes "the secular" not merely a neutral entity defined by religion's absence, but with its own substantial content.

Talal Asad contributes a new approach to discussions of secularism, challenging the consideration of any political doctrine as purely neutral. [176] Asad asks what an anthropology of "the secular" would look like and attempts to provide a new theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approach to the field. Asad claims that "over time a variety of concepts, practices, and sensibilities have come together to form 'the secular.'"[177] Asad identifies how both religion and the secular are historically contingent, constantly undergoing a process of being made and remade, and approaches substantiating the secular indirectly through discussions of myth, pain, agency, cruelty, torture, and human rights. In doing so, he suggests we can trace an articulation of the secular historically. Furthermore, Asad points to how the secular creates societal and political bias against non-Christian religion, particularly identifying the challenge secularism poses to Muslims in Europe, or more broadly, in the West.

I provide this background to highlight the difference between academic considerations of the secular, the secularization thesis, and how my participants understand the secular. Some participants of this study identified themselves or others as, for example, a "secular Jew" or described Canada as a "secular country." Contrary to common belief, Canada is not a truly

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[174] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 594.
[175] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 544.
[176] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).
[177] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 16.

secular society. There are elements of Christian-centrism so embedded in society that when people speak of Canada as secular, they fail to see how it has been and continues to be shaped by Christianity. This Christian shaping of society is evident when, for example, considering how statutory holidays fall on important Christian dates. Despite this nuance, my participants clearly imagined themselves in relation to something known as "the secular."

When participants spoke of the secular, they were not referring to the secularization thesis. Instead, they used the secular to describe one of two things: a general idea that religion is declining, or the absence of religion. For these reasons, it is essential to understand my participants' invocation of the secular as holding a separate, more straightforward meaning compared with academic concepts. In the next section, I will explore religious nones, a broad category for those who identify themselves as non-religious, and particularly how it relates to this popular notion of the secular.

2.3.5 Religious Nones

Despite my call-out looking for religious individuals, some of the people I interviewed identified themselves as non-religious during the interview itself. The number of religious nones (also known as the non-religious, secularists, the unaffiliated, apostates, and irreligious) is increasing in Canada and western countries. Due to the heterogeneity of the classification, it is difficult to define what this category consists of. As well, non-religion does not take the same forms as traditional religion because it is unstructured, and institutional forms are not as visible. While we know that there is considerable variety within non-religion, engaging with it is challenging due to a lack of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological grounding.

Terminology around non-religion can be problematic. For example, how do we describe this phenomenon without implying a lack? Currently, the field is leaning towards using a

revisionist form of secularization theory that substantiates secularity—that is, not treating it as a phenomenon defined by religious absence but by the presence of something else. Lois Lee and Stephen Bullivant's research fits into this subfield of sociological inquiry, particularly with their commentary in, "Where do atheists come from?" [178] One of the leading struggles in the study of the non-religious is the lack of a collective vocabulary in which to discuss these individuals. The various ways scholars describe the non-religious—such as atheistic, agnostic, irreligious and others—are, in fact, not synonyms and differentiation of terms in the field is useful.[179] There is, at times, complexity to how non-religious people construct their worldview. As a large and ever-growing group of people in North America choose not to affiliate with a religion, this focus on religious nones and language becomes increasingly necessary.

In her work "Believing Without Belonging: Is This the Future of Religion in Britain?" Grace Davie explores how, in the United Kingdom, belonging to religion has declined at a faster rate than believing.[180] People are moving away from practicing in the church towards something else, maintaining their beliefs in ways outside of the traditional church structure. This unstructured way of doing religion appeared organically in Davie's research, "Believing Without Belonging. A Liverpool Case Study." She found that following a largescale tragedy, many non-affiliated people in Liverpool in the early 1990s were grieving in innovative and unusual ways that challenged the norm of traditional grieving practices.[181] Davie framed these findings by re-envisioning a soccer field as a sacred place.[182]

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[178] Stephen Bullivant and Lois Lee, "Interdisciplinary Studies of Non-religion and Secularity: The State of the Union," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 27, no. 1 (2012): 19-27.
[179] Lois Lee, "Research Note: Talking About a Revolution: Terminology for the New Field of Non-Religion Studies," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 27, no. 1 (2012): 130.
[180] Grace Davie, "Believing Without Belonging: Is This the Future of Religion in Britain?," *Social Compass* 37, no. 4 (1990): 455. https://doi.org/10.1177/003776890037004004.
[181] Grace Davie, "Believing Without Belonging. A Liverpool Case Study / Croyance Sans Appartenance. Le Cas de Liverpool." Archives de Sciences Sociales Des Religions 81, (1993): 79-89. https://doi.org/10.3406/assr.1993.1636.
[182] Davie, "Believing Without Belonging," 82.

Locating sacredness in non-religious contexts is something I encountered in my own research. For example, a participant named Ali described breaking their fast with their cricket teammates during Ramadan at the university gym before playing a late-night game, reimagining the university gym as a space for a sacred practice.

Phil Zuckerman's research in *Faith No More* offers case studies that provide insight into people's unique and often varying processes when shedding their faith to become a none.[183] Interview excerpts from people who previously held religious convictions and belonged to highly organized communities provide insight into how individuals who leave their faith consider their place in society. Zuckerman's research is helpful to my research in that it assists in understanding the complexities of people with non-religious identities.

2.3.6 Sociology of Religion Conclusion

There has been considerable work done in the field of sport and psychology, women and sport, and sport and religion. However, the nuances of how individuals hold intersecting identities in fitness has not been studied in-depth, despite questions about religion in the public sphere dominating headlines in recent years. The *S.A.S. v. France* court case heard by the European Court of Human Rights over whether banning face coverings in public spaces in France is a violation of freedom of expression is one example of this attention.[184] The debate over Zunera Ishaq's decision to wear a niqab during her Canadian citizenship ceremony is another.[185] As sport and recreation act as a barometer of diversity in the public sphere, the study of religion's function in sport access is integral to the study of diversity and inclusion.

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[183] Phil Zuckerman, *Faith no more: Why people reject religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[184] *S.A.S. v. France* [2014] No. 695, European Court of Human Rights.
[185] Shaun Fluker, "The Niqab and the Rule of Law: Canada v. Zunera Ishaq," *Advocates' Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (March 2016): 251-258.

The literature on sport and religion focuses on high-level sport, predominantly on overt examples of discrimination such as the FIFA and FIBA hijab bans.[186] Attention is also given to stories of changing consumer markets to accommodate diversity in sport. For example, the introduction of Nike's modest swim range, which included a swim hijab and full-coverage swimsuit.[187] Less study has been conducted on the lived realities of everyday people.

I expected to hear stories of overt exclusion when I began my study. This expectation was informed by media coverage that framed religious diversity in Canada as a threat to social and historical norms. The 2015 federal campaign promise by the Conservative party to institute a "barbaric practices" call-line is one example of this problem-based framing towards Muslims.[188] Yet another example is the 2019 federal election coverage that stressed displays of prejudice towards the New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet Singh, who wore a turban.[189] Participants of this study expressed experiencing subtler forms of exclusion than these overt or problem-based forms.

Participants in my own study rarely saw themselves as marginalized because of their religious practice in sport and recreation spaces, and if they did, they cited additional factors such as race or gender intersecting their religion. The intersecting identities people hold alongside their beliefs or religious convictions, in many ways, shape how they experience and move through spaces like sport and fitness centres. This study found that a combination of race, gender, sexual orientation, trauma, religion, and environment affected how individuals were

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[186] Hamzeh, "Jordanian National Football Muslimat Players," 517–531.
[187] Tiina Rosenberg, "Wrapped in Meaning: Modest Fashion as Feminist Strategy," *NORA: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies* 27, no. 4 (2019): 285–289, doi:10.1080/08038740.2019.1656669.
[188] Timothy B. Gravelle, "Friends, Neighbours, Townspeople and Parties: Explaining Canadian Attitudes Toward Muslims," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 3 (2018): 643.
[189] Shannon Proudfoot, "Jagmeet Singh's moment," *Maclean's*, Nov. 2019, 28.

marginalized in society, resulting in different levels of comfort and perceived acceptance within such spaces.

Just as "lived religion" focuses on experiences at the individual level rather than the organizational level, this study too examines experiences and practices of fitness on a nuanced individual scale. In the next section, I will outline my working definitions.

2.4 Working Definitions

Throughout this dissertation, I use various terms in a context-dependent way. In the subsequent pages, I use the following concepts to explain the findings of my study: diversity, shame, and modesty.

Neivin M. Shalabi helpfully defines diversity as "socially constructed differences that include gender, economic class, job status, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, and religion."[190] I expand Shalabi's definition of diversity to include immigration status as well.[191]

My working definition of shame is an individual feeling social pain that derives from not fitting into societal norms or expectations. This working definition includes synonyms used to avoid describing shame, as studied by Scheff and Mateo.[192] These synonyms of shame include but are not limited to: stigma, embarrassment, fear of rejection, disrespect, fear of dishonour, self-consciousness, and feeling intimidated by others.

Religiously-based modesty values—the crux of this dissertation—describes mental and physical ideas of modesty according to the participant's understanding. Mentally, modesty

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[190] Neivin M. Shalabi, "Toward Inclusive Understanding and Practice of Diversity: Directions for Accommodating Muslim and Other Religious Minoritized Students on University Campuses," *Journal of Critical Thought & Praxis* 2, no. 2 (2014): 2. doi:10.31274/jctp-180810-19.

[191] Whether participants were international students, first or second-generation Canadians, or third-generation or more proved relevant to how they constructed their identity.

[192] Scheff, "The S-Word is Taboo," 2-6.

includes actively not engaging in egotistical or arrogant thoughts and not boasting about accomplishments. Physically, it could be forms of veiling, wearing loose-fitting clothing that covers certain sexualized parts of the body, or wearing muted colours when going to places of worship. Modesty is contextual, based on how the participant frames it in their practice. It is important to note that ideas around modesty exist for non-religious participants as well, such as not sexualizing nudity. I do not draw from a particular scholar's working definition of modesty.

With these working definitions for diversity, shame, and modesty outlined, I will next turn my focus to the theoretical and conceptual framework of this dissertation.

2.5 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Fitness is a unique site for investigating religiously-based modesty values because it brings issues about the body to the foreground. This section explores theoretical approaches and conceptual tools that allow me to do this work. The three main focuses of my framework are nonevents and negotiations of difference, deep equality, and spatial analysis.

2.5.1 Nonevents and Negotiations

To understand how individuals negotiate religious differences, I draw from Jennifer Selby, Lori G. Beaman and Amélie Barras' research in *Beyond Accommodation: Everyday Narratives of Muslim Canadians.* I focus on their idea that everyday negotiations of difference occur that are not captured by media and scholarship. Selby's framework shifts scholarship away from the assumption that there must always be a momentous event when difference is negotiated. They explain:

> We analyze and situate moments in which religiosity is "worked out," sometimes so casually and subtly that we have described them as "nonevents" because they are not memorable or remarkable. One academic commentator on our work stated, "There is no such thing as a 'nonevent' for Muslims." This point, in fact, is contrary to what the vast

> majority of our interviewees told us. Many of our participants indicated that overemphasis on problems contributes to a pejorative foregrounding of their religious identities that they found unrepresentative and tiresome. There is no question that our study participants experienced racism and/or Islamophobia. Sometimes these moments were blatant, as with the experience of one participant, whose front steps of her home were defaced in what she described as a hate crime, or less blatant, as was the case for participants positioned by non-Muslims to be the resident workplace experts on Islam. Our aim is not to negate these experiences or to deny the exhaustion and pain that comes from attempting to deal with racism and ignorance. In the simplest terms, we seek to shift our gaze to these nonevents while, at the same time, being attentive to the layers of power relations that characterize these nonevents.[193]

Within this thesis project, many of the challenges participants face are indeed resolved in uneventful ways. There are exceptions, and I highlight blatant examples of prejudice or racism, but the bulk of this research focuses on these nuanced negotiations of difference.

2.5.2 Deep Equality

In addition to Selby et al.'s work, I draw on Lori Beaman's concept of deep equality, which seeks to reformulate the academic and policy focus from conversations of difference to similarity. Deep equality refers to how diversity is managed organically without being problematized in day-to-day life, contrasted to how most policy and academic focus is currently on the "problem" of diversity.[194] It is societal adherence to these values of Western individualism and political liberalism that set the preconditions for diversity frameworks and is the spirit of what Beaman attempts to capture with deep equality. Deep equality refers to reshaping the social imaginary to capture common values across differences that law or language cannot reflect. Beaman describes it as: "…a vision of equality that transcends law, politics, and social policy,

[193] Selby et al., *Beyond Accommodation*, 18.
[194] Lori G. Beaman, "Deep Equality as an Alternative to Accomodation and Tolerance," *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 27, no. 2 (2014): 90.

and that relocates equality as a process rather than a definition, and as lived rather than prescribed."[195]

Deep equality is conceptualized counter to frameworks of accommodation that hierarchically organized power dynamics of tolerance in a top-down manner to religious minorities situated in the receiver's position. We can use deep equality as a lens to reflect differently on the negotiation process my subjects enacted in fitness and sport contexts. My research seeks to provide nuance overlooked when diversity is framed by academics and policy writers as a "problem" to manage.[196]

2.5.3 Space

It is necessary to focus attention on the space where fitness takes place to study the negotiation of diversity in fitness. I draw from Kim Knott's spatial analysis framework, including "Religion, Space, and Place: The Spatial Turn in Research on Religion," "Secular Values and the Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis of an English Medical Centre," and *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis*.[197] A spatial approach is used within this dissertation to evaluate the physical layout of university recreational facilities and how religious individuals read the space. Studying the dimensions of space on physical, social, and mental levels allows for a deep inquiry into barriers to religious practitioners. Perspectives on the conceived space (how planners desired the space to function) juxtaposed with the perceived and lived experiences in the space contributed to my data analysis and conclusions.

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[195] Beaman, "Deep Equality as an Alternative to Accomodation and Tolerance," 96.
[196] Beaman, "Deep Equality as an Alternative to Accomodation and Tolerance," 90.
[197] See Kim Knott, "Religion, Space, and Place: The Spatial Turn in Research on Religion," *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* 1, no. 1 (2010): 29-43; Kim Knott, "Secular values and the location of religion: A spatial analysis of an English medical centre," *Health & Place* 13, no. 1 (2007): 224-37; and Kim Knott, *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2014).

Space in the context of this dissertation refers to physical locations, such as a gym, changeroom, pool, and the outdoors. Using Kim Knott's spatial analysis, I also include conceptual space, which is somewhat abstract and multidimensional.[198] Conceptual space allows for analysis of non-physical elements present in the space, such as how the body moves through space imbued with inequities and the sacredizing of space. Per Knott, space is "complex, dynamic, and relational."[199]

Knott articulates spatial analysis as a framework for analyzing space. The elements she includes in this framework are:

- The body as the source of "space";
- The dimensions of space;
- The properties of space;
- The aspects of space;
- The dynamics of space. [200]

It is this premise of space that I use within this dissertation. I discuss the impact of fitness spaces on user mindset extensively in Chapter 6.

The role of space in the negotiation of difference is significant. In Selby et al.'s research, spaces in which Muslims negotiate differences, such as apartment pools, restaurants, workplaces, daycares, and schools, are explored. The power dynamics present within spaces matter. One of the participants in Selby et al.'s study

> decided to only contact private [daycare] facilities (not the subsidized option available in Quebec) because of 'the level of attentiveness to service' that she felt was absent in Québécois public facilities. In other words, she thought that negotiations would be easier outside a formal daycare institution.[201]

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[198] Knott, *The Location of Religion,* 8.
[199] Kim Knott, "Spatial Theory and Method for the Study of Religion," *Temenos* 41, no. 2 (2005):156. https://doi.org/10.33356/temenos.4778.
[200] Knott, "Spatial Theory and Method for the Study of Religion," 156.
[201] Selby et al., *Beyond Accommodation*, 151.

I stress that the space of a private daycare has a different implied power dynamic than a subsidized provincial daycare because the client is paying more out of pocket. Therefore, under capitalism and free markets, they have more of an assumed right to ask for customer-focused services.[202] The private vs. public setting is one way the daycare space is inscribed with meaning. It is important to note that the participant's access to money translated into empowerment in this situation. If a person did not have the same class resources to procure private childcare, they would not have the same ability to negotiate their needs. This attention to analyzing space, such as the difference between private and public gyms, as well as socio-economic differences helps to understand negotiation processes through intersecting dynamics, which can be fruitful.

2.5.4 Literature Review and Theory Conclusions

This concludes the literature review of three bodies of research: sport and religion, contemporary sociology of religion, and shame, as well as the theoretical and conceptual framework used in this doctoral research. Nonevents and negotiations of difference provide a lens for considering how people may work out differences organically. An example of this is in Chapter 5, when Ali describes changing his team's practice times to accommodate fasting for Ramadan. In Chapter 5, we will also see how deep equality provides a lens for understanding how Tanya's sorority saw the value in respecting the variety of dietary practices their members followed. Particularly how they unproblematically framed why they cooked meals that accommodated all of them. Spatial analysis comes to the forefront in Chapter 6, where participants share various ways that they read the spaces within the gym. With the context and

[202] This assumption that privatization equals better care or customer service undergirds the arguments for various services to be privatized, such as healthcare, education, and senior home care.

foundation provided in the literature review and theory sections, Chapter 3 will explain the study’s methodology.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction to Methodology

Early on, when outlining my thesis design, I spent time thinking about the best way to approach the topic I wanted to study and how to best research it. As I struggled to put my finger on what precisely my research question was and what might help me to answer it, I began to consider how Kim Knott's spatial analysis offers scholars the ability to take a broader approach to analyzing data.[203] Instead of pursuing yes/no responses from study participants with pre-conceived opinions on what I thought the issues were, I opted to seek rich qualitative data to which I could then apply a spatial approach. As I undertook this project with an exploratory qualitative research design, I mapped out specific features of fitness facilities, considering hallways, mirrors, and change-room organization. I did this work while conducting interviews with university students who self-identified as religious. The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions.

My sample included 50 interview participants, initially recruited from the University of Ottawa campus clubs and later through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a non-random sampling method in which "a few identified members of a rare population are asked to identify other members of the population, those so identified are asked to identify others and so on, for the purpose of obtaining a non-probability sample."[204] As articulated by Leo A. Goodman, using this method, "the sampling plan follows out the chains of sociometric relations in the given

[203] Knott's research is detailed in Chapter 2.
[204] M.S. Handcock and K.J. Gile, "On the concept of snowball sampling," *Sociological Methodology* 41, no. 1: 369.

population."[205] Snowball sampling gets its name due to the continually increasing number of participants recruited in each successive wave. Because of the nature of the recruitment strategy, there are students from various post-secondary schools across Canada in the study.

I recruited participants primarily through religiously based on-campus student groups at the University of Ottawa by contacting the club leadership (presidents, vice-presidents) through the listed club email. I then requested these clubs' leaders to send their members an invitation email. Additionally, after interviewing participants, I asked them if there were anyone who they thought would be interested in participating in the study, in line with snowball sampling.

I designed individual interview questions to capture participants' experiences of accessing fitness facilities relating to issues and themes of accessibility. I asked participants demographic questions about their age, gender, and area of study. After the demographic questions, the focus shifted to their religious identity—for example, whether they were raised religious and/or were involved in sport or fitness as a child. I asked questions about their comfort level in certain gym areas and their experiences practicing modesty values in those settings. I outline the main questions I asked in Appendix A.

Participants were asked about their experiences practicing fitness in spaces inside and outside the gym. I gathered additional information such as their country of origin, ethnicity, and educational background to create a holistic picture of each participant's perspective. Further discussion about participants' beliefs, non-beliefs, and religion followed to provide better understanding of each participant's ideological background. I also allowed participants to share anything they felt may be relevant to the study at the end of the interview.

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[205] Leo A. Goodman, "Comment: On Respondent-Driven Sampling and Snowball Sampling in Hard-to-Reach Populations and Snowball Sampling Not in Hard-to-Reach Populations," *Sociological Methodology* 41, no. 1 (2011): 348.

In addition to the interviews, I drew inspiration from Kim Knott's spatial analysis research to consider religion's location within fitness spaces. I did this by studying the dimensions of space described by participants on physical, social, and religious levels, creating the backdrop for an inquiry into how various dimensions of space presented, or did not present, specific barriers to those with religious modesty practices. I also compared the social perceptions and lived experiences within the space to how the design intended to function. For example, participants re-imagined toilet stalls as semi-private spaces to change. This comparison allowed for new considerations that brought greater visibility to the inclusion issues identified by study participants.

3.2 Recruitment

I recruited students from Canadian universities to participate in the study through various outreach methods. Participants were recruited by email through list serves (if club leaders chose to forward the participant call-out to their groups); in-person, through group introduction; and via snowball sampling. Snowball sampling was pursued by asking participants to pass on the participant call-out information to potential participants who might be interested.

I provided participants with a consent form approved by the University of Ottawa Research and Ethics Board (REB), outlining the nature of the study and pertinent details to participation. I reminded participants that participation was voluntary and that they could request to withdraw from the interview at any time.

I selected participants to gather in-person data through semi-structured open-ended interviews. This study underwent an ethics review from the REB in 2017, renewing in 2019 and 2020, with the study closing in February of 2021. I received permission to recruit post-secondary

students through email, direct approach, presentation, and online recruitment using the approved submission to the REB.

Initially, I had focused on the University of Ottawa for the recruitment process, but about a third of the students attended other Canadian universities. These universities include Trent University, Mount Royal University, York University, Western University, The University of Alberta, Nipissing University, and St. Francis Xavier University. The snowball sampling recruitment method provided the opportunity to reach more people within close-knit religious communities than this study otherwise may have. After interviewing one person from a specific community, others from the same community often felt more comfortable participating.

Snowball sampling took on a more prominent role towards the end of the study when the Covid-19 pandemic made recruitment more difficult. Approaching participants in the predetermined spaces of classrooms and student clubs could no longer occur due to health and safety constraints. Snowball sampling proved necessary at this point to reach saturation in data.

I interviewed participants once, collecting data through semi-structured qualitative interviews. The interviews lasted between 20 to 45 minutes and occurred between February 2017 and January 2021. Most interviews averaged 25 minutes in length. The location where we would meet reflected the preference of the participant. Discussions took place over Skype, at dog parks, in coffee shops near or on the University of Ottawa Campus, in private rooms on campus, and in other agreed-upon locations suggested by the participants, where they would feel most comfortable.

I framed questions to allow for an open response. Depending on how the participant responded to the base questions,[206] I posed appropriate follow-up questions. The interviews were

[206] See Appendix A for specific questions posed.

conversational and allowed the participant to ask for clarification and express their thoughts and experiences openly.

The interviews were recorded on the iPad application Notability using the recording function. I transcribed the interviews and hand-coded them several times for themes. Themes were determined inductively through their relevance to the research question and how often they arose as a theme for distinct groups. It became apparent during analysis that there were three primary groups of people my study reached: Muslims (broadly), Christians (broadly), and non-religious individuals. The latter group included religious nones, atheists, and those who identified as spiritual but not religious. Within the broad non-religious grouping, there was a group of former Catholics who are now non-religious that will be explored in Chapter 3.

3.3 Data Analysis

This study focuses predominantly on the nuance in negotiations around difference, or as Selby et al. term, "nonevents."[207] I invited participants to respond to the questions I posed to them conversationally, trying my best not to seem like I was administering a questionnaire but rather that we were conversing about their lives and experiences. This conversational approach allowed participants to share what they deemed most important within the context of the question. Due to the qualitative nature of the data, I opted to frame my analysis inductively. I did this to avoid limiting myself to the themes and concepts I anticipated would be present.

I used an inductive analytical approach similar to grounded theory, as pioneered by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss.[208] The objective of grounded theory is to create a set of procedures that allows qualitative research in sociology to be rigorous and able to develop novel

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[207] Selby et al. *Beyond Accommodation*, 18.
[208] Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss. *Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research.* London: Routledge, 2017.

theories, as opposed to testing and verifying pre-existing perspectives. Edward Tolhurst builds on Glaser and Strauss, exploring how sociology constructs "disciplinary boundaries in response to potential encroachment."[209] Tolhurst highlights that grounded theory legitimizes qualitative research in a world that places high value on empirical research and the scientific method:

> The title itself, "grounded theory," provides a highly appealing title to apply to a qualitative study. The outcomes of qualitative social research may not appear to have the solid rigor of the natural sciences or quantitative social science, but "grounding" theory lends the impression that findings are embedded in a palpable objective world.[210]

However, one area of contention is how grounded theory is often erroneously used to describe several types of qualitative research methods. As Jane C. Hood argues, the term "grounded theory" is not a unified method:

> For some authors, use of the term 'grounded theory' is simply a justification for engaging in a qualitative data analysis or doing some form of coding. For others, 'grounded theory' simply means building theory inductively from data. However, since qualitative research designs are usually inductive and necessarily involve analyzing data by coding for themes and patterns, what distinguishes Grounded Theory from the generic inductive qualitative design?[211]

This concerns Hood, as she views the blurred boundary between grounded theory and inductive qualitative design to be a weakening of the method's power. She argues the main difference between grounded theory and generic inductive qualitative design is the emphasis on finding a new theory developed from data—something that is necessary for grounded theory, but not required for generic inductive qualitative design. As I am not finding a new theory, the method I am using in this research is a generic inductive qualitative design.

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[209] Edward Tolhurst, "Grounded Theory Method: Sociology's Quest for Exclusive Items of Inquiry," *Forum, qualitative social research* 13, no. 3 (2012): 1.
[210] Tolhurst, "Grounded Theory Method," 4.
[211] Jane C. Hood, "Orthodoxy vs. Power: The Defining Traits of Grounded Theory," in *The Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory*, edited by Kathy Charmaz and Antony Bryant (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2007), 152.

In "Sampling in Grounded Theory," Janice Morse identifies three principles of effective sampling that extend to all inductive qualitative research designs. The first principle is the possession of research skills that allow for good data collection. For example, a researcher's experience on when to probe for specifics on a topic and the level of openness of the participant depends on the researcher's ability to establish trust quickly.[212] The second principle is to find "excellent" participants, who will provide strong data. This principle includes a willingness to participate openly and speak candidly about their experience.[213] In my study, these so-called "excellent" participants were there, particularly towards the end of sampling, though in the beginning, participants were less likely to be open.[214] The third principle is that sampling techniques must be targeted and efficient.[215] This principle involves insight on behalf of the researcher to seek out the best data quality through the purposeful selection of participants. I did this through snowball sampling, which by its very nature focuses on a particular group of participants within the same social circle.

I applied an inductive design to my study. An inductive design allows for an open response format through interviews, enabling the participant to direct the research towards what they consider meaningful. This open-response format allows the responses from participants to determine themes around the topic and prevents researcher assumptions from being placed onto the data, enabling organic themes to arise.

The data gathered in the interview phase underwent thematic-based coding techniques, allowing for themes to emerge that are specific to the issue of accessibility. Then the data drawn

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[212] Janice Morse, "Sampling in Grounded Theory," in *The Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory*, edited by Kathy Charmaz and Antony Bryant (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2007), 230.
[213] Morse, "Sampling in Grounded Theory," 231.
[214] This could also reflect on my own interviewing experience at the time and an inability to establish trust promptly.
[215] Morse, "Sampling in Grounded Theory," 234.

from the interviews on spatial features of the facilities were analyzed considering Kim Knott's work on spatial analysis and spatial approaches. This analysis considered various facets of space, such as physical features, psychological layers, and social space.

Through the course of conducting this study, including the analysis phase, I maintained participant privacy and kept the data secure during the conservation period.

3.4 Privacy and Security

I used pseudonyms when transcribing and coding data to safeguard participant identities. The only place where participant identification exists is on the consent form stored in a secure area and only accessible to the researchers listed on the Research and Ethics Board approval. As a practice, I redacted any overtly identifying information during transcription. I omitted quotes I could not alter to conceal a participant's identity. This level of anonymity allowed individuals the confidence to freely discuss aspects of their life that are sensitive without fearing stigma or repercussions.

Collected data, including the audio recording and the transcription, as well as analysis, were stored securely on password-protected computers and data storage devices. Data stored in a dedicated cloud service is encrypted and password protected with two-step verification. I will retain the data for five years after publishing the study results, after which the data will be securely deleted or destroyed. During this conservation period, I will store data on my personal computer, recorder, and external hard drive. These devices are password protected and will be held securely during the conservation period.

3.5 Demographics of the Sample

This study included 50 participants. Based on self-identification of gender, 60% were women and 36% were men and 4% were non-binary. The self-identified religious beliefs include 14 Christian participants—specifically six Catholics, five Protestants, and three Orthodox Christians. A total of 17 participants identified as Muslim: 13 were Sunni, two were Shia, and two did not specify. Two participants identified as Jewish, both moderately practicing (reform.) A total of 13 participants self-identified into non-religious categories: four atheists, four were spiritual but not religious, and five broadly described themselves as non-religious. Within this non-religion group, five self-identified as ex-Catholic and one as ex-Muslim. Additionally, two participants identified practicing First Nation's traditional spiritualities (one Cree, one Anishinabek). One participant identified as Buddhist, and one participant described themselves as melding several belief systems into a personal spirituality drawing on Indigenous spiritualities, Buddhism and Paganism.

This study targeted post-secondary students for recruitment, and the age range reflected this. The age range was from 17 to 35 years of age, and most participants were between 19 and 30 years old. The median age of a university student in Canada is 23 years of age, as reported by Statistics Canada in 2015.[216]

Students were predominantly Canadian citizens, with a few participants having permanent resident status. The countries of origin of participants included: Lebanon, Somalia, Cameroon, Syria, Morocco, Djibouti, the United States of America, Pakistan, Ukraine, France, and England. When participants identified their heritage (for example, stating they are Italian-

[216] Statistics Canada. "Postsecondary graduates, by location of residence at interview and level of study." 2015 Table 37-10-0031-01, 2019. https://doi.org/10.25318/3710003101-eng

Canadian), I included this information when introducing them. This study included four international students.

This study is not a representative sample of students in Canada. Instead, the focus is on obtaining valuable qualitative data unique to various diverse participant backgrounds. The diversity of the sample allowed for perspectives that would not be as prominent (when considering challenges facing diversity) within a representative sample. With the sample demographics now explained, the following section will focus on the interviews.

3.6 Interviews

As a researcher, I was in a privileged position in that the people who volunteered to participate in my study were willing to share intimate details about their lives that enriched this dissertation. Participants had many positive and wholesome experiences with sport and religion to share.

For example, Ali came to Canada from Pakistan as an international student and initially struggled to fit in. He worked hard to create a cricket club at his university because he saw there was interest and wanted to fill that need. Ali spoke about the strong relationships he developed by creating this team and his pride when they qualified for a cricket championship in the USA. Ali warmly talked about friendships he developed with Canadians who had no prior exposure to cricket. He saw these friendships as an opportunity to learn about other cultures and, at the same time, showcase Islam in a positive light amid rising Islamophobia. Ali spoke of a friend who initially held prejudice towards Islam, but over time, he learned more about what it means to be Muslim and changed his mind. Sport allowed Ali to build a supportive community in Canada.

Sara, a Somali–Canadian whose dad coached her sports teams growing up, shared another touching story. She sometimes found her dad's involvement in her sports "annoying."

Her perspective changed once she started living on her own, and she realized how much her dad sacrificed in his own life to spend that time with her. Sara's appreciation and love for her dad, who was so involved in her life, was apparent. She values their mutual love of sport and the memories that they created together.

Lastly, the endless stories people shared of playing/watching/coaching hockey was a humorous development because it seemed so stereotypically Canadian. It is unlikely hockey is unique in this regard. If I did this study in India, where cricket is more popular, or England, where soccer dominates, I would likely hear similar stories of belonging and relationship building centred around those sports. Though not an expected area of study, I consider the role hockey plays in Canadian nationalism, identity and belonging in Chapter 7.

The next sections will explore several themes that made the interviews so rich in findings, such as vulnerability and resiliency, the atheists and the ex-religious, and challenges I faced throughout the interview process.

3.6.1 Vulnerability and Resiliency

The interviews provided a wealth of qualitative information on how people negotiate their lived religious practices in their everyday lives. As a whole, the participants were highly vulnerable in their responses. They often highlighted personal insecurities when talking about their negotiations in fitness spaces. One example was a trans man named Ray who described not feeling completely comfortable in his body despite having gender-affirming surgery. He expressed that his insecurity was worse around other men. Those who disclosed gender-based violence as a factor in shaping their navigation of fitness spaces were another group that expressed vulnerability. Participants spoke about sensitive personal topics, such as sexual orientation, gender dysphoria, racism, prejudice, sexism, illness, and family dynamics to explain

their understanding of the world. For the painful stories, many participants framed their disclosures as potentially benefitting someone else if they included them in an academic study that might give voice to their experiences of racism, being bullied, or not fitting in.

Coupled with the vulnerability shown by participants was resiliency. Resiliency came across poignantly in the interviews, with every individual sharing how they navigated fitness despite their hardships. The participants shared strategies to overcome barriers caused by the layout of fitness spaces or mental challenges. Participants often took agency of the situation by continuing to engage in fitness despite impediments.

Vulnerability and resiliency were significant features of the interviews that made for rich qualitative data. As a group, ex-religious atheists were unique in that they used their agency by responding to my call-out—despite not being religious—to make a space in this research for themselves. The next section will explore how they engaged in this research.

3.6.2 The Non-religious

The non-religious were a surprising group that engaged with me in the interviews. The invitation to participate indicated that the study required individuals who practiced modesty values as part of their religion and were involved in sport or fitness. I was surprised by those who responded to the participant call-out but later identified themselves as atheists or non-religious in their interview. After discussing this data with my supervisor, I decided to include it. My reasoning was the motivation for their participation and their associations with modesty could be valuable to answering my research question.

Those who are atheists or non-religious do not want to be left out of studies on religion. Many non-religious participants previously belonged to a religious tradition and had a religious upbringing that informed their worldview and perspective on modesty. The ex-Catholic

participants and one ex-Muslim wanted to share how their religious upbringing continued to influence their lives. Those who identified as atheists or non-religious were navigating their own barriers in fitness and engaging in fitness through often deeply personal and meaningful ways. The non-religious had some similarities and shared experiences with participants who identified as religious.

I categorized the non-religious who had left religion in two ways: those who had a strong negative feeling towards the religion they left, and those who left but wanted to continue the chain of religious memory with their children by raising them within a religion. I will briefly describe these two groups below; they also appear in subsequent chapters.

The first group of those who had left religion spoke intensely of grievances still held towards their former faith, describing guilt, shame, and anger toward their former religious community for teachings or views that harmed or excluded them. One participant, Matthew, said, “I think it is pretty sick to tell young children that they are born sinners. That they are inherently sinful by their existence and then to pile more shit and shame on top of that as they age with their sexuality and stuff.” Another participant Genevieve described intense faults in the way she perceived abuses of their old church:

> It’s pretty fucked up the way so many religious groups allow priests and stuff to like prey on children. Then if it’s found out, it doesn’t matter because the religion has a get out of jail card, all they have to do is confess and it’s like whatever. What about the victims though?

The non-religious individuals who held strong views towards their former religion had thought deeply about their experiences in their previous faith group. They could not reconcile the grievances they perceived as harmful or major ethical failings with their personal values.

A couple of atheists and ex-religious participants held more neutral views. These individuals viewed their religious past as a fictitious story they grew out of, like the Easter bunny

or Tooth Fairy. They viewed religion as something that could be a good influence. Some of these neutral ex-religious participants indicated that they would like to raise their children in the same religious way they had been. One ex-religious participant Farah described her reasoning as: "I think it taught me some morals and values and like, how to just be a decent person… I don't think it's a bad thing for kids to grow up with, as long as it's okay if they question it or eventually want to stop going."

No specific type of religious upbringing exclusively had this perspective. A Jewish participant, Elena, who identified as a moderately practicing Jewish while also being an atheist wanted their children to grow up the same way she had. She reasoned that: "there's just a lot of culture and identity tied into the religion. If you're born Jewish, you are kind of going to still be seen as Jewish whether you like it or not." She viewed religious tradition and memory as essential to her life, even though she rejected belief. There will be further discussions of the residues of religion as expressed by participants later in the thesis. The desire for ex-religious individuals to participate in this study highlights their understanding of how religion continues to affect them, despite leaving their faith.

The participation of atheists and non-religious individuals in this study allowed me to see some of the religious dimensions of sport participation by providing a contrasting group of people. Participants also shared commonalities across the religious and non-religious, as we will see in Chapter 4 related to shame. In some circumstances, these commonalities included remnants of religious practices and views from their previous religion in their modesty interpretations. With this explanation of how non-religious individuals ended up in my study, I will now turn to challenges I faced during the interview process.

3.6.3 Interview Challenges

As much as they offered me insight into my research topic, my interviews posed some challenges. I have grouped these challenges into three categories: (1) openness of participant, (2) uncomfortable comments, and (3) misunderstanding questions.

As with any qualitative research, some respondents and participants are less forthcoming. In several interviews, try as I might to encourage the participant to engage with the topics I introduced through my questions; their answers were brief, sometimes joking, or seemingly insincere. For example, when asked what motivates them to engage in fitness, one participant laughed nervously and responded, “I want my muscles poppin’.” Through further discussion, I could not achieve a clearer articulation of what “muscles poppin’” meant. I could not seem to put this participant at ease. Though this interaction raised my anxiety about the interviews to come—it was my first interview—I need not have worried, as participants were generous with their responses for the most part. While nervousness and awkwardness occurred to some degree with a few others, none were as challenging as the first interview. I believe these challenges were due to my own lack of experience interviewing.

Some interviews broached difficult personal topics, which was challenging. For example, one Muslim participant named Ziad commented that women with piercings and tattoos were undesirable to him based on his understanding of his religion. Another participant who identified as Christian, named James, highlighted that he would not want to meet his future wife and have her wearing a t-shirt showing her arms. He also viewed piercings and tattoos as objectionable. It was challenging to dance around the candid remarks, because I fit the description of what they found unfavourable.

Another challenge in the interviews was when participants discussed their various traumas. I found it challenging to navigate situations where participants raised topics involving childhood abuse, gender-based violence, and abuse of power in their responses. Despite my difficulty, I am enormously grateful for the willingness of these participants to share these difficult experiences to contribute to this research.

Participants misunderstanding words or requiring definitions for specific words was another challenge. Occasionally this was because English was not their first language. I translated the terminology if I had a working knowledge of their first language, such as French. If I could not translate specific terms into their first language, I would use synonyms to help participants understand. My working definitions were sometimes technical, so relaying the meaning in accessible English helped. All participants were fluent in English, so these misunderstandings mainly were due to a lack of knowledge of a specific word in the question.

Most of these challenges were easy to navigate, requiring only some extra time or attention to resolve. These challenges were foreseeable, and as I gained more experience interviewing, my skillset evolved to address them better.

3.6.4 Interview Conclusions

Listening to the stories and experiences of individuals from such diverse backgrounds was a privilege. It gave me insight into the complex ways that the participants in my study negotiated and navigated their understanding of religion with fitness. The participants shared a lot of overlapping insecurities. As a collective, their struggles were very similar. Many spoke in some capacity of a desire to belong, be healthy, and comfortable.

3.7 Methodology Conclusion

This thesis seeks to clarify how individuals experience recreational spaces and navigate their religious identity or worldview while participating in fitness. I do this by exploring themes and trends using a semi-structured interview approach. The analysis chapters focus on the themes that emerged in the interviews during coding. In the coming chapters, I explore the construction of hybrid identities, negotiation between fitness centres and patrons, navigation in fitness settings, and lived experience. Below I provide a summary of each chapter to come.

In Chapter 4, I explore understandings of modesty across Muslim, Christian, and non-religious participants. Broken down by religion (and non-religion), I consider how participants manifest their interpretation of modesty through their dress, actions, and thoughts. The variations in modesty within each religious and non-religious group and how those understandings of modesty interrelate in fitness settings are analyzed. Ultimately, participants desired greater privacy in fitness settings for modesty and comfort reasons. Understandings of modesty also had deep links to shame, which I explore throughout the chapter.

In Chapter 5, I investigate how individuals embody their religion through fitness. Similar to the structure of Chapter 4, I explore the links between religion and fitness by religious grouping. The three groups considered in this chapter are Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Each religious group has a history of muscularization, a trend which I contextualize historically and in the present. I also analyze the religiously prescribed motivations towards fitness as described by participants and their lived practice. What I found were varied ways of expressing religiosity through fitness.

Chapter 6 consists of a spatial analysis of fitness spaces. This analysis considers mirrors, static elements in the space, inclusivity, changerooms and washrooms, single gender spaces, pool

accessibility, body image, safety, the role of nature in fitness settings, thin privilege in fitness spaces, and the management of religious rituals within the space of the gym. I explore shame and its associated feelings towards some of these features in fitness spaces. This chapter highlights the negotiations that participants make to overcome obstacles to fitness and notes possible solutions to the obstacles as described by participants.

Chapter 7 considers identity formation through sport in Canada and the role of hockey as a tool of nationalism. This chapter explores how communities are imagined, the shame held in not meeting those communities' ideals, and the role of sport in constructing identity and relationships.

Understanding and analyzing student experiences in recreation is vital because universities present a microcosm of diversity in Canadian society. As mentioned earlier, Canada is rapidly increasing in diversity through immigration. Immigrants primarily settle in Census Metropolitan Areas,[217] where most universities are located. Immigrants play a significant role in the university community. Recent, second, and third-generation immigrants and international students contribute to the diversity within universities. Whether current fitness facilities are poised to meet the needs of rising diversity in a dignified way is a question relevant to Canada, universities, and the communities that use such facilities. Understanding how university recreational facilities may inadvertently limit access to significant portions of the student body will contribute to future initiatives in developing and implementing user-centred designs for increased accessibility—findings that could broadly apply to recreation and fitness spaces beyond the university setting.

[217] Statistics Canada. 2017. *Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-404-X2016001. Ottawa, Ontario. Data products, 2016 Census.

Chapter 4 Religious Modesty

Marla wakes up in the morning and heads to her dresser, where she puts on her clothing. To keep modest, she checks to be sure that her white shirt is not see-through in the light. When doing so, she realizes her bra straps are showing due to the neckline of her shirt, so she adjusts them so that they no longer show. She picks her cross necklace up from the nightstand, puts it around her neck, closes the clasp, and slides the chain until the clasp is at the back and the cross is centred. She tucks it into her shirt.

She then heads to the washroom to wash her face and brush her teeth and hair. When her face dries, she applies a little bit of makeup on her blemishes and some eyeshadow around her eyes—but not so much that she must worry about smudging if she accidentally rubs her face.

Marla heads to campus for her class. She is in her second year of Health Sciences and is finally getting the hang of the university rhythm. After class, she heads outside to the quad to eat lunch with friends. She breaks off from her peers once she finishes eating and decides to use the last 20 minutes of break to do a quick walk on the trails around campus. She sees a blue jay and snaps a photo of it on her iPhone.

Marla sits through another class and then her anatomy lab. She is famished when she finishes her lab and quickly eats a banana and a granola bar as she heads toward the campus gym. After her Monday, Wednesday, and Friday classes are done, she always goes to the gym.

She relieves herself and then changes into leggings, a sports bra, and a loose long-sleeved shirt. She sees her Zumba instructor and waves when she exits the bathroom stall. She started going to Zumba in the second semester of her first year after a girlfriend encouraged her to try it. Marla felt that the transition to university had caused her to be more sedentary. She

enjoyed the class even though she was terrible at it. The class was all women, and when people made mistakes in the choreography, they giggled and went on with it.

After class is over, she goes home. She finishes her homework and catches up on the latest episode of the shows she watches. She showers, towels off, and unhooks her cross necklace, putting it on her nightstand before sliding into bed.

Marla's routine for Monday and Wednesday follows this pattern. On Fridays, however, she has a burlesque class instead of Zumba, and her routine differs slightly. Marla heads over to the campus gym on Fridays while snacking on fruit and granola. She changes in the bathroom stall but trades her leggings and loose top for lacy lingerie and a robe. She applies some bright red lipstick and false lashes in the changeroom mirror. She leaves the changeroom and waits in the hall by the weight room for the studio to unlock, gathering awkwardly with the other girls in her class in their robes and high heels. When the burlesque class is over, Marla uses a makeup-removing wipe to take off her lipstick but usually waits until she is home to take off her lashes.

Marla was sexually assaulted the summer after high school ended and turned inward as she processed the trauma in the months after. She used to feel comfortable in her skin, but after the assault, she stopped wearing tee-shirts and shorts since they reminded her of that horrible night, turning instead to long and loose clothing. As she worked through the trauma with a counsellor, she realized she missed her "old" self, who would not have thought twice about whether her shirt was see-through or about skinny dipping with friends at the beach. Her counsellor suggested she take small steps to honour her "old" carefree self while ensuring she feels safe. Those small steps eventually led her to burlesque. She takes off her robe for one night a week and celebrates her femininity and sexuality in a safe and supportive atmosphere.

Despite finding a sense of healing at burlesque, Marla keeps it a secret from her family and church—as she did the assault. "What happened to me and how I deal with it is between me and God."[218]

Composite*

4.1 Modesty Introduction

Modesty values prevailed as a theme through many of the interviews, applying to numerous facets of participants' lives. Many religious worldviews include teachings about modesty, particularly for women. Some of these modesty teachings emphasize clothing and presentation as indicators of a woman's piety. As Kelsey Sharrod Michael writes, a woman's "purity is treated as something external to herself, something that is both visible and legible to the male gaze. Thus, a woman's sexual 'purity,' read through her dress, is conflated with her spiritual piety."[219] Some participants felt this focus on clothing as a heavy burden, expressing how they have been shamed for not being modest enough in how they dressed. As noted by Michael, the male gaze perpetuates how "traditional conceptions of modesty treat women's bodies as 'inherently seductive and problematic,'" which contributes to the pressure and shame associated with immodesty.[220]

Marla's composite illustrates a complex relationship with modesty and her strategies for navigating it in a fitness context. Women navigate their understandings of modesty under various types of scrutiny. Friends, family, religious peers, and even strangers scrutinize women based on their clothing. What is missing from the surface-level scrutiny of others is how modesty is

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[218] Actual quote from a participant.
[219] Kelsey Sherrod Michael, "Wearing Your Heart on Your Sleeve: The Surveillance of Women's Souls in Evangelical Christian Modesty Culture," *Feminist Media Studies* 19, no. 8 (2019): 1132.
[220] Michael, "Wearing Your Heart on Your Sleeve," 1135.

embodied by the women themselves: "Embodied modesty is something no one except the wearer can know or determine."[221]

As Marla's composite highlights, modesty values intersect with lived experiences such as sexual assault. This overlap complicates our ability to neatly categorize what motivates certain forms of modesty. Marla's composite shows us that the embodiment of modesty may sometimes subvert expectations. One aspect of Marla's management of embodied modesty is to use burlesque as an outlet in an all-female space. In a single-gender environment, she safely recreates the carefree feeling of her youth, when she did not conflate modesty with safety the way she does now. Marla reimagines modesty to include embodiment through burlesque and notes that this embodiment is "between her and god."

Lea Taragin-Zeller's research on constructions of modesty by Orthodox Jewish women echoes this sentiment. She highlights how her participants frame modesty to exclude concern about the male gaze from their motivations:

> They interpret modesty as a spiritual practice embracing not only their dress code but also their thoughts and words. Each student constructs for herself a ladder of advancement that creates a personal relationship with God. The girls reject the masculine-halakhic discourse of what might be called "modesty for the sake of men" in favor of a discourse of "modesty for the sake of God," replacing the erudite-male authority and its attendant hierarchy with a direct divine source for their practice. Paradoxically, this interpretation enables these young women to embrace the yoke of modesty with greater fervor and accept stringent practices, on the premise that they are doing so for God and no one else.[222]

Taragin-Zeller's research highlights how individual motivations for modesty are often not obvious based on sight. A variety of factors—including but not limited to personal experience, societal shaping, gender socialization, and religious interpretation—may inform modesty values.

[221] Michael, "Wearing Your Heart on Your Sleeve," 1135.
[222] Lea Taragin-Zeller, "Modesty for Heaven's Sake: Authority and Creativity Among Female Ultra-Orthodox Teenagers in Israel," *Nashim: a Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, no. 26 (2014): 76. https://doi.org/10.2979/nashim.26.75.

Further, modesty values for some women appear to be shaped and reinforced by gender-based trauma. As reported by Statistics Canada in 2019, one in three women have experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in public: “Not only were women more likely to experience these behaviours, the impact of them was also greater. Women were more likely than men to have changed their routines or behaviours and to have experienced negative emotional consequences.”[223] Marla's composite highlights a change in behaviours following an assault, as some women alluded to or directly expressed in my study.

Gender-based violence takes many forms. In this study, a participant described being in grade seven and having boys snapping her bra straps, leading her to hide them. Several female participants disclosed trauma, such as being groped on a subway train or being raped. Gender-based trauma affects everyone differently, and there is no right or “normal” way to process that trauma. Some women and girls find safety in covering up more than before being assaulted; some do not. As we see with Marla, some find liberation and healing in exploring activities that others might perceive as immodest. The fact that seven women[224] in this study described gender-based violent transgressions as a factor informing their perception of their body and understanding of modesty leads me to view this as a relevant factor when exploring ideas of modesty holistically. Due to the sensitive nature of the disclosures, I will not provide direct quotes from participants on gender-based violence.

Participants also described how various experiences and influences informed their ideals around modesty outside of gender-based violence. Families were highly influential in how

[223] Adam Cotter and Laura Savage, “Gender-based violence and unwanted sexual behaviour in Canada, 2018: Initial findings from the Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces,” Statistics Canada, 2019, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2019001/article/00017-eng.htm (accessed January 9, 2020).
[224] One male participant disclosed gender-based violence or sexual assault in addition to the seven women. I did not ask questions related to sexual violence. Occasionally, participants directed open-ended questions around changeroom preference or modesty values towards this topic.

participants interpreted modesty, with some women referencing how their parents or siblings imposed their views on clothing or behaviours. For example, one woman talked about how she had a large chest and was constantly encouraged by her family to wear higher necklines than her smaller-chested sister. Social conditioning around gender, modesty, and what it means to be "presentable" was a pervasive theme among participant responses in this research.

Modesty views and values are also shaped by peers. Some participants discussed the difference in how they dressed or acted around their religious peers from church compared to their close friends from school. Some participants experienced bullying in their teens for wearing tight clothing. The residual effect of this bullying informed how they dressed and viewed clothing looseness as a point of modesty. Childhood and adolescent experiences with peers appeared to affect participants' perceptions of modesty.

Religious values and religious upbringing also played a role in how the interviewees shaped their understandings of modesty. For example, some Muslim women viewed wearing the hijab as reflecting religiously framed modesty values. Others interpreted it as "cultural" and unrelated to modesty. One participant interpreted bright and "flashy" clothing as immodest, even if that clothing was loose fitting. That participant viewed anything that drew attention to the body as immodest. Some described modesty as dressing plainly, while others described how they incorporate fashion trends into their personal style. For those who identified as ex-Catholics (and some now as atheists), "Catholic guilt" or "Catholic shame" was instrumental in how they understood modesty.

We can understand the multiple ways participants interpret modesty within their religious communities, and how modesty practices operate as part of an individual's lived religious

experience, through what Meredith McGuire terms "embodied practices"[225] first introduced in Chapter 2. We see this idea of embodied practice through Marla's routine of dressing modestly. Another example of embodied practices is how some Muslim individuals engage in "modest thinking," which I will describe further below.

Participants talked about how their religious worldviews impacted their thinking about modesty, dress, and practices. Although my interview questions focused on a fitness atmosphere, most participants chose to speak generally. This generalizing may have occurred because people carry the same values through the different spaces in their lives, whether in work, play, or places of worship.

Modesty as manifested outwardly through dress was not the only way of being modest. Some participants integrated modesty into their way of thinking. This was particularly the case for some female Muslim participants, who described modest thinking as part of their religious practice. These participants framed modest thinking as holistic, expressing that it was not enough to dress modestly if they lived their lives with immodest intentions. Many Muslim participants spoke about humbleness, such as thinking humble thoughts as part of a "mental" form of modesty.

In terms of outward manifestations of modesty through dress, Christians and Muslims noted similar expressions. From the qualitative data I collected during this study, it became apparent that there was a component of modesty within the lived religious practices of many of the Muslim and Christian participants. Where they differed was in their discussion of behaviour in places of worship; no Muslims discussed their experiences of modesty within a mosque.

[225] McGuire, *Lived Religion*, 14.

Feelings around modesty often correlated to comfort in specific spaces focused on the body, such as gyms. Ideas about modesty were also expressed by those who did not adhere to religious modesty values because participants expressed feeling judged for not following the same values as others. How this relates to shame will be discussed further on.

In this chapter, I will introduce participants like Zahra, who melds western fashion with modest dress. Other examples, such as John, converted to Islam to ease his in-law's religious concerns over his commitment to modesty. Later, I discuss how Tanya, who is non-religious, views her relationships with women through a lens of sisterhood, which helps her accept and embrace modesty differences with others. I also highlight Suraya, a Muslim woman who feels in-group religious pressure to dress more modestly, and Genevieve, a non-religious person who feels out-group pressure around how she expresses her bodily autonomy through sex work. It is important to note that some participants were actively in the process of negotiating their differences and how these differences informed their sense of belonging at the time of our interview; I will explain how these tensions are an integral aspect of the negotiation of social diversity. These feelings of tension create a sense of dissonance that provokes change, whether that change is a shift in thinking or in behaviour.

For Muslim women, the hijab was a core focus of discussion about dressing modestly. How and why the hijab is worn varies individually. The discussion of modest thinking was unique to Muslim participants and was thoroughly described by Sara and Azra in their interviews. Some Muslim participants also expressed their modesty values by seeking out same-gender fitness spaces, though they were not unique in doing so.

Christian participants largely centred their discussion of modesty values around the concept of "purity." This purity was expressed in behaviours and dress such as abstinence,

cleanliness, repression of sexuality, modest clothing, and—for some—commitments such as purity ring rituals. Participants from predominantly Catholic backgrounds also spoke of a "Catholic guilt," which translates into a shame felt when engaging in behaviours deemed sinful by the Catholic Church.

For those who were non-religious, modesty values centred around clothing. The non-religious expressed reasoning for their modesty in slightly different ways than the religious participants, focusing on comfort and a desire not to be sexualized. The desire not to be sexualized was not unique to the non-religious, but rather appeared to be the driving motivation for this demographic's value of modesty. Regardless of the motive, for each group, clothing was a powerful means of expressing modesty values. Where participants differed in their notions of modest clothing was in how the clothing looked or fitted.

This chapter explores three groupings: Islam, Christianity, and the non-religious. I begin with a thorough analysis of Muslim participants' concept of religious modesty, including discussion of Muslim head coverings, to highlight the diversity in the practice and how it is conceived by its practitioners. I then move on to compare the three groupings in how they conceive of modesty.

4.2 Scholarship on Muslim Head Coverings

Since modesty practices involving hijabs and niqabs are an important subtheme in this research, I will briefly discuss some of the literature to provide context for understanding these practices. Much of the scholarship around women in Islam fails to study the perspectives of women who veil. The narrative is then often influenced by biases from outsiders. Simply put, veiling and ideas around female subjugation or female agency are complex and context dependent. Veiling practices in Islam are not monolithic and need to be grounded by context,

location, and the voices of women who practice it. This section will explore scholarship that draws on participant perspectives to highlight some diversity in views on veiling.

This idea that the hijab can signify both agency and oppression is articulated by Md. Mahmudal Hasan in his article, "The Feminist 'Quarantine' on Hijab: A Study of Its Two Mutually Exclusive Sets of Meanings." Hasan argues that depending on the context, the hijab can be wielded by patriarchal power systems, or serve as a tool for dignity, self-worth, and freedom.[226] Banu Gökarıksel and Anna Secor, meanwhile, contest the idea that the hijab serves to render women invisible and subjugated by men.[227] Studying more than 80 veiled women in two major Turkish cities, they argue that the veil markedly increases the wearer's visibility. They study this increased visibility through what they term "veiling fashion."[228] Gökarıksel and Secor also highlight a fundamental flaw in work on women who veil, arguing "that they have tended to treat the veil as a symbolic object rather than as part of women's lived subjectivities."[229] Through studying the intersection of modesty and fashion, they found that women within their focus groups were aware of the cyclical nature of fashion. The women acknowledged the role that marketing, peers, and sense of personal style play in obtaining fashionable hijabs, suggesting that hijab fashion operates similarly to mainstream commercial clothing industries.

As noted by Gökarıksel and Secor, "Even the question of loose- or tight-fitting clothes was approached both in terms of modesty and in terms of women's individual, aesthetic preferences for how much fabric they felt their frames could pleasingly carry."[230] Clearly, attention to aesthetics, fashion, creative expression, and desire to be modest, in conjunction with

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[226] Md. Mahmudul Hasan, "The Feminist 'Quarantine' on Hijab: A Study of Its Two Mutually Exclusive Sets of Meanings," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 38, no. 1 (Jan. 2018): 32-33. doi:10.1080/13602004.2018.1434941.
[227] Banu Gökarıksel and Anna Secor, "The Veil, Desire, and the Gaze: Turning the Inside Out," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 40, no. 1 (Sept. 2014):178. doi:10.1086/676897.
[228] Gökarıksel and Secor, "The Veil, Desire, and the Gaze," 182.
[229] Gökarıksel and Secor, "The Veil, Desire, and the Gaze," 180.
[230] Gökarıksel and Secor, "The Veil, Desire, and the Gaze," 187.

the desire to be seen, are facets of veiling for some women. Later in this chapter, we will meet Zahra, a Muslim woman who discusses the interplay of maintaining modesty while engaging in fast fashion and personal creativity, expressing the same message as participants in Gökarıksel and Secor's study. The contradiction of "How to navigate this demand—to be both modest and beautiful"[231] seems to be the central focus in practices of veiling fashion.

For some women, the context of veiling engages agency, fashion, and modesty values. Gökarıksel and Secor's study also identifies ways in which Islam is not monolithic. Their participants reinforced the message of diversity in Islam, noting that "women in our focus groups recognize the contingency of these interpretations, pointing out that not only do readings of the Koran differ but what counts as modest in one era is risqué in another."[232] Muslim women's expression of modesty values can look different depending on the person. We will continue to see diverse lived religious expressions of modesty in the participant analysis below.

4.3 Islam and Modesty

Muslim participants broached modesty within Islam in three ways. The first was practicing modest thinking while navigating day-to-day interactions. The second was through ways of understanding modest dress or behaviour. Lastly, modest behaviour was navigated through religious observance or conversion to prove a commitment to modesty.

4.3.1 Modest Thinking

Several female Muslim participants of this study discussed modesty in terms of thinking humble thoughts. Humility is not frequently discussed in secondary literature about Muslim

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[231] Gökarıksel and Secor, "The Veil, Desire, and the Gaze," 188.
[232] Gökarıksel and Secor, "The Veil, Desire, and the Gaze," 185.

women through the lens of modesty.[233] The mental modesty I identified in my study may be one aspect of the lived religious experience of some Muslim females that has slipped through the cracks of meaningful study.

Like other participants, Sara, a varsity Rugby player, described her practice of mental modesty using the language of humility: "It's more on the thought process side for me. It's just how you act, rather than gloating, to take your victory in stride and just like take it as it is, not overreact to things to try and humble yourself as much as possible while not taking away from those accomplishments." Sara views humility as an internal mental exercise that keeps her grounded. While not "visible," this form of modesty shapes her day-to-day activities in important ways, influencing how she responds to success and failures. In the example above, Sara describes how important it is to take victory in stride, but the opposite is also true for her. Sara emphasizes that it is equally important not to be a "sore loser" because it implies that you think you are superior, which is also not humble or modest in her perspective.

Azra, another Muslim participant, talks about practicing modest thinking during Ramadan. She describes her understanding of humbleness as a practice of connecting with those less fortunate:

> ...during Ramadan when you are feeling hungry and thinking you could just reach for some food in your cupboard and end the hunger, it is the humbleness of thinking about all the people who do not have food and remembering that you are no different than them, no less or more and can be hungry temporarily too. It reminds me of my place in the world.

[233] That is not to say the subject of humility is not studied through its own lens, however. See, for example, Atif Khalil, "Humility in Islamic Contemplative Ethics," *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 4, no. 1-2 (2020): 223-252. https://doi.org/10.1163/24685542-12340048; and Abbas-Ali Haratiyan et al., "The Islamic Scale of Arrogance and Humility (ISAH): Factor structure in a non-clinical sample," *International Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 11, no. 3 (2011): 107-113.

This idea of mental humbleness and modest thoughts was a unique expression specific to Muslim women in the study. It did not occur in any other religious or non-religious group, nor with the Muslim males I interviewed. For Sara and Azra (and Zahra, who will be discussed in the next section), modest thinking was expressed as a way to improve their outlook on the world and be more empathetic, compassionate, and less self-focused.

Rahmath et al.'s study of citizenship and the hijab also describes this concept of mental modesty. In their study, they examined the agency of 26 veiling Muslim women in Calgary and Thunder Bay. Notably, they found there was an element of modesty extending beyond dress:

> For the young participants, modesty is also a central aspect of having a religious understanding of the hijab. Modesty is not only practiced in the type of clothing you wear but also in how you conduct yourself in daily matters. A particular emphasis was put on being able to actively promote oneself through proper conduct. In this way, the women felt as though it was their responsibility to represent Islam. In fact, the participants felt as though they had a bigger responsibility after taking up the hijab to behave in ways that reflected the values of Islam.[234]

This idea of modesty going beyond dress into "how you conduct yourself in daily matters" aligns with Sara and Azra's descriptions of modest thinking.

Modest thinking is a lived religious practice that is difficult to observe because it involves an internal process but is important to consider because it affects behaviour. For example, Sara described not showing pride outwardly after winning, which is an expression of modesty not obvious to me as the researcher without Sara sharing the motivation behind her behaviour. An inability to view internal processes is why fieldwork and engagement with the individuals we study are vital to understanding lived religious expression.

[234] Sabah Rahmath, Lori Chambers, and Pamela Wakewich. "Asserting Citizenship: Muslim Women's Experiences with the Hijab in Canada." *Women's Studies International Forum* 58 (2016):37-38.

4.3.2 Modest Dress: It Varies

Unlike modest thinking, modesty presented through dress is a more embodied expression of modesty. Muslim participants often brought up clothing as a medium through which they practiced modesty. It was clear that what participants perceived as modest dress varied and differed from group to group and individual to individual. Modesty values varied across Muslim participants and even within the same nuclear family unit.

Aala, a second-generation Iranian-Canadian Muslim, acknowledged that her views differ from those within her immediate family:

> My views are a lot different from my sister's even though we were raised in the same house and the same environment, but my sister actually works out in like thicker sweatpants and like a lightweight sweatshirt and she actually does attend a women's-only gym.

Aala's values differing from her sister, despite having similar influences and both being practicing Muslims at the same mosque, shows the importance of considering what modesty means on an individual level. The variance in modesty practices between Aala and her sister also shows the negotiation of differences as a family. In this case, Aala's family accepts both her and her sister's understanding of modesty and supports them both in their fitness goals. Aala describes it this way: "My parents support me with my badminton, and they never comment on what I wear, and they support [my sister] the same, even paying more for her gym because its women's-only."

It is important to emphasize how diverse women are in their practice and understanding of Islam and modesty. We see this diversity in belief with Zahra, a Lebanese-Canadian Muslim who enjoys fashion. Zahra talked about differences of opinion on what constitutes modest dress; for her, it was about covering certain sexualized areas of the body. Despite focusing on covering sexualized areas, she highlighted that her view of modesty did not emphasize the looseness of

clothing, which is different from some women she knows. She describes how she styles clothing to meet her own needs, which may not work for other Muslims:

> I work at Old Navy so I know that we get a lot of like the majority of the sweatpants we have are like things you can wear that are both modest and comfortable. Things that are form-fitting is something that most Muslims consider not modest. Whereas I believe that it can be completely done as long as you're wearing like some sort of cardigan with the top to be able to cover up those specific portions of the body that you don't want to be to be visibly seen, then yeah everything clothing-wise is possible.

For Zahra, modest dress is a creative fashion display. She styles the current societal fashions to meet her understanding of modesty. Zahra's understanding of both Islam and modesty is thus embodied by how she styles her outfits.

4.3.3 Modest Dress: Veiling

Veiling is a topic that receives an inordinate amount of media attention. As we saw in Chapter 2, some international sporting associations have implemented hijab bans over the last decade. Veiling is also a popular political topic; the government of Quebec's Bill 21, "An Act respecting the laicity of the State," was enacted in 2019 and bans public workers in authority positions from wearing religiously symbolic clothing, such as veils.[235] In France, the media peddles an ongoing narrative of conflict between laïcité (a form of secularism born out of the French context) and symbols of Islam in public spaces. A major focus of media attention was the "Burkini Ban," which was adopted by 30 French cities in 2016. The French government justified the ban by claiming that the "burkini was unhygienic, a uniform of Islamic extremism, and a symbol of women's oppression," denying women from wearing them on beaches.[236] These examples are merely a small sample of hijab-oriented stories that make the headlines.

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[235] Ken Victor, "Belief, Belonging, and Behaviour: Quebec's Allergic Reaction to Religion," *Queen's Quarterly* 126, no. 3 (2019): 344–353.
[236] Giulia Evolvi, "The Veil and Its Materiality: Muslim Women's Digital Narratives About the Burkini Ban," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 34, no. 3 (2019): 469. doi:10.1080/13537903.2019.1658936.

While wearing a hijab is seen by non-Muslims as synonymous with Islam, there is no significant physical difference between the way many Muslims wear their hijabs and how elder Eastern European women often wear headscarves in their day-to-day lives. The difference is the meaning attached to it by the wearer and observers. Ideas around head coverings are complicated. Head coverings can be adorned for religious reasons (across Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, among others) but can also be a cultural standard of dress like it is for babushkas.

Zahra's story reflects the intricacies an individual may feel towards the act of veiling and her view of what constitutes modesty has changed over the years. This changing view has led her to veil for two separate periods, and no longer veil at the present time. Her veiling experience also touches on modest thinking. She describes her story below:

> Participant (henceforth "P"): I used to veil, and then I stopped.
>
> Interviewer (henceforth "I"): Oh, that's really interesting – could you tell me a little bit about the veiling and then not veiling?
>
> P: As a child, I put on my headscarf twice, on two different occasions. My reason for taking it off was the same each time; I felt that modesty comes from the inside, not from entirely what you wear. So, it does play into it but it's not entirely dependent on it. So, wearing a scarf doesn't make you modest, it's what's on the inside. That's what I realized: it wasn't necessary.
>
> I: And how old were you on these two occasions that you stopped veiling?
>
> P: On the first time, I was 12. I had put it on for a year before taking it off. And the second time, I do believe I was 17 or 18, and I had again put it on for about a year before coming to that realization and deciding to make the decision to take it off again.

Zahra described a dynamic relationship between her views and her understanding of her religion. I asked Zahra if she would consider wearing a headscarf again in the future, and she said, "It's possible that I will again." This is similar to the *S.A.S. v. France* case on religious freedom, which was sparked by a France's ban on face coverings. The court heard that the plaintiff did not wear the niqab continuously. The Plaintiff stated that she veils "according to when she so

chooses particularly when her spiritual mood so dictates."[237] Both examples demonstrate how religious attitudes and perspectives on modesty are not static.

This diversity in practice can also be found in Leila's story. Leila is a Somali-Canadian Muslim who has thought deeply about what the hijab means to her. She talks about wearing the hijab as a goal for the future:

> I would take a hijab someday when I'm ready, cause clearly, I'm not ready, clearly, you can see that. My mom is wearing the hijab, my sister is wearing the hijab, I'm not. Because like I said, I'm not ready, but I will be. I'm really working hard. Hopefully, I'm still alive to take on that, and my sister… we are almost, that's how we've been raised. I know someday, I will be with the hijab.

For Leila, deciding to veil is a significant life step. She sees it as something she must work toward but does not have a defined milestone or date for when it will happen.

Suraya offers yet another perspective veiling. She is a Somali-Canadian Muslim woman who enjoys working out in the park. Suraya views veiling as an important component of religious practice in Islam. She believes that wearing the hijab is a personal choice to be made when ready:

> It's in the Quran. Every female should be wearing the hijab, but God also gave us the choice. Nobody should force you, it's you. I mean, you will probably answer to him someday but it's your choice, and it's a choice that I am not wearing a hijab. I will be someday in God's will, that it is a choice. Everything we do is a choice; nobody should force anybody.

Like Leila, Suraya views wearing the hijab as a choice, but while it is not necessarily a goal for Suraya, for Leila it is something to work toward. I asked Suraya if she experiences any pressure from inside or outside her community on veiling. She responded:

> It happens, I've had a lot of friends who are hijabis. That is what we call them—hijabis.[238] You know, they are cool. But, yeah, we get it from both sides. I understand that

[237] See S.A.S. v. France [2014]. No. 695. European Court of Human Rights.
[238] Hijabi is a phrase used by individuals to describe women who wear the hijab. The term was popularized by the 2011 reality TV show "All American Muslim". The phrase has been used pejoratively as well, so it is important to highlight the context and intent of its use when used by those outside of the Muslim community.

> just because I am not wearing a hijab does not make me less of a serving Muslim. There are hijabi women who are not doing what they are supposed to do; sometimes they see us, and think, “oh you’re a slut,” but they are less serving than me.

According to Suraya, veiling is simply one possible component of living a modest life. She is clear in her convictions that wearing a hijab does not negate wrong actions. In the same way, positive actions are not negated by choosing not to wear a hijab. She considers herself a serving Muslim, regardless of whether she veils.

Leila also indicated that while she feels her religious peers are judging her choice, it does not affect her significantly. She explained: “If you are not wearing the hijab, you are being judged by other females who are wearing hijabs. They are like, ‘what are you doing’ and they will criticize you, but hey, I’m okay.” Leila frames the effects as negligible despite feeling judged because she feels secure in her decision. As indicated earlier, Leila intends to begin wearing the hijab someday. Thus, the shaming from her hijab-wearing peers is a temporary experience.

Ayesha provides another perspective on veiling through her experience with out-group tension. Ayesha is a Djiboutian-Canadian Muslim in her early twenties who wears a hijab. She understands the hijab as an extension of her modesty values and feels shamed by Canadian society for her decision to wear one:

> It is about modesty. We believe that ... I feel like in the media and everything they make it seem as the woman is submissive to the man. Or how all these negative… I don’t even know if it’s a myth. It’s not even a myth. It’s not; it’s just it’s more about being humble and it’s actually empowering to us. This is how we are raised. We see it more positive than what other people think, and I understand the other side because they don’t know what this is about, and they’re not really educated or maybe they don’t want to believe that other people are different than ... Just because I wear a hijab does not mean I’m submissive to the man. No. No. That’s not it. But I understand also why we seem crazy to other people. People, they treat us like this is the case but it’s not.

In her response, Ayesha raises an Islamophobic trope—the assumption that women are perceived as lesser than men in Islam. This assumption frames veiling practices as female subjugation. Ayesha highlights the tension she feels when around others with different values because of this widespread out-group belief.

A recent study by Baljit Nagra uses focus groups with Muslims to highlight the amplification of Islamic tropes in Canada. Nagra introduces the term "reactive identity formation" to articulate a process of intensification by persecuted or discriminated minority groups to their religion and culture.[239] This intensification for her Muslim participants in Canada took many forms in the post-9/11 context, with a focus on reclaiming their Islamic identity through personal changes and becoming more politically active or involved in their community. Some participants in Nagra's study took on the hijab as part of identity resistance,

> The *hijab* was not imposed on these women, despite popular assumptions. Rather, they used it as a political tool to form an identity of resistance. By using the *hijab* to broadcast their support of Islam and the Muslim community, in the post-9/11 era, these women demonstrated individual agency. In contrast, I did not find any examples of Muslim men making changes to their physical appearance after 9/11, such as growing a beard or wearing traditional Muslim clothing. This difference may be due to the special meaning which the *hijab* holds in Western society. Since the *hijab* is a clear visible indicator that someone is Muslim, by simply wearing it, Muslim women become ambassadors for their religion.[240]

We can see from Ayesha's statement and Nagra's study that the hijab represents *something* to most people, whether that representation is positive or negative. It is often not a neutral item of clothing. Wearing a hijab can be seen as a political statement by the wearer, but also by others, regardless of whether the wearer acknowledges it as such. This politicization of clothing further complicates ideas around veiling. Because veils are often pieces of clothing worn outside the

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[239] Baljit Nagra, "'Our Faith Was Also Hijacked by Those People': Reclaiming Muslim Identity in Canada in a Post-9/11 Era," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37, no. 3 (Mar. 2011): 429. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2011.526781.
[240] Nagra "Our Faith was Also Hijacked by Those People," 435.

home, the social and political dynamics around the hijab need to be considered in order to understand the nuances in its role as a symbol of modesty.

4.3.4 Modesty Through Conversion

Modesty is not solely relegated to the realms of clothing or thought. Some Muslim participants also viewed modesty as a motivator for their religious conversion. John converted to Islam in his early twenties and said his reason for conversion was to reassure his partner's family of his modesty: "Absolutely part of my conversion was to reassure my partner's family that I would be modest with their daughter. Even though I am not a serious Muslim, I do take that part seriously." John displays his modesty values through his willingness to convert to customs different from his own.

Showing modesty was a central aspect of his decision to become a Muslim. While John does not observe prayers, fasting, or dietary restrictions, he does practice a modest form of dress, modesty around members of the opposite sex, and modesty in how he courts his partner. In many ways, he frames this modesty as a way of expressing respect for his partner and her family, religion, and culture. Though John's practice of modesty was unique as it entailed a commitment to his partner and in-laws and was not motivated by personal religious convictions but rather by respect for the religious beliefs of others, it nevertheless held the value of modesty as crucial to personal conduct and dress.

4.3.5 Muslim Women in Sport

Personal conduct and dress are also critical in the context of sport. Studying these themes by way of the challenges for Muslim girls in Australian high school sports, Abeer Ahmed Alamri conducted semi-structured interviews with 11 Muslim girls. An additional four interviews were conducted with teachers who facilitated sports within their sample of high schools. Through her

research, Alamri concluded that certain sporting activities were more challenging for the female students and that there was "a strong relationship between students' Islamic background and their participation in schools sporting activities."[241] Alamri identified four main themes related to Islamic identity within students' sporting accessibility: firstly, the design of school sporting activities; secondly, ignorance of female Muslims' Islamic needs by supervisors and peers; thirdly, families' influences; and lastly, friends' influences.

Parallels between Alamri's study and my own study include modesty (namely in mixed-gender activities), though Alamri's research also included school dress codes.[242] Both these topics presented barriers to full participation for some Muslim girls in Alamri's study. The second theme in Alamri's study, involving ignorance of female Muslim needs, highlighted how fitness teachers would encourage students to participate in rigorous physical activity during Ramadan. This theme also emerged among my participants, though my study featured participants who were older and had more autonomy. [243] As we have seen, Alamri's third theme—influence from families—was also voiced by participants in this study. Participants who spoke of their family being active with them as children tended, in the present day, to be more involved in fitness activities. One example of this comes from Sara introduced in Chapter 3, a second-generation Somali-Canadian varsity athlete. Her dad was the coach for her soccer team growing up, and she had lots of experience being active with her family as a child.

My study suggests that family support, cultural acceptance, and socio-economic resources are related to fitness involvement. This suggestion is logical because the sample solely

[241] Abeer Ahmed Alamri, "How Australian Female Muslim Students Interpret Challenges in High School Sports," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 35, no. 2 (Apr. 2015): 222. doi:10.1080/13602004.2015.1051752.
[242] Unlike in my study of university gyms, where dress codes are not typically imposed (except for requirements to wear shoes and clothing), the high schools that Alamri studied had an established recreational dress code integrated into their school uniform for all students.
[243] Ramadan is a sacred month in Islamic culture. Prominently, many devout Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset during this month, which makes rigorous physical activity difficult.

included individuals obtaining a higher education, which is a costly endeavor. No matter the religion or non-religion, positive family influences through childhood and adolescence may result in higher instances of participation in sport.

Alamri's last emergent theme, the influence of friends, found that Muslim girls who had athletic female Muslim friends were more likely to participate in fitness activities. She also found that those students who reported instances of othering and racism felt it occurred most often when they chose not to participate. They felt this happened because their non-Muslim peers did not understand their decision to abstain from participation due to their interpretation of Islamic teachings.

One barrier to fitness identified by my study participants was a preference for gender-segregated fitness spaces, and the difficulties they had finding such spaces. The following section will explore my participants who practice modesty values by limiting contact with the opposite sex, and the barriers to doing so in a fitness context.

4.3.6 Women's-only Spaces

As discussed above, positive social influences that encourage sport are linked to greater sports and fitness participation. Access to same-gender fitness spaces is another way that sport and fitness can be made more accessible, according to some Muslim participants. The women in this study actively sought out women's-only fitness programming, joined women's-only teams or intramurals, and arrived at the fitness centre already dressed to avoid having to use changerooms.

One example is Leila, a Somali-Canadian woman who discussed how she maintained her modesty in fitness by choosing to use women's-only spaces. She also pointed out that she did not have to make these choices in her country of origin because sex segregation in sports was the norm. She felt that having to seek out a women's-only fitness space in Canada made her

convictions stronger because she had to actively choose to go to the women's-only space each time she worked out:

> Yeah, that's the difference between Canada and back home, you don't think about stuff like that you just know there is only one side and the other side. But here, you have to stop and say, "okay, this is like I have a choice and if I can't then I'll just do this". You know what I'm saying? It's both cultural upbringing and also trying to be the better Muslim because that's what it is. It's all that, it's everything.

Sandi is another participant who made a conscious effort to maintain their modesty values. Sandi is a non-binary international student originally from Morocco. They were raised Muslim, and though they now identify as an atheist, Sandi explained that they maintain the Islamic-based modesty values in which they were raised out of respect for others. They find changerooms difficult to navigate due to their gender identity and questioning. Sandi noted that they did not "fit comfortably in female or male changing spaces" because they did not identify as either. To overcome this challenge, Sandi adapted to the Canadian changeroom situation by arriving at the gym wearing their workout clothing to avoid the need to enter either gender's changeroom. For Sandi, this was a practical solution, although they noted that a more inclusive option would be to have private changing spaces for anyone to use—an accommodation that would benefit any gym users concerned with modesty.

4.3.7 Islam and Modesty Conclusion

Islamic conceptions of modesty are expressed in many arenas: through thought, clothing, and conversion. Some practices like mental modesty are less legible, while others—such as wearing the hijab—render the individual highly visible. Some participants expressed their modesty values by using same-gender fitness spaces in part to manage this perception. Islam is not monolithic; its expressions of modesty varied from individual to individual. Despite challenges, those I interviewed found ways to overcome barriers to participation while

maintaining their modesty values. The concerns expressed by these participants are not limited to the realm of Muslim modesty values, however. By providing and improving alternative options for fitness accessibility—such as by increasing or introducing women's-only programming and having various changeroom options—fitness centres and organizers can achieve a greater level of inclusivity by minimizing the compromise required by those who practice modesty values.

4.4 Christian Modesty

Modesty in Christianity often centres sexual purity. In the North American context, this concept of purity is often found within Evangelical Christian circles and referenced in Catholic circles when speaking about the Virgin Mary, who some believe as part of their faith to have been sexually "pure" when conceiving. Breanne Fahs provides an overview of this purity culture in her work, "Daddy's Little Girls: On the Perils of Chastity Clubs, Purity Balls, and Ritualized Abstinence," which considers some of the spaces and ways women and girls organize over a shared goal of committing to and adhering to purity. Fahs argues such a commitment to purity results from an "obsession with restraining sexual expression," which "has led to the sex-obsessed culture of chastity, including purity balls, virginity clubs, and ritualized celibacy pledges."[244]

Purity rings—which represent a commitment to abstinence—made headlines in popular culture when members of a famous boy band, The Jonas Brothers, began wearing them. Their decision to wear purity rings set off a frenzy of satire, jokes, and comedic shows discussing their choice. In an interview with *Harper's Bazaar*, Nick Jonas reflected on that time as a teen, saying, "The question should have been: Is it appropriate for people to talk about a 16-year-old's sex

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[244] Breanne Fahs, "Daddy's Little Girls: On the Perils of Chastity Clubs, Purity Balls, and Ritualized Abstinence," *Frontiers (Boulder)* 31, no. 3 (Jan. 2010): 116. doi:10.5250/fronjwomestud.31.3.0116.

life?"[245] His statement highlights the felt discomfort of public speculation on an adolescent's sexuality. Further, the Jonas brothers grew up in a church community where wearing purity rings were commonplace for teens, as described by Nick Jonas's brother Joe:

> The purity rings [symbolized the decision] to wait for the right person, when the time was right," Joe Jonas explained. "We grew up in a church, and our dad was the pastor, so it just kind of became natural for everyone we grew up with to do this and to get one." Joe went on to say that, once they got a bit older, they started to be a bit more inquisitive about what the rings really meant for their lives. "[But] when you're about 15, 16 and you start dating, you go 'Wait a minute, what did I say I was going to do? What did I promise to do?"[246]

This reflection on the public commitment of purity rings highlights the tension that goes into adherence to modesty values for teens growing into their sexuality.

Other than purity rings, Christians in this study talked about wearing Christian crosses or crucifixes as symbols of their faith. Wearing a cross held varying significance to participants of this study, with some using it to signify their Christianity broadly and others viewing it as an outward commitment to Christian values, including modesty. Additionally, two participants raised piercings and tattoos as a signifier of immodesty in interviews, covered further below. Lastly, church attire was an area where a lot of thought and consideration presented itself for some participants.

4.4.1 Wearing a Christian Cross

For the Christian participants in this study, modesty focused more on clothing, wearing symbolic items, and looking "respectful" than on having modest thoughts. Karen, a Lebanese-

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[245] Erica Gonzales, "Nick Jonas Explains How Falling in Love and Having Sex Changed His View of Purity Rings," *Harper's Bazaar,* June 2019, https://www.harpersbazaar.com/celebrity/latest/a27759952/nick-jonas-jonas-brothers-purity-rings/.

[246] Julia Emmanuele, "OMG, This Jonas Brother Just Admitted To Being The First One To Take Off His Purity Ring," *Bustle*, March 2019, https://www.bustle.com/p/the-jonas-brothers-revealed-who-took-their-purity-ring-off-first-in-a-very-juicy-carpool-karaoke-video-16822967.

Canadian, described the importance of the cross's simple symbolism as non-denominational to signal Christian kinship broadly:

> There's a cross that I wear. I have a couple of crosses at home. One is actually from Lebanon. It was actually designed by a jeweler in my mother's village. My mother bought that for me, and I wear it interchangeably with another cross that I have. Other than that, just the crosses that I wear, I pretty much wear them like 80% of the time. That would probably be the only symbol that really represented, but the crosses that I wear, it doesn't say like Catholic, or Orthodox, or Protestant. It's just a very simple cross. That's all it is so it just represents Christianity as opposed to the denomination.

For Karen, wearing a simple cross that she feels represents all of Christianity is an outward signifier of her faith; she wears it to be inclusive of diversity within Christianity.

James, an Italian-Canadian, also mentioned wearing a cross around his neck. For James, the simple cross has been something he has always worn: "I wear it to remind myself of my Christian values and to let others know." By wearing the cross, James is signifying his belonging to Christianity. He knows that his actions and wearing of the cross mark him as a Christian.

James had perhaps the strictest sense of modesty of all the Christians I interviewed. He highlighted the importance of dressing neatly and modestly in case he was to meet his future wife:

> You never know where you will meet your soulmate, you could meet her anywhere, and do you want your first impression to be like, wearing ripped jeans and a dirty shirt? Just like I wouldn't want to meet my future wife and see her like arms out, or clothing ripped, and like covered in tattoos and piercings.

James linked modesty to a broader idea of what it means to be Christian and how to express that publicly. This view is emblematic of purity culture.

Kelsey Sharrod-Michael's research highlights the notion that how one looks on the outside translates into a person's purity and piety:

> "…a central problem for men who are part of evangelical modesty culture: gender essentialism suggests the "double impossibility" of a man reading a woman's mind or her soul. How to circumvent this obstruction? Purity culture's response is to frame women's

> clothing as an unproblematic medium for making not only women's purity, but also their piety, visible to others—in other words, the way a woman (and it is almost always a woman) dresses serves as a "window" into the state of her soul."[247]

This contextualizes James' consideration of his future wife's outward appearance: her purity on the outside is assumed to be representative of purity on the inside. In further exploration of the role of clothing in spiritual purity, I will next consider Christian participant's views on clothing worn to church.

4.4.2 Church Attire

The modesty of clothing in Christian spaces came up in many interviews with Christian females. Like Marla, who had various reasons for dressing modestly outside the context of her burlesque class, many of the women I interviewed identified a dress code they adhered to for church. Their ideas around dress involved avoiding certain colours, as well as presenting a feminine look while being respectful of the accepted social conventions expected within church spaces.

My participants had views similar to those found within Kelsey Sharrod Michael's research on Evangelical Christians. She explains the connections between presenting as modest, desirable femininity, and purity culture:

> The "Modest is Hottest" meme floating across the Internet and stamped on t-shirts and other tchotchkes. In this schema, the desire women must both avoid and arouse is masculine, and being desirable means being both modest and "feminine" (most young evangelical women are not encouraged to try on butch styles or shapeless sacks any more than crop tops and yoga pants). In other words, both of these seemingly contradictory messages are integral to purity culture.[248]

[247] Michael, "Wearing Your Heart on Your Sleeve," 1131.
[248] Michael, "Wearing Your Heart on Your Sleeve," 1139.

Being desirable through modesty and femininity is challenging when women and girls are also sexualized at a young age through popular culture.[249]

These ideas around proper dress appear fluid and flexible depending on the person and the unspoken policies of their respective places of worship. Historically, dress code for attending church was spoken or documented, as shown by a 1789 Charing Cross manual on how to create appropriate church apparel for the poor.[250] Another example can be found in an 1832 letter to the female clergy of the church by a reverend highlighting his displeasure with the number of "ornaments" being worn by women.[251] In decades past, when books on etiquette were commonplace, these ideals around proper dress were more rigidly prescribed and observed.

Despite a lack of obvious modern direction on how to dress, some of the women I interviewed explained their reference points for proper dress. Karen, a Lebanese-Canadian emphasized the colour of clothing worn to church. She stated that she would not wear neon or anything bright to draw unwanted attention to herself while at church:

> I probably wouldn't wear anything neon, for example. Just because I don't want to attract attention to myself and I'm in a place of worship, so I think it's important to be respectful. Mind you, I've been to many, many churches over the course of my life, whether it's a Catholic church, an Orthodox church, and I see other people wearing it, and that's fine, but that's not what I would wear.

Despite her avoidance of drawing attention to herself in church, her phrasing "and I see other people wearing it, and that's fine" shows an acceptance of difference in how others choose to dress.

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[249] Maddy Coy, "Milkshakes, Lady Lumps and Growing up to Want Boobies: How the Sexualisation of Popular Culture Limits Girls' Horizons," *Child Abuse Review* 18, no. 6 (2009): 372–83. https://doi.org/10.1002/car.1094.
[250] *Instructions for Cutting Out Apparel for the Poor: Published for the Benefit of the Sunday School Children at Hertingfordbury, In the County of Hertford.* Charing Cross: J. Walter, 1789.
[251] "Letter on the Subject of Ornamental Dress, from the Rev. Adoniram Judson, Missionary in Burmah, to the Female Members of Christian Churches in the United States of America." *The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* 9 (1853): 532.

In addition to associations of colour with modesty, some participants raised other aspects of modest dressing. Talia, a self-proclaimed feminist, highlighted that she makes conscious decisions to dress in specific ways within Christian spaces, “But when I do go to church, I would never wear anything sexy, or short, or low cut in the chest. I know there are certain fabrics I would never wear to church. I think looking feminine and fresh is important. It is being respectful and showing respect to God.” Talia values cleanliness, modesty in clothing cuts, and looking feminine when dressing for church. When I asked if she felt that people should dress respectfully when attending church, she pointed out that what is respectful to one may be disrespectful to another and that “being present is the most important thing.” Like Karen, while Talia feels it is important to dress a certain way when attending church, she does not feel her own dress code should extend to others.

Talia also briefly talked about her decision to wear a purity ring growing up: “It wasn’t a big deal. All the girls at my church did it. It was just kind of expected of us, to be honest.” Talia noted that she did wear the ring until she got married but disclosed that her views shifted over time. She shared that she would not have her daughter participate in a purity ring ceremony: “It’s just a lot of pressure and a lot of shame for girls who aren’t able to meet expectations on that.” Talia’s response identified two related themes in this study: first, her willingness to re-evaluate traditions centring on modesty and purity with her family because of what she views as negative emotional consequences for girls, which suggests fluidity and change over time and within the faith. Second is her naming shame as to why she viewed purity rings as harmful.

While shame was a pervasive theme across all participants, perhaps the most blatant association between modesty and shame was among the Catholic participants in my study. These participants framed their feelings around shame and their values around modesty as informed

through "Catholic Guilt." The following section explores Catholic participants' association between modesty, shame, and guilt.

4.4.3 Catholic Guilt in Modesty

In my research, Roman Catholic participants—both practicing and those who had left the church—linked modesty and shame by referencing a "Catholic guilt." Stephen Vaisey and Christian Smith describe Catholic guilt as:

> …feelings of shame, remorse, self-doubt, or responsibility of a unique tone and persistence, rooted in particular in a Catholic spirituality that is said to emphasize obedience, sin, damnation, confession, and penance. Often Catholic guilt is specifically associated with what the Catholic Church teaches are sexually-related disorders or sins: lust, premarital sex, masturbation, birth control, pornography, abortion, adultery, and same-sex desires and sexual relations, among other things. However, Catholic guilt also connotes a generalized tendency to feel bad for a wide variety of sins, including imagined or seemingly trivial wrongdoings. [252]

The Catholic participants in my study articulated similar reactions, reporting negative feelings toward partaking in what they heard growing up were "sinful" thoughts or behaviours. Ex-Catholics expressed this "guilt" as a persistent burden from their upbringing they could not shake.

Whether Catholic guilt is a tangible empirical part of the Catholic experience is debated by scholars such as Vaisey and Smith, Jonathan Stotts, and Kenon M. Sheldon.[253] Despite this debate, it is intriguing how many Catholic and ex-Catholic participants use the term "Catholic guilt" to frame their feelings about modesty and shame. Jessica, an ex-Catholic who now self-identifies as an atheist, described her view of Catholic guilt in her interview:

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[252] Stephen Vaisey and Christian Smith, "Catholic Guilt Among U.S. Teenagers: A Research Note," *Review of Religious Research* 49, no. 4 (June 2008): 415.

[253] See Vaisey et al., "Catholic Guilty Among U.S. Teenagers"; Jonathan Stotts, "Obedience as Belonging: Catholic Guilt and Frequent Confession in America," *Religions* 10, no. 6 (2019): 370–390, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10060370; and Kennon M. Sheldon, "Catholic Guilt? Comparing Catholics' and Protestants' Religious Motivations," *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 16, no. 3 (2006): 209–223, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327582ijpr1603_5.

> Even though I left religion behind, and I don't believe in a god, there are times when I think something I don't agree with rationally, like maybe I'm judging another woman for something, but it's not something I rationally care about or disagree with, but this thought that whatever they are doing is wrong just bubbles up and, and when I reflect on it, I realize it's Catholic guilt. I have this undercurrent of Catholic guilt still.

Jessica noted how she replicates what she understands as Catholic values by way of judgement, thus, in turn, reproducing Catholic guilt in the world.

Another participant, 31-year-old Matthew, an ex-Catholic male who self-identifies as an atheist, exasperatedly expressed in our conversation about changerooms that people need to have more shame:

> Then there are those people that are… they just let it all hang out and they shouldn't. They have no shame; they'll be talking to you with no underwear on and just… everything is sagging. Some people should have more shame about their bodies.

When digging a bit deeper on this, Matthew referenced a "healthy sense of Catholic shame" as likely being the cause for his disdain towards his naked peers, despite no longer being Catholic.

Matthew's link between body-related shame and Catholic guilt is not unusual. The idea of Catholic shame is often touted through popular culture, which may be why many people use it in their vernacular as a reference point for their views on certain things. For example, the comedian Conan O'Brien has stated in a Rolling Stone interview by Patrick Doyle that his religion came with the baggage of Catholic guilt:

> Listen, I've had a lot of therapy, but when you get programmed that early that God is always watching, so if you think you could do better, God will know, and you must try harder … I don't know. I mean, there are plenty of Catholics that didn't get that message, but that's the way I interpreted it.[254]

Conan O'Brien often alludes to this feeling of inadequacy in his comedy, linking modesty and humility about his body to why he thinks his Catholic upbringing has contributed to his comedic

[254] Patrick Doyle, "The Last Word: Conan O'Brien on Catholicism, 'The Simpsons' and Life As Late Night's Elder Statesman," *Rolling Stone Magazine*, January 2019, https://www.rollingstone.com/tv/tv-features/conan-obrien-late-night-simpsons-catholicism-780706/ (accessed January 9, 2020).

success: "If I had grown up in Southern California and not been Catholic, and my dad was a surfer, and my mom taught yoga on the beach, and we were told early on to just enjoy our bodies, and I had a girlfriend when I was 14, I don't think I'd be a funny person."[255] It is interesting how he alludes to not enjoying his body in his youth and his relative celibacy until his late adolescence as fodder for comedy.

Robert Orsi, in his research, also discusses the role guilt plays in the lives of Catholics—mainly in how childhood and adolescent experiences are prominent in shaping this guilt. Quoting a psychotherapist he interviewed, Orsi discusses the longstanding impact of such guilt:

> "I have listened to hours of disclosure from suffering victims about the damages of pre-Vatican practices. Midlife women still angry at missing their babies' Christenings because they hadn't been churched yet (cleansed of the stains of childbirth). A mother who felt guilty for years that her SIDS baby's death before baptism sent him to limbo . . . Scores of midlife women who have never experienced an orgasm because they were taught that sex was so dirty . . . A woman who had an abortion after a rape and now believes her two subsequent miscarriages are punishments from God." The making of the realness of a religious world is not a benign process; religious reality achieved in children's bodies (and reverberating in the memories of the adults these children become) did not make the world safer for these children, more comforting, or even necessarily more meaningful. It made it real.[256]

Despite the debate over the universal prevalence of Catholic guilt, my findings and Orsi's show that it plays a role in how Catholics and ex-Catholics frame their feelings around modesty. This seems especially true for people who cannot find another frame of reference for describing specific feelings. Interestingly, Catholics and ex-Catholics in this study were most likely to name shame explicitly out of all groups in my research.

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[255] Doyle, "The Last Word."
[256] Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth,* 108.

4.4.4 Christian Modesty Conclusion

Modesty is a value that shapes how Christian participants understand themselves, their bodies, and their presentation of self. The significance of modesty is evident in how some Christians dress in and out of religious venues; purity rituals; and ideas around shame and the body. Modesty is described by the Christian participants similarly to the Muslim participants. The struggle of trying to be modest and comfortable while looking nice is shared across both religions. Nonetheless, a notable difference between the two groups is that Muslim participants focused on their day-to-day clothing choices; in contrast, the Christians I interviewed assumed the question was specifically about church attire. Muslim participants did not describe how they dressed for the mosque, yet every Christian response focused on their clothing for church. This suggests that, for Christians, there may be a markedly different way modesty is practiced in dressing for church versus in day-to-day attire.

4.5 Non-Religion and Modesty

Various factors shape how individuals, religious and non-religious, construct their views around modesty. We saw with Marla's story how her modesty is flexible between her day-to-day life and her burlesque classes. The diverse responses from participants who identified as religious illustrates Meredith McGuire and Robert Orsi's arguments about the individualized nature of lived religion.[257] As outlined in the literature review, individual religious behaviors vary greatly in expression, even when the subjects belong to the same religion, church, or sect. Views of what it means to be non-religious are similarly diverse, including how lived experiences translate into personal views on modesty.

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[257] See McGuire, *Lived Religion,* and Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth.*

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Some individuals who identify as non-religious also identify as atheists. Others may have no religious memory, as coined by Danièle Hervieu-Léger,

> At the source of all religious belief, as we have seen, there is a belief in the continuity of the lineage of believers. This continuity transcends history. It is affirmed and manifested in the essentially religious act of recalling a past which gives meaning to the present and contains the future.[258]

Alternatively, non-religious persons may have a collection of beliefs not commonly captured by studies on religion that are as rich and diverse as religiously informed values. Peter Beyer et al. delve into the ways individuals construct their religious and non-religious identities in the Canadian context, illustrating the complexity of non-religious identity, reaching the vital conclusion that religious nones—that is, atheists, agnostics, and those who are spiritual but not religious—are likely to be a larger group than what is currently captured by research.[259]

This study highlights the diversity inherent in non-religious views in comparing Genevieve, a non-religious atheist from a family background of Catholicism, with Tanya and Leah. Tanya had no religious memory because her upbringing was non-religious. She did not grow up attending church and described her family celebrating Judeo-Christian religious holidays in a way that did not include the religious aspects. Leah describes herself as spiritual but not religious and finds sacredness in the changing seasons and nature. Like the religious participants of this study, Genevieve rejects the over-sexualization of bodies, while Tanya feels intimidated working out around men and prefers same-gender classes. Leah describes herself as a prude who "doesn't want to put those [sexualized] vibes out there." I will explore their views further in this section.

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[258] Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, 125.

[259] Peter Beyer, Alyshea Cummins, and Scott Craig, "Measuring Religious Identity Differently: A Canadian Survey Study," *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 45 (2016): 15. doi:10.1558/bsor.v45i1.30174.

4.5.1 Non-Religious with No Religious Memory

Non-religion is a complex identity category comprising of various perspectives, including those who may have some religious "memory" and those who do not. Danièle Hervieu-Léger describes religion as a system of meaning that can pass on through a chain of memories and traditions.[260] Some individuals grow up without having this religious memory transmitted through their families.

Though Tanya described herself as having no religious memory, her membership in her sorority informs her worldview on both religion and modesty. Tanya is a sorority sister in a teacher's college in Ontario. She immigrated to Canada from the United States as a child and did not link her thoughts about modesty to religion because she grew up with no religious memory. Instead, she feels more comfortable exercising in same-gender spaces because she views kinship with women. When asked how she feels about others who practice modesty values as part of their religion, she said "I think it's great, I mean like, I feel so intimidated in the gym by men. I don't see a difference between me wanting to work out with women because of nervousness and them wanting to work out with women because of religion." Tanya's perspective shows empathy for women who prefer to work out around women only and reveals that she relates her own preferences to those who hold religious-based preferences.

Tanya does not feel as though people who practice modesty values judge her, stating, "I feel like women who cover up their body a lot accept me. I have a large chest, so I try to not show cleavage and stuff, but I think even if I did, it's all about girl power." Tanya's experiences emphasize a thoughtful approach and perspective towards differences, focusing instead on the shared similarities between herself and other women. As a sorority sister, Tanya told me early in

[260] Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, 82.

the interview that she values sisterhood and has taken an oath to celebrate and honour her relationships with women. This understanding of sisterhood has shaped her view of what she sees as a shared experience of womanhood inclusive of religious differences: “Quite a few of the girls in my sorority are religious, we don’t care, and we support it all. We all celebrate Eid, Easter, Hannukah, everything.” This perspective fits with Lori G. Beaman’s framework of Deep equality and is a perfect example of an on-the-ground negotiation where Tanya chooses common ground with religious people over exclusion. [261]

Tanya and her sorority sisters navigate differences through a shared understanding and appreciation of what is important to each woman. The value of sisterhood transcends other differences. Together they celebrate each other’s values and religious (or non-religious) understandings, and by doing so, the need for negotiation is negated. For example, Tanya is a vegetarian, and the group predominantly eats vegetarian meals together. She described this as mutually beneficial since doing so accommodates Muslim and Jewish avoidance of pork, the views of environmentalists who like to reduce their meat intake, and dietary restrictions such as shellfish allergies. They found that what is good for one woman is often best for the group.

4.5.2 Spiritual but Not Religious

With an understanding of how one can grow up like Tanya with no religious memory, I will now turn to another non-religious identity, spiritual but not religious (hereafter SBNR). Four participants in this dissertation identified in some capacity as “spiritual” and not part of organized religion, but only Leah specifically labelled herself as SBNR. SBNR is a term to

[261] Lori G. Beaman. “Deep Equality as an Alternative to Accomodation and Tolerance.” *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 27, no. 2 (2014): 89-111.

describe individuals who view their orientation as spiritual and do not consider organized religion as the path to developing their spirituality. As Linda Mercadante describes:

> These people define spirituality as personal, heart-felt, and authentic, while claiming religion is external, structured, and non-essential. SBNRs are particularly prevalent in the U.S. and represent at least a third of the non-religious. They are generally neither devoted atheists nor devout believers, instead occupying the middle space between these orientations.[262]

SBNRs are part of the non-religious, but because they straddle this middle space as described by Mercadante, their positionality with regard to religion is a bit harder to explain.

Leah is an SBNR nursing student who practices modesty values because, in her own words, "I'm a prude. I don't like people staring at me; it makes me self-conscious." Leah takes exercise classes with both genders but prefers the energy in women's-only classes because she does not feel as inhibited as she does around males. Leah feels that women are hypersexualized and that she "doesn't want to put those [sexual] vibes out there." Leah believes that women should be comfortable working out in spaces regardless of their religion or non-religious preferences: "Canada is a diverse country; we need to respect that and be inclusive." This mentality also reflects deep equality; Leah values diversity and feels there is an obligation to ensure everyone is comfortable.

4.5.3 Non-Religious Rejection of Modesty

Modesty—or, in this case, the absence of modesty as a value—played a particular role in the identity of one non-religious participant. Genevieve is a 19-year-old ex-Catholic woman, who grew up in a northern Ontario city, loves cross-fit, and is studying anthropology. Genevieve

[262] Linda Mercadante, "Spiritual Struggles of Nones and 'Spiritual but Not Religious' (SBNRs)," *Religions* 11, no. 513 (2020): 1-2. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11100513.

is currently employed in sex work and views modesty as more nuanced than clothing or naked bodies:

> From my life experience, I just think that bodies at the end of the day are just bodies. Personally, as my job, I'm a sex worker and I've seen so many naked bodies, men, and women, that at this point it's like I don't even notice that they're naked anymore. It's not like, "Oh my God, he's naked." It doesn't even matter. I've met people for the first time, them stark naked, and it does not influence me at all now.

Genevieve does not view modesty as playing a role in her life or values because she considers the concept of modesty to be centred on the over-sexualization of bodies, a notion that she rejects.

Genevieve views a naked body as a sort of "work uniform." In the context of sex work, in the space where that work takes place, she does not feel that work is an appropriate time or place for her to sexualize her coworkers who are doing their job. Genevieve views consumption of bodies for sexual gratification as time- and location-dependent:

> And also, as a queer woman, it's kind of weird because I look at, for example, my coworkers, there'll be two or three girls, or sometimes like four girls in our house and two or three of them will be naked, and I'm not attracted to them at all. They're beautiful women, but I see it as a different space. Their naked body isn't for my eyes or it's not to be sexualized at that time. It's just that's almost like their work uniform.

Genevieve describes the concepts of modesty and sexualization as context dependent. She also enacts the common workplace rule that romantic or sexual relations between coworkers are to be avoided. In her place of work, her coworkers' bodies are not for her consumption. This time- and place-dependent context informs her values when it comes to modesty.

Genevieve made a point to mention that she "respects women who do choose to wear headscarves or save themselves for marriage," explaining that she is supportive of others and their desire to maintain a modest life. She discussed supporting a peer she works out with who veils. Despite her support of others, however, she did not always feel the same mutual respect offered to her for the way she lives in her body:

> People get almost afraid or rigid when I am less than modest. Well, say, if I'm talking or if I'm telling a story that's kind of lewd about work, I'm very open about what I do for work, and people will know that I'm a sex worker and then I'll go into specifics and then they're like, "Oh, I don't want to hear about that. I don't want to know about that." And I feel it's the same thing about nudity or modesty or sluttiness. Yeah.

This excerpt highlights a tension Genevieve feels with society at large. Genevieve feels sex work is not a societally accepted occupation. She believes that "religiously imposed views on sex work" embolden people to dehumanize sex workers. While unpacking this view, she acknowledged having a Muslim friend who accepts her as-is and pondered how perhaps more people might accept it if they realized that they knew a sex worker. While these tensions exist for Genevieve, she desires to navigate those tensions respectfully.

4.5.4 Non-Religion Conclusion

It is clear from the views highlighted by Genevieve, Tanya, and Leah that modesty values are not solely attributable to religion. However, like the religious participants, the male gaze permeates how these women dress and do fitness. We can see how patriarchal ideals has shaped their constructions of modesty. Modesty values—sometimes entangled with religion, as we saw with the Muslim and Christian participants—also seem to permeate the worldviews and values structures of non-religious women. The male gaze, gender-based violence, social views, and fear of victim-blaming forces women to conduct self-surveillance. One mechanism women may employ for respite from the overt male gaze is to work out in same-gender spaces, as Tanya does. Another is to wear clothing that covers sexualized areas, like Leah. Genevieve subverts the male gaze through the outright rejection of modesty values. Each woman uses strategies to disrupt the male gaze, engage in fitness, and be comfortable in their body. Like the Muslims and Christians, the non-religious are under patriarchal pressures when it comes to their conduct.

4.6 Modesty Conclusion

A consistent theme throughout the experiences outlined by my study's participants is that modesty values are uniquely expressed by the individual and are, for the most part, successfully navigated through day-to-day life. Participants who discussed experiencing prejudice against their values felt that negotiation may have been possible by building mutual understanding. For example, Ayesha put herself in the shoes of those who oppose veiling and noted she understood why it would seem odd to someone with little understanding of Islam why women may choose to veil. Most participants I interviewed voiced compassionate support for women who practice modesty values in forms such as choosing to veil, working out in women's-only spaces, and dressing in certain ways. Even some non-religious participants voiced considerations of personal modesty not rooted in religious practice. For example, Leah self-identified as "a prude" who dresses in ways some might consider modest, despite Leah not having a religious intention to signal modesty. With the knowledge that religion is not the sole predictor of modesty as a personal value, barriers related to modesty could be a more significant issue than is currently considered by sport and fitness institutions.

Modesty accommodations should be essential considerations when configuring the space within a university gym. Allowing flexibility in changing options, dress code, and same-gender fitness rooms within the gym could make it more accessible to a variety of people. Religious or not, some women feel more comfortable in a women's-only space. Flexibility and accommodations can also improve accessibility for gender diverse and trans people such as Ray whose modesty is informed by self-consciousness and uncertainty relating to transition.

If modesty values affect identity, it is equally important to recognize that shame impacts modesty practices. Clothing choices are informed both by religious understandings and the perceived or actual male gaze. Participants in this study described how they navigate these often-

overlapping spheres of religion, patriarchy, and personal shame while carving out meaning in how they do so. In the next chapter, I will bring these insights about modesty and its links to shame to bear on a discussion of the specific context of fitness for those who practice religion. Participants from Muslim, Christian, and Jewish backgrounds spoke to me about how they live their religious understandings through fitness and sport and how they navigate and negotiate fitness spaces so that their fitness practice aligns with their values.

Chapter 5 Practicing Religion Through Fitness

"As a result of these high expectations surrounding a greatly valued ideal, health has become a salient metaphor for salvation."
-Meredith McGuire[263]

Abdi came to Canada as an international student from Pakistan when he was nineteen to study Business. When he first arrived in Canada, he felt a bit isolated: he missed his friends and family back home, and things were quite different living on his own. His dad suggested joining a local cricket club to meet new people. Abdi found this difficult since he moved to a medium-sized university with no cricket club. He decided that going to the university gym would be a good alternative and started going every day. While weightlifting, he noticed another student who was wearing a cricket shirt. Abdi decided to comment on the shirt, which started a conversation. He exchanged his phone number with the guy and was excited to have made a friend.

This new friend invited Abdi to his place to watch the Cricket World Cup. When he showed up, he saw that his newfound friend had invited twenty other university-aged cricket aficionados. Excited, Abdi talked with his new friends and decided to start a cricket club. He had so much in common with these guys. Many were South Asian like him and were also Muslim. He felt like he finally had a community.

Starting the club took much work at first. Luckily, there was immense interest and support. Even people who had never played cricket joined to learn the game. He felt like his friend group was becoming more diverse than ever, which was exciting.

[263] McGuire, *Lived Religion*, 136.

It was smooth sailing over the first few months, and everyone enjoyed coming to practice and designing the cricket uniform. However, as Ramadan approached, Abdi started having anxiety. Practices were in the early afternoon, but with fasting, he was worried about the Muslim members of the team having low energy. As the club leader, Abdi wanted to adjust the practice time until after sundown for Ramadan so that those fasting could eat beforehand. He was nervous about how non-Muslims would feel about it and whether he would be able to rent the practice space that late in the day. He had experienced anti-Islam prejudice during his time in school here and was afraid of possible backlash.

He decided to find out if it was possible to change the rental time with the venue where they practiced—there was no point in bringing up the schedule change if it was not an option. At first, the gym coordinator was quizzical. "Why do you want to rent it so late?" After explaining the issue, the coordinator worked hard to find staff available to work from 11:30 pm-1:30 am. While Abdi was very appreciative of being given the new time option, he became worried that people would find the practice time too late at night.

He decided to bring it up to the team on its Facebook page. He posted the situation, explaining that about a third of the team would be observing a fast for Ramadan, and asked how people felt about moving the practice time. He held his breath as he waited for responses. The first response was, "This is perfect! No conflicts from me," followed by, "Can we join the feasts I heard Muslims have after fasting lol?" Overwhelmingly the responses were positive and supportive of changing the time.

Abdi was relieved. His religion always had been an important part of his day-to-day life. He understood from his Imam back home that fitness was essential for being a good Muslim. Living a healthy life free from drugs and alcohol, eating well, and keeping his body in good

shape were all critical to his values and supported by cricket practice. He was relieved that his new team understood his perspective and felt more comfortable talking about his religiosity because of their acceptance.

Composite*

5.1 Introducing Practicing Religion Through Fitness

Abdi's composite illustrates some of the ways that religion intersects with the body. Food and the body overlap while fasting for Ramadan, and social connections and the body interact while navigating a later practice time. We see glimpses of internal negotiation and anxiety as Abdi waits to see if his cricket team is willing to accept his request to change practice times. These are all examples of Abdi navigating his Muslim identity in university sports.

Numerous study participants reflected the themes shown in Abdi's composite. Many spoke of their connection between religion and sport through the frame of what I see as lived religion. Meredith McGuire's concept of "lived religion" is a helpful frame for these negotiations, as it provides a structure for considering how day-to-day beliefs, practices, and experiences are applied. These daily applications often differ from the prescribed rituals or beliefs as outlined by organized religion.[264] As we see with Abdi's story, many connections between fitness and religion are inferred by individual religious understandings, not by their religious organization. In this section, I explore lived religion and how it manifests in fitness within each religious grouping.

This chapter explores participants' negotiation and navigation of identity in sport and fitness. This navigation relates to Jennifer Selby et al.'s research in *Beyond Accommodation: Everyday Narratives of Muslim Canadians,* which studied examples of day-to-day negotiations

[264] McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*.

by Muslims in various public spaces, including schools, daycares, and fitness facilities. Notably, these negotiations were often done quietly, flexibly, and informally.[265] Selby et al. discuss negotiations such as a school employee negotiating a vegetarian lunch during an event through informal conversation with the school secretary, and a colleague who did not drink for religious reasons negotiating the receipt of an alcoholic gift from a colleague.[266] These examples demonstrate how negotiations like the one Abdi made with his team for Ramadan are commonplace, though there is not much discussion on such negotiations in literature. These navigations are evident in how many participants adapt to fitness in spaces not designed for them. We will see examples of these informal negotiations throughout this chapter.

Some views around religion and fitness as outlined in this chapter can be traced back to historical processes, like the muscularization of religion as a response to real or perceived threats of persecution. The muscularization of religion also solidifies rigid gender roles, which we see play out in "acceptable" sport practices as expressed by women and men in the interviews. In this chapter, I explore muscularization—overviewed in Chapter 2—in more depth within the context of each religion.

I have organized this chapter along religious lines because there were many organic similarities in lived religious expression and navigation between individuals within the same religious group. This chapter will consider Islam, Christianity, and Judaism in that order, exploring how participants use fitness to embody their religious understanding. Further, I will consider religious muscularization and unique features particular to each religion.

[265] Selby, et al, *Beyond Accommodation*, 20.
[266] Selby, et al, *Beyond Accommodation* 153; 168.

5.2 Religion and Fitness in Islam

Media coverage of bans of religious headwear in professional sports frequently portrays Islam and fitness in conflict. Following FIFA and FIBA's decisions to ban religious headwear, hijab-wearing members of the Jordanian Women's soccer team were banned from playing soccer in 2011 matches leading up to the 2012 Olympics.[267] The ban was widely publicized and drew the public's attention to the difficulties that some Muslim women faced when it came to accessing organized sports. These bans were resolved during a trial period, with the full removal of FIFA's ban in 2014 and FIBA's ban in 2017.[268] As FIFA and FIBA are the governing bodies of sport for football[269] and basketball, these policies set a precedent for lower levels of sport, right down to children's recreational leagues. These bans affected the ability of children and young adults who wore hijabs to play these two organized sports.

Despite the attention given to hijabs and organizational attempts to limit the involvement in sports of those who wear them, historically and presently, countless Muslim women are active advocates and participants in sports at all levels. This section begins by highlighting how some Muslim participants view fitness and sport in relation to their religious understanding. I then move my focus to Christian, and Jewish understandings of sport.

5.2.1 Muscular Islam

There is less academic literature on Muscular Islam than on Muscular Christianity (detailed in Chapter 2) and Muscular Judaism (explored later in this chapter), but what exists is helpful in framing the role of fitness in communities where Muslims are a minority. John Nauright used the concept of Muscular Islam to describe the phenomenon of physicality in

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[267] Hamzeh, "Jordanian National Football Muslimat Players," 520.
[268] Shireen Ahmed, "After a Long Fight, FIBA Finally Lifts Its Ban on Religious Headwear," *VICE*, 4 May 2017, www.vice.com/en/article/nz8bvg/after-a-long-fight-fiba-finally-lifts-its-ban-on-religious-headwear.
[269] Known in North America as soccer.

Muslim rugby leagues in 1930-1970s Cape Town, South Africa.[270] Nauright saw the sport of rugby as an essential part of the community in the working-class districts of Cape Town. The structure of rugby clubs within Cape Town reinforced masculine ideals and community solidarity while involving women in subsidiary yet active roles in the operations of the sport. These gender roles are similar to those in Muscular Christianity and Muscular Judaism.

Muscular Islam differs from Muscular Christianity in its use to strengthen the image of an oppressed people. Nauright uses the example of darker-skinned Muslims in Cape Town during apartheid to draw similarities with how Israel utilized Muscular Judaism to invigorate and elevate Jews after the hardships of World War Two:

> The Muslim community in particular accepted violence and intimidation as significant parts of the game, which enabled rugby in its expressive form to symbolise the struggle against a wider society in which Coloureds and Muslims had no real power and in which work and play were hard activities for the majority. Rugby and the Islamic faith fostered a culture of discipline that allowed for significant violence within specifically defined spheres.[271]

In this way, Muscular Islam via rugby operated as a type of embodied protest to the struggle and subjugation experienced by working-class Muslims.

In "'Tough Talk,' Muscular Islam and Football: Young British Pakistani Muslim Masculinities," Samaya Farooq considers how Muscular Islam operates in the identity construction of British Pakistani boys.[272] She largely finds that Muscular Islam is a process resulting from rising Islamophobia in Britain and views masculinization as a response to the oppression they face.

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[270] Nauright, "Masculinity, muscular Islam and Popular Culture," 184–190.
[271] Nauright, "Masculinity, muscular Islam and Popular Culture," 189-190.
[272] Samaya Farooq, "'Tough Talk', Muscular Islam and Football: Young British Pakistani Muslim Masculinities," in *Race, Ethnicity and Football: Persisting Debates and Emergent Issues,* edited by Daniel Burdsey, 151-165 (Routledge: 2011), doi:10.4324/9780203817117-21.

Scholars like Nauright and Farooq see the muscularization of Islam in situations where Muslims are oppressed or the minority. Though trends of Muscular Islam have not been widely studied in these nations, the prevalence of Islamophobia in France and the United States suggests similar phenomena may be occurring elsewhere.[273] That is not to say, however, that the only motivation for fitness in Islam is the presence or threat of persecution. The following section will explore individual motivations in Islam for maintaining fitness.

5.2.2 Islamic Motivations for Fitness

For some individuals, fitness directly relates to the practice of their religion. In my research, a common theme among fitness practitioners was viewing the body as an extension of God's creation. Zahra, a Muslim participant introduced in Chapter 4, remarked, "You're taught to respect God's creation and what God has given to you, so yes, I see it as a way to maintain yourself for God and to keep yourself healthy." She felt that not exercising was not taking care of her body, which she interprets as harming God's creation. When asking Zahra if it was an understanding that she felt was common in her religion, she explained:

> [i]t was definitely something I picked up along the road between Islamic school and family. The people I picked it up from essentially used to work out to keep themselves in top shape and just to keep themselves healthy and feeling good but not to an extreme just enough to be like at a good place where you're not at an unhealthy weight or you're not feeble. Just as a way to survive and be healthy because being unhealthy actually does harm your body, and that is harming God's creation.

Zahra views fitness and actions to maintain good health as a teaching within her understanding of Islam, inspired by the influences of her upbringing.

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[273] See Jim Wolfreys, *Republic of Islamophobia: The Rise of Respectable Racism in France* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2018) and Liz Jackson, "Islam and Islamophobia in USA: The Tip of the Iceberg," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 48, no. 7 (2016): 744–48, doi:10.1080/00131857.2016.1175844.

This view—that it is a Muslim's responsibility to take care of their body—was shared by Ziad. Ziad is a 21-year-old double degree student originally from Pakistan who enjoys weightlifting. When explaining his religious motivations for fitness, he said, "throughout the teachings of the Prophet, he is leading by example. By taking care of the body Allah gave me and showing others how to live a healthy life, I am leading by example in the Muslim way." Ziad views fitness as a physical depiction of living a good life as a Muslim.

Furthermore, Ziad views how he takes care of his body as a message to others about Islam. This perspective is similar to Steven Fink's findings in *Dribbling for Dawah: Sports among Muslim Americans,* where Fink explores the concept of athletic "bridging" and "bonding" with Muslims in sport to non-Muslim Americans through American ideals.[274] Fink connects Dawah, a concept of Islamic proselytization that invites non-Muslims to learn about Islam, to the bridging and bonding process.[275] We can also see this process of understanding Islam through sport depicted in the composite of Abdi. By sharing his practice of Ramadan with his teammates, they came to better understand Islam.

5.2.3 Lived Religious Motivations for Fitness in Islam

Lived religion, a concept outlined in Chapter 2, considers how individuals actively negotiate and shape their understandings of religion in everyday life. Individuals express and live their understandings of religion on their own terms, rather than reproducing institutional expressions of religion. This section will consider lived religious motivations for fitness in the Muslim group I sampled.

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[274] Fink, *Dribbling for Dawah*, 2.
[275] Fink, *Dribbling for Dawah*, 60-61.

Azra and Sara, introduced in Chapter 4, both spoke of their motivations for fitness, Azra said: "I want to be as healthy as I can for as long as I can, so when I have kids, I can be there for them. My dad died young; I don't want to if I can help it." For Azra, family is essential to her values, and she views taking care of her family as a responsibility she can control to some extent through good health practices.

Sara, meanwhile, views herself as having a religiously informed commitment to her parents and wants to be there for them in their old age "We have a small family here in Canada. It's me or my sister here for them. They remind us, the Quran says to be dutiful to your parents. They're going to need more help at some point, and you can't care for others if you are unwell." While Sara links her views more explicitly to religious understanding than Azra's, both women spoke at length about the importance of family in Islam and Somali culture.

Some participants also spoke of fitness as a practical means of preserving their bodies and maintaining a decent quality of life. John, introduced in Chapter 4, is a minimally practicing Muslim convert. He described how he focuses on fitness when he begins to see a breakdown in his body:

> Absolutely, I consider myself to be utilitarian, and I won't do something unless I need to do it. But if I need to do it, I'm going to do it… I'll have to do it. I just watched both my brothers gain about 30 lb. And you know there's going to be a point when that's going to hit me too. Eventually, there will be a point when I'll stop being in decent shape.

John partly shapes his perspective from seeing poor behaviours and ill health modelled by family members and not wanting to fall into the same struggle.

Another part of his desire to stay in good shape is related to his commitment to his partner's family through an Islamic marriage where he vowed to care for his wife. He said: "Obviously, when I agreed to convert, to put my wife's parents at ease, I also committed to taking care of their daughter. I can't provide for her properly if I am unhealthy." Part of fulfilling

this vow to provide for his wife is maintaining a healthy lifestyle and adjusting his health practices to ensure his longevity.

5.2.4 Holistic Health in Islam

Some Muslims spoke of fitness as part of a larger web of healthy choices and actions that are all interconnected and necessary for good health. Their recognition of this interconnectedness of the whole body considers health practices beyond fitness. As described in the introduction to this chapter, Ali used his interest in fitness to have healthy social relationships with his peers and enjoy the benefits of regular exercise. He also made his religious identity fit his athletic lifestyle by finding a way to continue to exercise during Ramadan. This overlap between exercise, religiosity, healthy socialization, and diet is also something I found with other participants who viewed good health as consisting of many factors.

For some Muslims, their idea of "good health" included factors like mental health, hygiene, balance, and diet. Those who viewed their relationships with their body as part of their relationship with God tended to participate in practices they interpreted as linked to their Muslim identities. Leila, introduced in Chapter 4, is one example of this. She feels that it is part of her religious conviction to maintain a good standard of overall health. Leila views eating well and abstaining from intoxicants as part of her holistic commitment to taking care of her body as part of her faith. As she described it:

> I mean, yes, it's part of health. Be healthy, eat good food, and work out to stay healthy. In religion, God said, "take care of your body". In my religion, your body is not yours because when you die, it dies, right, but like that's how we say and my mom used to say, God gave you this body and life, take care of it. Don't smoke, don't buy a drink, and I never drank in my entire life, so I wouldn't know how it tastes.

For Leila, maintaining a healthy body by exercising and having healthy lifestyle habits is part of how she understands her Muslim faith and religious obligations, as taught to her by her family and faith group.

Ziad also paints a picture of holistic health beyond exercise. He highlights this view when he describes abstaining from things he views as harmful to the body, some of which he views as religiously prescribed:

> To be a good Muslim, I believe you should not take intoxicants, you should not eat pork because it is an unhealthy meat with lots of fat, and is unclean, you should wash for good hygiene, you should not damage your body with tattoos or piercings, you should stay healthy and be active, you should live with love in your heart. I think these are things Muslims focus on because they maintain our health. I don't judge those who drink or smoke or eat pork, but I don't think it is good for them and I don't think it helps them be the best Muslim they can be.

Ziad views fitness as one part of a list of things he believes—in his personal understanding of Islam—that is prescribed through teachings to encourage a good standard of health. Some of these good health habits are related to food and drugs, such as avoiding pork and alcohol. These habits can also have a mental focus, like living your life with love, or be physical, such as staying active and not partaking in body modifications like tattoos or piercings.

Some Muslim participants that approached health with a whole-body approach lived these holistic practices differently than Leila and Ziad. Nayla, a third-year Social Work student of Somalian descent who enjoys walking her dog and going on nature walks along outdoor trails, views holistic health in a different way than Ziad. Nayla views a healthful lifestyle as balanced with vices in moderation. While Ziad mentioned that he abstains from smoking and drinking, Nayla is a smoker who drinks on occasion. She described her relationship with her vices:

> I just really hate going to the gym, and like I try to eat well, but to be honest I drink a lot of sugary drinks and often skip meals. I also have a lot of tattoos and although I don't eat pork, I do drink. And I smoke… well I've been trying to quit, but I smoke a pack every two or three days. But you know, moderation. I don't go overboard on anything; I'd just rather live a good life enjoying good food and celebrating with friends than being in the

> gym every day and following a meal plan. I think it's healthier for my body and brain to go on walks in nature and do natural exercises that actually reflect me in my regular life than be like doing fifty crunches every day in a gym and you know, I'm happy with that and I think I'm healthy enough. I think God cares that you like take care of your body, but I don't think there's a one perfect way to do that. Like it would look different depending on the person you know? And I'm not perfect I don't think anyone should really look to me for solid health advice… like at all.

As we have already seen, religious identities are negotiated and navigated in the context of day-to-day life. Nayla understands what is or is not realistic in her lifestyle and lives her understanding of fitness and Islam accordingly.

McGuire's notion of lived religion can be found in how Nayla integrates being Muslim with her approach to health. Nayla highlighted her approach as a moderate one. She does not go to the gym but carves out time for meaningful exercise outdoors. We see her thinking about moderation and interpreting it somewhat differently from Ziad and Leila, particularly around drinking and smoking. Nayla lives her understanding of health similarly to Ziad and Leila in the holistic sense but varies in her approach.

These holistic ideas around fitness, health, and religion manifest in everyday actions by individuals, such as the decision to fast for Ramadan and still play a sport, as Abdi does with his cricket team. Alternatively, some choose to abstain from alcohol and other habits, like Leila and Ziad, then there is the moderate approach, as with Nayla. Though each of these approaches take Islamic teachings into consideration, their outcomes look different because each individual interprets them differently.

5.2.5 Fitness and Islam Conclusion

Islam is not a monolith, and the practices and views of those who identify as Muslim are varied. The views expressed by the participants of this study are no exception. However, many express a connection to their faith as a primary motivation for maintaining a healthy body. For

some like Ziad and Leila, this association extended beyond exercise to include dietary choices and avoiding drugs and alcohol to create a religiously inspired holistic view of health. For others, such as John, the motivation stemmed from his desire to be a good husband and belong within his wife's community.

Study participants were committed to engaging in fitness through negotiation and navigation of fitness institutions that produced barriers to participation. Individual Muslims live and express their religiosity in a wide range of ways that cannot always be captured by studying Muslims within the framework of organized religion or within a rigid understanding of Islam. Lori Beaman et al.'s study involving Muslims found that lived expressions of religiosity varied as participants navigated and negotiated boundaries:

> Some of the practices can make it difficult for young men and women to negotiate the restrictions they have placed upon themselves in order to live an "authentic" form of Islam. Negotiating the boundaries of their personal and religious lives was something that many Muslim youths ... took very seriously, and although some found it difficult to maintain, they all felt that they were able to practice their level of faith freely in Canada[276]

This boundary negotiation was present in how participants of this study described their understanding of fitness, which for some meant abstaining from pork, alcohol, or co-ed fitness spaces. The way each participant incorporated their understanding of fitness within their religious worldview manifested in "lived" ways like walking their dog or going on hikes.

Fitness practices are not "prescribed" in any particular way by Islam. Instead, the participants in this study used their understandings of what it means to be Muslim—including dietary choices, views on health, and responsibilities to family, among others—to guide them in

[276] Lori Beaman, Nancy Nason-Clark, and Rubina Ramji, "The Difference That Gender Makes," in *Growing Up Canadian*, edited by Peter Beyer and Rubina Ramji (Montreal: McGill–Queens University Press, 2013), 261.

their choices and interpretation of their approaches to fitness. A "lived religion" approach allows us to see how being Muslim shapes practice and beliefs related to fitness more broadly

5.3 Religion and Fitness in Christianity

Christianity holds a privileged position in North American society. We see privileging of Christianity in fitness with the scheduling of games; rules governing how athletes can pray within Christian standards of normative prayer; and how widespread and commonplace Christian athletes attribute their success to God in a post-game interview. In this section, I explore how Muscular Christianity subtly and overtly continues to operate in North American sports more than a century and a half since its inception, and how these tenets are still evident in gendered conceptions of fitness.

5.3.1 Muscular Christianity

As discussed in Chapter 2, Muscular Christianity is an academic concept referring to a Protestant moral asceticism and discipline of the body.[277] It focuses on a commitment to physical health and specific ideals of masculinity that have become embedded moral implications in North American sport. Muscular Christianity originated in England and was adopted in North America to respond to a perception that males in America were being culturally feminized due to a female majority running secular institutions like schools. Sport served as a space that could reinforce Christian ideals of masculinity.[278] The focus of Muscular Christianity is on masculinity, but it also prescribed gendered expectations and roles for females within a patriarchal lens. For example, women were encouraged to be physically active in specific ways deemed feminine and believed to be advantageous for childbearing.

[277] Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 45.
[278] Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 2-3.

Muscular Christianity and its ideals of masculinity, including those tied to patriotism, continue to resonate in the discourse around sport in North America. In 2018, then-U.S. President Donald Trump asserted that Black athletes kneeling for the U.S. anthem in protest of police violence and white supremacy, led by Colin Kaepernick in the NFL, was non-American and unpatriotic behaviour: "Wow, NFL first game ratings are way down over an already really bad last year comparison. If the players stood proudly for our Flag and Anthem, and it is all shown on broadcast, maybe ratings could come back?"[279] This tweet directly suggested the protest was un-American and unappealing to American football viewers.

Another series of tweets by former President Trump conflated posture and stance with disrespecting the American Flag: "I am a big fan of Drew Brees," wrote Trump. "I think he's truly one of the greatest quarterbacks, but he should not have taken back his original stance on honoring our magnificent American Flag. OLD GLORY is to be revered, cherished, and flown high..."[280] followed by, "We should be standing up straight and tall, ideally with a salute, or a hand on heart. There are other things you can protest, but not our Great American Flag - NO KNEELING!"[281] These tweets imply that kneeling displayed a lack of patriotism from the athletes, when what it was really displaying was a protest against police brutality toward Black Americans. These tweets resonate with Donald Trump's base of conservatives, which includes a significant portion of the Christian right.[282] It is no coincidence that he contrasts the rhetoric of

[279] — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) September 9, 2018
[280] 1/— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) June 5, 2020
[281] 2/ — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) June 5, 2020
[282] See Rebecca Barrett-Fox, "A King Cyrus President: How Donald Trump's Presidency Reasserts Conservative Christians' Right to Hegemony," *Humanity & Society* 42, no. 4 (2018), 502–522, doi:10.1177/0160597618802644, and Gerardo Martí, "The Unexpected Orthodoxy of Donald J. Trump: White Evangelical Support for the 45th President of the United States," *Sociology of Religion* 80, no. 1 (2019): 1–8, doi:10.1093/socrel/sry056.

standing tall and strong—a perception of masculinity—with kneeling, which he conflates with a lack of righteousness and Americanness.[283]

Evidence of Muscular Christianity is clear among American athletes, supported in part by the dominance of Christianity in America. In American football, players often pray in a Christian fashion, like Tim Tebow after scoring a touchdown, with no issues and plain support. Muslim athletes can face penalties or fines if they display their faith on the field, however, as happened to Husain Abdullah when he prostrated after a touchdown.[284] Abdullah was penalized owing to an NFL rule that celebrations cannot include going to the ground, a rule that privileges Christian prayer, which can typically be done with a hand gesture. (The rule, which had no clear basis in safety, was repealed in 2017.) With this example of "acceptable prayer" in sport, we see ways that Muscular Christianity operates in overt and subtle ways in North American and European sports. One effect of this legacy is the importance of sport in modern conceptions of both Christian masculinity and femininity—a connection that was frequently identified by the Christian participants of this study, as explored in the section below.

5.3.2 Christianity and Fitness

Some Christian participants directly linked their religious views with their motivation to maintain a healthy body. An example is Talia, first introduced in Chapter Four. She and her husband feel fitness is integral to their religious commitment and relationship with God. Talia explained how she believes maintaining a fit and healthy body is a meaningful way to honour

[283] Former President Donald Trump's Twitter account has been suspended indefinitely. A statement by Twitter from January 8th, 2021, explains: "After close review of recent Tweets from the @realDonaldTrump account and the context around them — specifically how they are being received and interpreted on and off Twitter — we have permanently suspended the account due to the risk of further incitement of violence." The full statement can be found here: https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/company/2020/suspension.html
[284] Cindy Boren, "NFL penalizes Muslim player for praying; league says it was wrong (updated)," *The Washington Post*, September 30, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/early-lead/wp/2014/09/30/nfl-penalizes-muslin-player-for-praying-after-chiefs-touchdown/.

God's creation. Talia goes on runs, plays volleyball regularly, and engages in preventative exercises for her musculoskeletal disorder.

Talia—who, when we spoke, was attending a bible college as a gap year in the middle of her undergraduate program—mentioned that many of her peers did not hold the same views towards fitness as she and her husband. "It's kind of weird," she said. "There's a ton of really nice people here who are very active in extracurriculars like theatre, and music, and volunteerism, but almost none of them play sports or go to the gym." Talia even went so far as to explain how some of her peers disagreed with her view of maintaining a healthy body as part of a Christian lifestyle:

> I've actually had disagreements with some of my friends. They just don't think fitness matters to God. They don't see their body as needing human intervention to keep up good health. They think whatever God wills will happen without seeing their own role in health. Maybe it's because we're still young, but still.

This interesting disagreement reinforces that lived religious practice through sport and fitness depends on the individual's understanding of their faith.

As Talia highlights by sharing her experience with her religious peers, religious practices and views on fitness are diverse, even among those who share a church, friend group, or family. Several participants from each religious group in this study highlighted their connection between fitness and religion and, in many cases, how practices and views differ even within their same church groups. In Chapter 2, I reviewed Meredith McGuire's conceptualization of lived religion, in which she argued that researchers who study religion need to broaden how religious practice is observed and measured. In other words, scholars need to look beyond prescriptive rituals and traditions defined by religious establishments to engage in rigorous research.[285] The reasons for this are clear based on Talia's response. To attend Talia's church, an observer would be unlikely

[285] McGuire, *Lived Religion*.

to see the connection between religion and sport. Talia lives and expresses her religious values as they pertain to sport outside the framework of the church in her daily life.

5.3.3 Holistic Fitness—Multiple Motivations

Some Christian participants framed their religious practice in fitness through existential realities, such as witnessing familial health challenges. Talia considered fitness and health through the lens of her mother's disability and her own. Likewise, George recognizes the importance of health because he observed his family suffer from preventable health challenges.

Talia noted her motivation toward fitness was due to a deep appreciation for "God's gift of a healthy body." Her mother became disabled in the past few years, which has impacted how she views her body:

> [My] mother's body isn't able to do the things it once could. It made me realize that my body won't always work the way it does now and that I need to be grateful for the things it can do because it won't always be able to do them and to take care of it so it can do those things I love for as long as possible.

Talia's mother's disability caused her to think about how her body functions and how important it is to maintain that function for as long as possible, because there is no guarantee of lasting good health.

George, who identified as a spiritual but non-practicing Catholic, witnessed significant suffering among his loved ones related to their weight and was noticeably emotional when discussing his family's health concerns:

> My family has a history of sort of being overweight and having health problems due to weight, so I'm trying to keep that inevitability at bay, and you know, my dad had a heart attack a few years ago from not being healthy, and yeah, my mom and my sister have been fighting with obesity for most of their lives and yeah, I just… I don't want to. I don't want to go through that.

Both Talia and George understand their body through their lived experiences with their family's illnesses and their understanding of religion. Talia recognizes that "God's gift of a healthy body" needs to be cherished and appreciated through fitness. As we see here, the multi-faceted dimensions of experience bring about existential realities that some participants choose to address through their understanding of their faith.

5.3.4 Christianity and Fitness Conclusion

The historical context of Muscular Christianity in North America continues to seep into modern-day views on fitness and gender. Explicitly religious motivations for maintaining fitness and reasons not centred around religion showcase how those who identify as Christian hold diverse interpretations of fitness. For some Christians, fitness is a core practice of their lived religious experience. Talia and her husband view maintaining a healthy body as part of respecting God's creation. By the same token, Talia's experience with her Christian peers at her bible college who do not share that view and do not maintain a fit body highlight that it is not a universal belief by any means. Likewise, we also hear from George and Talia about existential motivations that drive them to maintain a fit body.

As with Christianity and Islam, Judaism brings its unique framework to the role between religion and sport. I explore the role of fitness in Judaism below.

5.4 Religion and Fitness in Judaism

In this section, I discuss the development of Muscular Judaism in the period after the Holocaust and specific interpretations of the link between Judaism and fitness.[286] This section explores the responses of two Jewish participants.

[286] Carmi, Udi. "Sport Literature as an Educational Means in the Formative Years of the State of Israel."

5.4.1 Muscular Judaism and Fitness in Jewish Identity

Muscular Judaism shares similarities with John Nauright[287] and Samaya Farooq's work on Muscular Islam, [288] as the process resulted from a similar root of oppression in being a minority religion.[289] The emergence of Muscular Judaism reinforced the shared religious identity of Jews worldwide after the Second World War and aided in the development of Jewish Israeli nationalism in the state's early days. Israel was declared a nation on May 14, 1948 and recognized as a state the following day by global superpowers including the Soviet Union and the United States. With the creation of Israel as a state, the Israeli government focused on solidifying a national Jewish identity.

Part of this solidification of Jewish identity was through sport. Udi Carmen outlines sports institutions' role in constructing Hebrew body culture in the early years of Israeli statehood. Also implicated in this body culture is Muscular Judaism:

> Volumes have been written about the growing politicisation of sports, which mirrored the political divisions and institutions in Israeli society. Although a discussion of the animosity that raged between the sports associations Maccabi, Hapoel, Beitar, and Elitzur, is beyond the scope of this article, we note that the clashes, mainly between Hapoel and Maccabi, frequently paralysed the country's sports activities. The rivalry revolved mainly around control of the country's sports institutions, which included the Sports Association, the Football Association, and the Olympic Committee. Public opinion was one of the primary arenas of the conflict between the two leading associations, which sought to gain prestige and public recognition of their contribution to Hebrew body culture. One way to shape and imprint themselves in the collective consciousness was by publishing professional and theoretical literature on sports.[290]

Sport in history (2020): 596-615. Web.

[287] Nauright, John,"Masculinity, Muscular Islam and Popular Culture" 184–190,

[288] See Nauright, "Masculinity, Muscular Islam, and Popular Culture," and Farooq, "'Tough Talk', Muscular Islam and Football," as well as exposition on these topics in Chapter 2.

[289] Presner, "Clear Heads, Solid Stomachs, and Hard Muscles."

[290] Udi Carmi, "Sport Literature as an Educational Means in the Formative Years of the State of Israel," *Sport in history* 41, no. 4 (2020): 597.

Some of the Jewish participants in my study had family members who grew up in Israel during the early years of statehood. Their answers suggested that their views on sport as part of Jewish culture are in part informed by their family's exposure to Israeli sports literature.

Muscular Judaism was very much at play in Israel in the same way that Muscular Christianity informed the American Protestant Identity in the early shaping of the United States. Zionist Max Nordau conceptualized Muscular Judaism through his introduction of the "muscle Jew" in 1898 in his speech at the second Zionist Congress.[291] Nordau notably called for the creation of "a lost muscle Jewry, once again."[292] Much like Muscular Christianity, Muscular Judaism refers primarily to a regimented idea of cultivating the mental and physical strength to be the ideal Jewish man. This concept of Muscular Judaism arose as a counter-narrative to antisemitic ideas around Jews at that time in Europe as "weak, powerless, physically unfit, cowardly, and even degenerate."[293] As Todd Samuel Presner explains, "After World War II and the Holocaust, many a generation of Jews growing up in Israel and the United States has been weaned on this ideology of muscle."[294] Many Jews with Israeli ties have been raised with cultural ideas around Jewishness and fitness as synonymous.[295]

Presner also posits that Jews in the diaspora are affected by Israeli identity in sport: "And while the associated ideals of muscularity and masculinity have certainly become internalized as part and parcel of Israeli identity, they have also come to define a more widespread, contemporary mode of being-Jewish-in-the-world."[296] The two participants in my study who identified themselves as moderately Jewish supported this idea of being Jewish in the world and

[291] Todd Samuel Presner, "Clear Heads, Solid Stomachs, and Hard Muscles: Max Nordau and the Aesthetics of Jewish Regeneration," 269.
[292] Presner, "Clear Heads, Solid Stomachs, and Hard Muscles," 269.
[293] Presner, *Muscular Judaism*, 217.
[294] Presner, *Muscular Judaism*, xvii.
[295] Presner, *Muscular Judaism*, 63
[296] Presner, *Muscular Judaism*, xvii

identifying with fitness. Unfortunately, this finding cannot be generalized because my sample is small, but it fits with similar ideas found among Muslim and Christian participants about fitness as an aspect of modeling their faith.

Like Christians and Muslims, Jews also have symbolic markers of their religion that individuals may wear**.** These signifiers may include forms of veiling, wearing a Kippah, or wearing a Star of David. Jewish women may practice veiling as part of their understanding of modesty, which may include covering the head with a cloth or a wig and wearing certain types of clothing, such as blouses that cover the elbow. [297] Males in Judaism may observe forms of dress that signify their Jewish identity, such as wearing a kippah, caftan, or shtreimel.[298]

Portraying a Jewish identity by wearing a kippah may create barriers for some individuals. Assaf Harel describes the embedded meaning of wearing a kippah: "In opposition to its relatively small size, the kippah is a very heavy 'thing': a material site laden with meanings and concerns about relations between the religious and the political, the private and the public, the visible and the invisible."[299] The wearing of a kippah is similar to the weight of wearing a hijab in that it is an overt symbol of one's religious identity. As Harel describes, "Similarly to European Muslims who alter their sartorial practices to demonstrate their loyalty to the state, some non-white Jewish migrants prefer to wear the kippah in order to demonstrate their belonging to the Israeli state and avoid being racialized as non-Jews."[300] Understanding the role

[297] Bronner, Leila Leah. "From Veil to Wig: Jewish Women's Hair Covering." *Judaism*, vol. 42, no. 4, American Jewish Congress, (1993): 465–477.
[298] Daniel Hotary, "Yarmulke/Kippah," in *Encyclopedia of Global Religions*, eds. Mark Juergensmeyer and Wade Clark Roof, vol. 2 (SAGE Publications: 2011), 1392–1393.
[299] Assaf Harel, "Under the Cover of the Kippah: On Jewish Settlers, Performance, and Belonging in Israel/Palestine," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 25, no. 4 (2019): 773.
[300] Harel, "Under the Cover of the Kippah," 773.

of clothing as part of how some Jews express their religiosity is contextual in understanding the experiences of Jewish participants in this study.

5.4.2 Judaism and Sport in Canada

I conducted interviews with two Jewish participants on their experiences playing sports in their Jewish communities throughout their upbringing. Tanner described himself as moderately Jewish and was passionate about human rights. He described a situation where he was playing against a more devout group of Jewish athletes in basketball:

> I went to a very, it was a very Jewish high school, but it wasn't an [officially] Jewish high school. But when we were playing basketball, we would play against the kippah schools. They'd be wearing their kippahs on their heads while they're playing. It was funny but interesting at the same time. When their kippah would fall off, they'd have to stop dribbling and pick it up and kiss it, put it back on their heads before they continued playing. Obviously, that puts them at a huge disadvantage because play never stopped.

Tanner's recollection described the challenges he saw his kippah-wearing peers face in organized sports. He said he respected the other team's dedication to prioritizing religion over winning which was a value he said he experienced growing up playing sports on predominately Jewish teams.

Elena, a 21-year-old business student who loves being a camp counsellor and is a lifeguard at her university pool, believes fitness is important to her Jewish identity. Her passion for fitness arose from attending a Jewish summer camp growing up. She describes herself as moderately practicing, does not eat pork, celebrates all major Jewish holidays, and has been on a birthright trip[301] to Israel. Despite her practice and involvement in the community, Elena shared that she identifies simultaneously as an atheist and "secular Jew." Elena views fitness as part of

[301] Birthright is a free trip to Israel for Jews worldwide between the ages of 18-26. Donors and the Israeli government sponsor it, and its goal is to strengthen Jewish identity.

Judaism because it has been the backdrop to many of her formative experiences, such as summer camp and hikes with her Jewish youth group:

> Being healthy is important to me, and I think it's important to my faith because we are always active as a group. I learned how to swim at camp. I swim almost every day. Most of my teammates in my swim club as a kid were Jewish. I play in an intramural softball league in the summer with my Jewish friends.

Elena's relationships forged as a child through her religious upbringing encouraged her to be active in swimming, and these relationships continued into adulthood with softball leagues.

Tanner and Elena highlighted through their personal experiences that their Jewish identity has been a unifier in team sports, often playing on Jewish teams or in Jewish sport leagues. For Tanner, when playing with those he viewed as more devout,[302] he saw a higher level of religiosity as a disadvantage for the competitive nature of sport. For both, however, their sports participation was encouraged through their religious peers and family upbringing. The next section will consider the continuation of religiosity through traditions and community.

5.4.3 Continuing Tradition

Elena and Tanner were unified by their self-descriptions as "moderates," but what that meant for each seemed to differ. For Tanner it meant he was moderately believing and minimally practicing, and for Elena it meant being involved with the Jewish community while not believing.

As noted earlier, Elena identified herself as also being a "secular Jew." When I asked Elena if that was an important distinction for her, she said "Well, yes. Most of my friends are also secular Jews. We don't believe in God or anything religious like that, but we will continue our traditions and raise our kids Jewish." When I asked what continuing traditions would look

[302] In his view, wearing a kippah means they are more devout.

like, she described: "The same as what I had probably. I'd enroll them in [Jewish] summer camp, and sports so they would make Jewish friends and we would do Shabbat each week. If they wanted to do a birthright trip, I would also support that." Elena highlights in her response a desire to continue Jewish traditions with her future family through community-organized events, dinners, and sports.

Like we see with Elena, secular Jews play a role in continuing Jewish religious memory by reinforcing and teaching those traditions to their children. Jennifer Creese has studied this concept of "secular Jews" in an Australian context which can help to extrapolate how collective Jewish identity is shaped in other multicultural places such as Canada. Creese found that "the [Jewish] community's secular Jews, who experience and express Jewishness non-religiously in private, may also take part in much of this public reinforcement of the religious facets of Jewishness" through community events. [303] This desire to continue transmitting religious memory despite being non-religious seems common among secular Jews in her study.

Two of Creese's participants discussed practicing Judaism for the sake of continuing tradition similarly to Elena. Her participant "Susannah, whose family only identified with their Jewishness when she was in her teens, saw her participation in religious organisations as an investment in her Jewish continuity: 'I want to go because … if I have children, I want them to be part of the community so that if it's too late for me, it's not too late for them'."[304] Creese's participant Dalya's view was similar: "I'll keep my Jewish identity any way I can, and raise a

[303] Jennifer Creese, "Secular Jewish Identity and Public Religious Participation Within Australian Secular Multiculturalism," *Religions* 10, no. 2 (2019): 70.
[304] Creese, "Secular Jewish Identity and Public Religious Participation Within Australian Secular Multiculturalism," 6.

Jewish kid, even though I don't believe."[305] These views on continuing religion through community and tradition highlight how religion is transmitted as a chain of memory.[306]

Tanner, although not identifying as a secular Jew, also expressed this desire to keep identifying with the Jewish community and actively engage in Jewish traditions for the sake of his future children. He indicated that he would like to raise his children with exposure to Jewish culture and traditions:

> I'd raise my children the same way I was raised. Religion is, more for me, is a tradition rather than, in terms of religious practice. That being said, I will teach my kids and let them have the choice to do what they want. But I would definitely encourage my kids to have their bar or bat mitzvah when they're 13 or 12, and we will celebrate the major holidays and have the occasional Shabbat dinner. I want to teach the kids until they're old enough to decide on their own what they want to do, and then let them go on their own, let them do what they want.

Tanner highlights here that it is important to provide his children with the traditions and community he was raised within.

Creese's research and Tanner's and Elena's desire to raise children within the faith helps contextualize the presence of Jewish sports leagues, sports teams, and Jewish summer camps: cultural commonality is important for both secular and practicing Jews.

5.4.4 Judaism and Sport Conclusion

As seen through the historical lens of Muscular Judaism and articulated by the two Jewish participants Tanner and Elena, religion plays a role in the construction of views on fitness. Whether through state-encouraged fitness—as is the case with Israel—shared group

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[305] Creese, "Secular Jewish Identity and Public Religious Participation Within Australian Secular Multiculturalism," 6.
[306] Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, 82.

activities with Jewish peers, or through sport, maintaining a fit body was linked by both Jewish participants to their Jewish identities.

5.5 Practicing Religion Through Fitness Conclusion

Scholars of sociology of religion risk losing the diversity in views and practices individuals feel are inalienable parts of their faith by only focusing on what is easily captured in "big religion"—that is, religion as defined by religious organizations or law. With this sort of narrowing, we lose the richness in how people live their religion. Focusing on "big religion" also often marginalizes the practices of women and children since, as Orsi found in his work, scholarship on "big religion" typically centres on males.

"Proper" religious display in sport is often understood through a Christian lens, highlighted in this chapter. A key example is the sanction of Islamic prostration in some professional sports, while Christian prayer gestures are allowed. The FIFA and FIBA hijab bans also function as a barrier against Muslim women who play sports and wear a hijab. Yet participants of this study viewed fitness as part of their religious understanding. Such bans negate and undermine these understandings.

The experiences shared by the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish participants had unique features and overlaps. Ali struggled between fasting for Ramadan and having energy for practice. If Ali had not reached out to his team to change the practice time, he and the other Muslims observing Ramadan would have been at a disadvantage, either playing with no energy or forced to choose between practice of their faith and practice of their sport. The boys in Tanner's story were also at a sports disadvantage by displaying their faith, losing game time whenever their kippahs fell off their heads during gameplay. Both groups were willing to play through the

barriers despite the potential disadvantages, however, showing the importance of both sport and religion in both cases.

The participants of this study did not fit one model of religious practice. There is no one way to be Muslim, Christian, or Jewish. Diverse approaches to these religions were demonstrated by participants. The nuances of lived religion shade how each person expressed and embodied their religious understanding through fitness and sport, and participants' descriptions of their personal navigations sheds a more complex light onto our understanding as scholars on how religion is practiced in spaces often conceived of as areligious.

Space, too, is an important element in how religious students reconcile fitness with faith. The next chapter will consider different facets of physical fitness spaces that participants identified as helpful in their accessibility, as well as features that presented as barriers, using Kim Knott’s spatial analysis as the primary lens.

Chapter 6 Fitness Spaces

Meena was a 19-year-old first-year student at a small university. She grew up in a Muslim family with parents who came to Canada as immigrants when she was a small child. Meena did not remember her country of origin because she was so young when they moved, but she knew her parents gave up a lot to leave it.

The family settled in Calgary. Her mother was a stay-at-home mom who did tailoring on the side, and her father worked as a driver to support the family. She had no living siblings, as her brother passed away in infancy, but she was very close with her extended family. Being the oldest cousin, she often cared for the little ones in her family to give her aunts and uncles a break.

While her family was very traditional in many ways, her father felt she needed to get a formal education. Since being in Canada, he had struggled to find well-paying work, and he wanted her not to feel the same hardships he had felt. Her mom supported this idea and wanted Meena to study something that would give her many opportunities and was not too narrowly focused. As a family, they decided she should pursue a Bachelor's in Business Administration.

Meena was very excited to leave home for university; she would be the first in her family to go. It brought her a sense of pride when her little cousins would tell their friends that she was going away to school, although she was a bit nervous about being in a different city.

She adjusted well to university life. Her first elective course was "Social Determinants to Health," and she was fascinated by everything she learned, particularly that accessibility to health services was inequitable for people of colour and that those who occupy lower socio-economic classes were more likely to have shorter life spans. There was even a class on language accessibility and how translators are essential in hospitals for those unable to speak

English or French in Canada. This course confirmed to Meena how many of these determinants negatively affected her family and community.

This hit close to home for her. While she grew up speaking multiple languages fluently, her mother and father spoke English with an accent. She recalled when her grade schoolteacher made a mean comment about their accents in class after having a parent-teacher interview. Mary also realized that while many of her peers spoke about going to the gym, she had not put much thought into her own fitness. Her parents were always so busy working that they did not have the time to go to the gym.

She felt inspired to try out her university's fitness centre but did not know what to expect. It took a few attempts before she finally made it past the front desk. The first time she just wanted to confirm where the gym was, and the second time she inquired about the changerooms and what she should bring (a lock, a change of clothes, water). The ladies at the front desk were super kind, giving her pamphlets about programming and classes offered at the gym. On the third attempt, she came prepared with a lock, a change of clothes, a list of exercises she had looked up online, and a water bottle.

She went down the steps to the changeroom for the first time, and thought, "Yikes!" as she saw a bunch of half-naked women chatting around some benches. Blushing, she saw a door and went to it, thinking it was a changing stall. It was, in fact, a toilet stall. She awkwardly changed into her clothing while bumping into the toilet. She wanted to go home at that point and try again another day, but she figured "getting to the gym is half the battle," quoting a Women's Health magazine she had read the night before in preparation.

She quickly shoved her belongings into a locker and put the lock on. Leaving the changeroom into the gym, she immediately felt overwhelmed. The music was loud, and the space

seemed chaotic, with people and items everywhere. She saw a quiet-looking room off to the side full of exercise bikes and decided to warm up there. After a few minutes, another girl came in and sat by her side. Then, a few moments later, another two guys loudly stomped in. More people joined and took all the free bikes in a short while. The room felt full and hot. Then she heard the door shut.

She looked up to see a frenetic-looking bubbly fit girl climbing on an elevated bike at the front. "Welcome to cycle and abs! I see some new faces! Let's start our warm-up in THREE… TWO… ONE!" she loudly proclaimed.

"Oh, my goodness," Meena thought. "What on earth did I get myself into?" Fifteen minutes in, she realized it was a forty-five-minute workout of biking followed by fifteen minutes of ab exercises. The instructor seemed to have endless energy, both biking and screaming encouragement. This ordeal was not at all what she had planned or prepared for. She was sweating profusely, and her bike seat was uncomfortable. She felt like she could taste blood in her throat. "Surely, I am dying," she thought to herself, but she did not want to draw attention by stopping or leaving. She dug deep and finished the whole biking portion of the class.

Feeling awful and like she had done enough for the day, she figured she could slip out unnoticed before they transitioned to the ab workout. The instructor had a different idea. "Where are you going? The mats are over here!" the instructor exclaimed. Blushing, Mary saw the entirety of the class staring at her trying to escape. "Oops, my mistake," she said.

"How bad could ab workouts really be?" She thought to herself. "Awful, very awful," she quickly found out. She did not want to do one exercise they did at all because it seemed so awkward, especially around all these strangers. She stopped and took a long drink of water to avoid it. The instructor noticed and said, "I'll give some extra time for those that want to take a

water break." Meena just kept drinking until the instructor was finally ready to move on, but she certainly did not appreciate the extra pressure.

By the end of the class, she was ready to go home. She was fairly certain she had injured herself. She had never felt such aching pain all over her body. Her stomach and back felt like they were on fire. The instructor caught her as she was leaving and handed her a booklet of upcoming class times. She was pretty sure she would never take another class again, accidentally or on purpose, but she took a brochure to be polite.

After a few days, the achiness in her muscles went away, and she started to play with the idea of going back. She did not like the class at all, but part of that was because she did not know what to expect, she reasoned. She looked through the booklet and saw that shorter classes were available—only thirty minutes. That seemed more manageable, she figured. She also noticed that there were two women's-only classes a day. She decided to give it another try for a thirty-minute, women-only class.

It was perfect! She felt minimal aches when it was over, and it was much more comfortable and less busy than the first class was. Over time, she went four days a week to the women's-only classes. She purchased an athletic hijab made of a stretchy fabric that did not loosen as she biked, and she started wearing her fitness clothing under her outdoor clothing so that she did not need to change fully in the changeroom. As her fitness improved, she started going to the forty-five-minute classes. Her passion for indoor bicycling kept growing. She decided to take a cycle-fit course to learn how instructors put together the classes.

Next semester, Meena will be teaching two cycling classes a week.

Composite

6.1 Introduction to Fitness Spaces

Meena's composite highlights how challenging entering and navigating a new social space can be. From not knowing what to expect in the locker room to entering challenging environments such as the loudness she encountered to feeling pressured within the gym, these are just some obstacles people face in fitness spaces. This chapter considers how participants experience different features and aspects of the gym.

I use Kim Knott's spatial analysis framework, as introduced in Chapter Two, to examine different facets of fitness space. Several themes emerged from my interviews that touched on issues of space. Although these issues were not specifically religious, they linked to religious beliefs and practices, as well as an understanding of the complex dimensions of the body. Ultimately, these spatial aspects impact accessibility and link to issues of diversity and inclusion.

Knott developed spatial analysis to consider how religion operates, exists, and shapes seemingly secular spaces such as fitness spaces. In her words: "Whilst it was self-evident that religion resided in its places of worship and organisations, in new movements and, arguably, in various "spiritual" beliefs and practices, it was not clear to what extent religion inhered in other, ostensibly secular, places."[307] To investigate what Knott describes as "ostensibly secular places," I explore participant experiences of certain features of fitness spaces. Additionally, I examine spatial arrangements of fitness centres. Through this analysis, I present a holistic picture of space-related barriers. Each part of the gym seems small and insignificant when studying it in isolation, but when we consider the combined mental, physical, and social aspects of each space and how it is embedded with meaning, the collective meaning of the space takes on more significance.

[307] Knott, "Spatial Theory and Method for the Study of Religion," 153.

In the sections below, I will consider mirrors and weigh scales, the controlled space of the gym, changerooms and toilets, pressures exerted by staff at the gym, women's-only spaces, men's-only spaces, body image, the accessibility of pools, perceptions of safety, access to nature, thin privilege, and religious rituals and practices throughout this chapter.

6.2 Mirrors

Mirrors are often used in fitness centres to allow individuals to view their form when weightlifting. They are also commonly found in changerooms. The prevalence of mirrors in gyms made many participants I interviewed feel uncomfortable. Many participants expressed a negative body image association with mirrors and their placement within changerooms and gyms. Their absence from gyms was also felt, in some cases. One participant, Jane, a nursing student in Northern Ontario who enjoys Zumba, described the absence of mirrors and weigh scales within her post-secondary institution's gym and changeroom as a positive adjustment for her self-image:

> So, our gym at [redacted], they don't have any mirrors around except for in the bathrooms. Which I think is pretty cool because it makes you… you don't look at yourself when you're changing, you don't look for your flaws for anything that you might think is wrong with your body, you just… it's just a changeroom. And they also don't have, don't have uh weigh—no, not weigh—a scale. They also don't have a scale in there as well.

Jane, who earlier on in the interview discussed being bullied for her size as a child, found that the lack of mirrors made the space less distressing for her. The absence of a scale likewise eliminates ways for her to numerically "measure" herself. Jane's fitness goal was focused on general health, not on monitoring or measuring her progress by achieving a certain weight or creating a specific look. In this way, the gym's configuration met her needs.

This difference in the physical space, with the absence of mirrors compared to other gyms, resulted in a changed mental space. When Jane did not have reminders of the societal pressures around weight measurement and appearance always surrounding her while working out, she said she felt more empowered to focus on fitness.

Genevieve, an ex-Catholic atheist introduced in Chapter 4, also talked about mirrors, especially how she struggled with the mirrors in her dance studio growing up. She was one of the first in her group of friends to reach puberty and felt self-conscious about her size:

> I was twelve and I tried to diet. I knew I didn't look the way I needed to for dance; my chest was too large for the costumes, I looked so much bigger than the other girls. I hated seeing myself in the mirror at the studio beside all the girls with perfect bodies. I hated my body so much. I couldn't just dance and enjoy it.

While Genevieve is now more accepting of her body, at that point in her life, mirrors in her dance studio magnified her insecurities about her developing body. This association with wall-to-wall mirrors and childhood insecurity go hand in hand with comfort while exercising. Genevieve now works out in a cross-fit space that has fewer mirrors than the typical dance studios she grew up in. The absence of ceiling-to-floor mirrors resulted in a similar mental change as experienced by Jane. With fewer mirrors, she could exist in the space without comparing her body to those working out around her.

The presence of mirrors is often contested in fitness spaces. Studying women's attitudes toward mirrors in their aerobics classes, Ivanka Prichard and Marika Tiggemann found that women who prefer to not work out around mirrors managed greater body image and eating concerns in their day-to-day lives than the women in the study who preferred mirrors. [308] This

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[308] Ivanka Prichard and Marika Tiggemann, "Features of the exercise environment and body image: preferences for mirror and standing positions in the aerobics room," *Women in Sport & Physical Activity Journal* 41, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 47-57.

study highlights the potential accessibility issues for those who have body image issues, or issues around food in spaces where there are a lot of mirrors, as one aspect of the negative mental space fitness centres with mirrors hold. Below, I explore how participants viewed the gym as a controlled environment, which affected their views on spatial features like mirrors.

6.3 Static Environment

Some participants viewed the gym as a relatively static and controlled environment, where participants had expectations of spatial order, and community norms. This static environment is one feature that, when understood in the context of spatial analysis, provides a sense of ease, relaxation, uncertainty, safety, kinship, and anonymity, depending on the individual. This feature of a controlled space, shown through the examples and reasons provided by participants below, allows us to learn how one facet of the space contributes to a positive mental headspace.

For Donald a Christian nursing student, the controlled environment was a positive aspect of the space that made his experience at the gym easy to plan:

> I would say um, if I'm physically attempting to run… focusing on fitness or lifting weights, I'd like to be indoors. I like the controlled environment. I'd like to be able to run and stay in the same space where I don't have to worry about if I'm going to run out of space to run or if I'm going to have to turn around and run in the same spot.

It made planning exercises simpler for Donald to be in a controlled environment and not have to plan for inclement weather or the route his run would need to take.

Matthew, introduced in Chapter 4, exercises as an outlet for stress and maintains what he views as a healthy body. Matthew finds the controlled environment of the gym more ideal as he views fitness as a necessary chore. The cardio machines at the gym track minutes and speed,

making it easy to set goals. Because it is indoors, it removes the chaos and uncertainty of the outdoors. In his words:

> I dislike not knowing what to expect. Being able to go in, turn off my mind and listen to music for thirty minutes while I run and then being done… It is the most bearable way to exercise. I like exercising in the middle of the night when I can't sleep. The gym is usually empty then, and it's much safer than running outside in the dark.

A controlled environment is preferable for people who enjoy regimented, structured physical activity—having this control over the space and knowing what to expect can be a comfort for people like Donald and Matthew.

For other participants, the controlled environment of the gym space lessened their anxiety about fitness. Tamika is a Catholic 19-year-old police foundations student who enjoys taking martial arts classes and going to the movie theatre. For her, the social aspect of going to the gym, where she can engage with a close-knit group of people, makes the experience enjoyable, and she likes the predictability of knowing who will be there:

> I love my gym; I love that I know what to expect and who will be there. Every class is pretty much the same. I kind of hate change, so it bothers me when there's a new person at my gym. I get over it after they come for a while, and I get used to them. I'm friends with pretty much everyone there.

Tamika views her gym and fitness classes as an extension of her social life and feels comfortable knowing the structure of the classes and who will be there.

Daryl is an Eastern Orthodox Christian doing her undergrad in translation studies who enjoys jazz music and playing with her cat. She likes the controlled space of the gym for the opposite reasons as Tamika. For Daryl, the gym is an impersonal space. She describes it as:

> I wear headphones at the gym always to give people the impression that I don't want to talk. If someone tries talking to me, I usually pretend like I can't hear them. If they... like if they get in my face to get my attention, I like don't take out my headphones. I'm not at the gym to make friends. I don't go on a schedule. I don't want to make friends there. Gym time is like… personal.

Daryl takes lengths to maintain social neutrality at the gym by going sporadically to avoid getting to know people or staff. She likes the anonymity of the gym as an escape from her busy life. She finds comfort in not knowing who will be there.

The controlled aspect of the space is seen positively by many participants for various reasons. When seen through the lens of knowing what to expect from the space, participants view the fitness centre as providing a positive mental and social space. This impression is not universal, however. Next, I will explore changerooms and washrooms in fitness centres and ways they can improve upon accessibility for more of their users.

6.4 Inclusivity in Changerooms and Washrooms

Participants were categorically neutral or negative towards their experiences of changerooms. No one I interviewed felt positively about the changerooms they used other than Jane whose gym had fewer mirrors and no public scales. In this segment, I will explore the experiences of four participants who explained how changerooms were inaccessible to them in very different ways to illustrate changes that could increase inclusivity in fitness spaces.

Ray discussed in earlier chapters, found changerooms and the bathrooms inside many gyms particularly difficult to navigate because he is trans. Ray spoke of a personal experience of discrimination with students at his university when trying to gain support for a gender-neutral washroom by posting signs.

> I don't honestly know, like I feel like changerooms are hard… bathrooms, like I don't know if you want to talk about bathrooms, so like bathrooms, there's recently one building in [university name redacted] that I really like the bathroom layout. Basically, they just have sort of a universal bathroom and then there's like a hallway and then there's just like a bunch of separate... it's kind of like a big bathroom but where there would be stalls, there's like a full-on door, kind of like a cubicle. And there's just like the toilet and it's just like any gender, there's just like no... It's like, I don't know... it's just different because there is no space at the top and the bottom, it's your own little room. So I like that …So I guess like changerooms, it would be sort of the same idea, just

> obviously it’s like more expensive cause you’re building a lot of sort of separate little cubicles. I feel like there could be a way that they could come out with something that’s like, you know, meet in the middle, because right now I use like family changing room and at Western that’s normally fine because there’s not a lot of families that go, so it’s normally super quiet, and yeah no problems with that. But I recently went to a community pool cause I was swimming in the summer, and I would use the family bathroom and it was just like a bunch of kids and I felt so out of place because I didn’t belong. So, changerooms are a bit more sticky. I think they could just come up with changerooms that have more of a common space with some private spaces off to the side as well so that people who need to have a little bit more privacy can use those.

For Ray, bathrooms and changerooms were a point of anxiety since his transition and the hostility some students showed at his school toward trans-inclusive bathrooms. He was not the only participant to voice these concerns. Aleah, a 19-year-old international student from Morocco who does martial arts and identifies as non-binary, also discussed their issues with gendered washrooms and open-style changing spaces:

> If I did go to a public washroom, I would just be so embarrassed, and people would look at me because I don’t look like a stereotypical woman. Sometimes they’re like, ‘You’re in the wrong bathroom.’ I’m like. ‘No, I’m not.’ Either way, I would be thought of as being in the wrong bathroom.

When I asked Aleah what could change the space to make them more comfortable, Aleah responded similarly to Ray: “It’s like, yeah. For a changeroom, I don’t know. It’s just something that would ... yeah. The perfect one would be something very private. Like there wouldn’t be people around you. Just sort of a tiny room, you go and change there. That’s better.”

Changing the configuration of changerooms, as Ray and Aleah described, could be one part of increasing inclusivity and accessibility. All three gender diverse individuals interviewed suggested that changeroom stalls with doors not segregated by gender would improve accessibility. This suggestion was also echoed by many cisgender individuals for myriad reasons, including ability to address disability instruments (such as ostomy bags and catheters) in

private.[309] Additionally, stalls with floor-length doors would provide a safe space for survivors of gender-based violence to change and satisfy a general desire for privacy.

Some participants identified ways to mitigate the discomfort of gender-segregated washrooms that did not necessarily rely on changes to space. The "I'll go with you" pledge is a movement designed for allies of trans individuals, who can visibly signify their allyship by wearing a pin that identifies them as an individual who would accompany a trans person to their preferred restroom. Sometimes similar allyship is signalled by the spaces themselves, with the backs of stall doors in some changerooms and washrooms showcasing domestic-violence help groups and LGBTQ+ resources, among other causes.

Changerooms also posed problems for participants who did not identify as LGBTQ+. Matthew, introduced earlier, stated:

> Changerooms are repulsive. Gross benches, people changing openly in front of a bunch of strangers. How often are they even cleaned? Then there are those people that just let it all hang out and they shouldn't.

As highlighted in Chapter 4, Matthew attributes his disdain for naked bodies as a remnant of his Catholic upbringing. Though he recognizes this aversion to nudity as a remnant of being raised Catholic, he expresses disbelief at those comfortable being naked in front of others, highlighting an expectation of common and shared shame (or lack thereof) amongst the other gym-goers.

Like the gender diverse participants, Matthew expressed a desire for more private changing spaces: "I'd much rather change in a bathroom stall bumping into the toilet and all that," he said, "than be out in the open with the weird old naked guys." A private space or stall, ideally one without a toilet in the way, would be a welcome alternative to communal changing spaces for Matthew.

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[309] I did not include testimony related to disability to maintain the anonymity of participants. Several participants identified as disabled.

Leila, introduced in Chapter 4, also stated a preference for changing in private spaces. Though explaining her religion does not argue against changing in front of other females per se, she still feels discomfort changing after swimming in a group setting:

> It's one thing to be like changing with a bra and panties on in front of other women, but like, after swimming you kind of have to get naked to change and I don't want other people looking at my hoo-hah. I don't like it, so I change in the toilet stall. It's worse if I go with my daughter because then we both have to change in the same toilet stall. She's too young to change by herself. There is like a family changeroom but it's also like for disability [sic] people so it's never free. There's always someone in it.

Leila is someone else who would feel more comfortable having a private changeroom space after swimming to change with her daughter, both for her own personal comfort and for the needs of her family.

Though there is no easily accessible designated space for these participants to feel comfortable changing, they still find solutions. Ray and Leila use the family changeroom or a toilet stall. Aleah, and Sandi meanwhile, arrives at their fitness studio already dressed to avoid having to go into the changeroom. These solutions show navigation and resilience in the face of obstacles that impede accessibility. Renovating or building single-stall changerooms, and implementing simple changes that affirm participation for all individuals in the community can help those uncomfortable with the current design feel more comfortable

Having a body that is marginalized in some way, be it by being trans or non-binary or by weight or ability, are valuable markers of the societal pressures on bodies to conform to certain societal ideals. As Kim Knott and Myfanwy Franks describe in their study "*Secular Values and the Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis of an English Medical Centre*," bodies are the central focal point of spatial discussions: "Bodies," they argue, "are central to any discussion of health and medicine, and important for analysing the physical and social spaces of organisations

that prioritise these matters."[310] Since the fitness centre is viewed as a space that is intended to prioritize health, it is important to listen to the experiences of people as they navigate hostile mental and social spaces in changerooms. To deepen our understanding of these hostile forces, I will next consider the concept of "thin privilege," which relies on seeing fat bodies as shameful and ascribes negative attributes to those with fat bodies. I will briefly explore the belief that thin privilege operates within society at large and fitness spaces.

6.5 Thin Privilege and Pressures on Fat Bodies in Fitness Spaces

During discussions on body image, two participants both introduced earlier in the study, Jessica and Genevieve, brought up the concept of "thin privilege," which is a term recently utilized by the fat acceptance movement.[311] Erec Smith, in *Fat Tactics: The Rhetoric and Structure of the Fat Acceptance Movement*, provides a good starting point for understanding this movement as a reaction to ideals around fitness that are not inclusive of individuals who have a larger body.[312] Study participants likewise raised that thin people possess a social advantage due to misconceptions about body weight as equivalent to health. Genevieve, introduced in Chapter 4, told me:

> It's an advantage. It doesn't matter if you're unhealthy, as long as you are thin, uh society looks at you and thinks you are somehow a better, prettier person than someone who has like, a curvier body. Even if you are thin because you have an eating disorder. Like, I can lift a lot, and my body can do things in CrossFit that a thin person probably would not be able to do, but because I am larger, people may assume I am uh, unhealthier than a thin person.

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[310] Kim Knott and Myfawnwy Franks, "Secular values and the location of religion: a spatial analysis of an English medical centre," *Health & Place,* 13, no. 1 (2007): 226.
[311] The Fat Acceptance movement was pioneered by the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance (NAAFA). The spokesperson for NAAFA, Francis White, defines the movement as, "*The fat acceptance movement champions a new kind of beauty that is not defined by the size of your waist. Supporters of the fat acceptance movement work to fight size discrimination. Most people in the fat acceptance movement have an issue with the words "obese" and "obesity," which seem overtly prejudiced and negative. We prefer the words "fat" and "fat power."* https://www.everydayhealth.com/weight/the-fat-acceptance-movement.aspx
[312] Erec Smith, *Fat Tactics: The Rhetoric and Structure of the Fat Acceptance Movement* (Lexington Books, 2018).

Jessica similarly summarized her understanding of thin privilege:

> Thin privilege is where you don't have to buy two seats on a plane, you don't have to worry about the size of your body when you do regular things. You don't have to worry about the size of your body when you're being treated by other people, or when you go to the doctor. A lot of fat people have health issues that are unrelated to their body size, but doctors write them off as, "lose weight, you should just lose weight and all your problems will go away." For example, there is bias in the medical system for overweight people not getting the treatment they need because they're written off as just being, "your problems are because you're fat. You need to lose weight, then you won't have this issue." They're not being taken seriously when they have an issue that is or may not be related to the size of their body. Thin privilege is not having to deal with those things. Thin privilege is not having to worry about if you're going to fit into the seat on the bus, or the plane, or the train. It's going to the store and being able to buy clothes at the mall, or at any store."

I would argue that notions around thin bodies as ideal have been informed through the influence of Muscular Christianity in the West as it complements the Protestant work ethic. In this philosophy, fit bodies indicate a stronger work ethic and morality than bodies considered overweight and weak. One of the factors Christian S. Crandall considers in his study, "Prejudice Against Fat People: Ideology and Self-Interest," is that anti-fat prejudice is closely linked to a belief in the Protestant Ethic.[313] The Protestant work ethic is a driving belief in Canada and the USA that dictates success is due to hard work. Being fat, poor, or otherwise disadvantaged reflects your work ethic. If you are unsuccessful, you must be lazy.[314] Fat prejudice relegates fat bodies to the periphery as undesirable by attributing shameful attributes like laziness to those with fat bodies.

Thin privilege and fat prejudice are topics too large to delve into in significant depth in this thesis. However, understanding the general thoughts around thin privilege and how society treats people with larger bodies assists our understanding of why some fitness spaces feel

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[313] Christian S. Crandall, "Prejudice against fat people: Ideology and self-interest," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 66, no. 5 (May 1994): 882-894.
[314] Lisa Rosenthal et al. "Protestant Work Ethic's Relation to Intergroup and Policy Attitudes: A Meta-analytic Review." *European Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 41, no. 7, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, (Dec. 2011): 874–885, doi:10.1002/ejsp.832.

inaccessible to people with different body types. We can think of thin privilege as one layer of the social space in most fitness centres, and as a barrier to access for people who fear being shamed for their bodies in that space.

Jessica, experienced fat prejudice at the private gym she attended when a personal trainer attempted to sell her training services through shaming her fat body. Despite Jessica saying that she was unable to afford the service he was selling, he continued an invasive line of questioning on her finances. Jessica describes her experience, “He kept saying it was for my health and that I will only get fatter if I didn’t do something now. He called me disgusting for not being willing to ‘make sacrifices’ like he basically implied I *wanted* to look like this. Obviously, I didn’t because I was there at the gym.” During this line of conversation Jessica articulated some of the power dynamics at play:

> Yeah, I just know that a younger version of myself would have had a more difficult time with that. It was just not a safe space at all to say “no,” and it’s physically intimidating because I’m a woman and he’s a man. It’s a small room and the door is closed, and he’s trying to ask me to tell him how much money I have, and I’m supposed to deny a service that maybe his job, his employment status relies on making these sales, so he’s very aggressive. The whole thing is really intimidating and really difficult.

Jessica has since decided to only use the women’s-only section of the gym and to avoid contact with the male personal trainers at her gym, partly due to bullying by the personal trainer in efforts to sell her training packages. This marks Jessica’s realization of the negative social and mental space the co-ed fitness section of the gym now holds for her. By deciding to only use the women’s-only section of the gym, Jessica is empowering herself by choosing a fitness space that is more accepting of her body.

It is essential to understand the power dynamics present in the co-ed space Jessica purposefully chooses to reject, and how those dynamics marginalize her body. In his research, David J. Hutson highlights how trainers must act as salespeople to ensure their economic

success. [315] Trainers approach this imperative by applying a "type of moral authority that emanates from their fit-appearing physiques"[316] to prospective clients. To be effective, this moral authority requires that the person they are conversing with feels shame towards their body. Bodily capital is a useful term for this analysis as it describes "the value attached to people's appearance, attractiveness, or physical abilities that may be exchanged for other forms of economic, social, or cultural capital."[317]

The personal trainer, who had an ideal body, used his body to assume a "moral" authority when he shamed her to sell her personal training classes. For Jessica, who is fat, the physical trainer was leveraging his bodily capital to provide a moral authority over her "rooted in beliefs about attractiveness, discipline, and knowledge"[318]

Jessica's experience highlights one of the reasons individuals may be hesitant about and intimidated by attending certain gyms that have aggressive personal trainers, or a strong focus on exterior body image, especially if their fitness goals are primarily to maintain health. The fitness industry preys on self-consciousness and body shaming to encourage the consumption of fitness products.

When considering the accessibility of fitness spaces, in the interest of public health, it is crucial to identify and limit negative pressures on individuals. By doing so, fitness spaces can provide fewer barriers making the space more accessible to a wider range of users.

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[315] David J. Hutson, "'Your Body Is Your Business Card': Bodily Capital and Health Authority in the Fitness Industry," *Social Science & Medicine* 90 (2013): 64. Web.
[316] David J. Hutson, "Your Body Is Your Business Card," 64.
[317] David J. Hutson, "Your Body Is Your Business Card," 64.
[318] David J. Hutson, "Your Body Is Your Business Card," 65.

In the next section, I explore the initial feature of gym space that captivated me and led me to pursue this research: women's-only spaces. I look at how participants view women's-only spaces and whether they believe them to increase their accessibility to safe fitness spaces.

6.6 Perspectives on Women's-only Spaces

My interest in this research was sparked by the online controversy for the university gym I worked at after it created a women's-only exercise space. My experience was not unique. Fitness spaces, within university and without, have frequently been grappling with the issue of whether to issue women's-only time and space within their facilities. This trend was reflected by my participants, who raised the issue when talking about their views on fitness spaces.

Ali, a Muslim man discussed in the previous chapter, remarked about how important he felt it was for women to be included in fitness spaces, including being given their own time at the gym. He said, "I think it is very important… very important for women to have spaces for themselves if that is what they want. Women create the future, and it is so important for them to be healthy. If they aren't healthy society isn't healthy. I think of my mother and sister." Ali started a male cricket club at his university when he realized that such a popular sport, which a lot of people play all over the world, was not offered in an organized form at his university. When Ali realized there was interest, he decided to start a women's cricket club as well. Ali is very passionate about sport and fitness for everyone and has won several awards for his leadership and work in creating these university teams. As an example of someone who does not passively accept barriers, he did not hesitate to suggest the action required to provide women with their expressed needs.

Leila, introduced in Chapter 4, had mixed perspectives on co-ed fitness. While she said she had no problem with it, in practice she sought out women's-only fitness spaces and classes.

She feels that it is a choice here in Canada to work out in a women's-only space, wherein her country of origin it was the norm. "It's both cultural upbringing and trying to be a better Muslim," she said, "because that's what it is. It's all that, it's everything." Leila's perspective is to be supportive of the choices other women make, but she was also clear about her own distinct preferences and hinted that she wished those preferences were more normalized in Canada.

Aala, introduced in Chapter 4, is a Muslim woman who is comfortable working out in a co-ed setting, but she has a sister who is not comfortable in co-ed fitness spaces. Aala's view is:

> I don't think we should be making all gyms segregated sexes like, by men and women, I think that's the wrong idea. But, uh, having separate areas seems okay, like a co-ed section, a female section, and a male section. I don't think like, it's not really fair to like have a women's section but not a men's section. That's not equality.

Aala agrees with having spaces that are separate within a larger co-ed space for both women and men. This suggestion was unique among study participants; it was not explicitly brought up by anyone else.

The benefit of a women-only team or women's-only space is that it removes some of the negative mental and social effects for women in fitness areas as generated by the male gaze. Additionally, as highlighted through Leila's experience, the provision of women's-only spaces is an example of where an ostensibly secular space meets lived religion. Though women's-only fitness spaces are chosen by women for a variety of reasons, one reason is that it allows women to comfortably uphold their religiously understood modesty values. Other reasons can be non-religious, as exemplified by Jessica who experienced high-pressure sales tactics and shaming in the co-ed section of her gym by male trainers, subsequently finding comfort in the women's space. The ability to comfortably practice religious modesty values is one layer of women's-only spaces that allows us to understand the holistic benefit of offering women's-only spaces for women of all backgrounds.

6.7 Perspectives on Men's-Only Spaces

Many male participants spoke about enjoying an empty gym, but none spoke of support, either for or against a men's-only section. If male participants had an opinion on gender segregated gym sections, they chose to focus solely on women's-only sections during the interviews.

This one-sided focus on women's-only sections would be interesting to explore further since men-only sections were brought up by individuals who were against a women's-only section at the gym I worked at (as explained in the introduction). Despite the idea of a men's-only section being raised then, it was not raised by a single participant in my study other than Aala, who believes both genders should have their own space.

One interesting aspect of women's-only spaces was how many women discussed feeling less self-conscious of their bodies in segregated spaces. In the next section, I explore body image in fitness spaces and how it intersects with shame. Maintaining a healthy body image was a challenge for participants from every background in my study and presents as a psychological barrier rather than a physical one, albeit one that was sometimes informed by fitness spaces.

6.8 Body Image in Fitness Spaces

Participants regularly identified how body image intersected with their identities and experience of fitness spaces, regardless of gender or religious background. They gave voice to themes of body image, shame, and intimidation, which served to highlight the anxiety many individuals felt towards the mental space created by the gym.

Donald, described his anxieties around attending his university gym:

> …I found it more so … okay who's looking at me, is anyone judging me, and what am I doing here? Am I doing it wrong? What did I do last time, what should I do this time? It was more so just constant thinking rather than just relaxing.

Participants regardless of gender identity raised this feeling of surveillance and of being judged in the gym, as did religious and non-religious participants. Donald identified mirrors as one aspect of the surveillance factor within the space of the gymnasium: “Well, it depends on what you think of body image, but I think [the gym] certainly focuses on it, that’s why gyms have mirrors everywhere… you can watch people as they stand in front of mirrors flexing.” For Donald, viewing other men who he felt were in better shape through the many mirrors caused him to feel self-conscious about his own body. If he could see others, then they would also be able to see him.

Jessica, meanwhile, highlighted the displayed photos of “fit” bodies on the walls of the gym as sources of confusion and intimidation. As some images displayed a flat stomach and others showed abdominal muscle definition, Jessica found herself unable to describe what she viewed as a fit body because of these conflicting depictions:

> I: Could you describe for me what your personal view of a fit body is?
>
> P: No, I can’t. For females, I don’t know. It’s really confusing. I don’t know. I guess I don’t know, some of them have abs. I don’t know, I really don’t know what people consider a fit body for females. I don’t know.

She later discussed the discrepancy between a societal ideal of thinness for females with a growing societal preference for a “thick” body, a concept explored in Chapter 2. These images conflate body image with fitness and create contradictory, indecipherable ideals that serve to exacerbate body image issues.

As highlighted by Jessica, ideals around a fit female body are confusing. For Donald, his body image was affected by the surveillance he feels in the gym and the inundation of fit male bodies around him. Both cases demonstrate how gym spaces create uncertainty and insecurity by emphasizing the ideals of fit bodies, thus creating barriers to those with body image issues.

In the next section, I discuss different kinds of fitness barriers through the example of swimming pools and aquatic fitness spaces.

6.9 Accessibility of Pools

Swimming pools are a unique site of accessibility barriers for those who hold modesty values. It also offers a different kind of accessibility problem for those who lack the skill set required to use swimming pools. Swimming was a barrier for some participants who did not know how to swim. In this section, I first explore ways that pools are navigated by those who practice specific modesty values before considering barriers to knowing how to swim.

Several participants in my study discussed how pools were challenging to navigate while maintaining modesty values. The challenges participants identified were related to swimwear, changeroom nudity, and that pools were often co-ed. Swimwear that meets the wearer's needs is not always easy to find, particularly for religious swimmers. Part of this is because most swimwear comes in a bikini style or one-piece design that does not offer much coverage. As described by Tanya, a non-religious woman introduced in Chapter 4, "No, I don't feel the most comfortable swimming in public. I have a large chest, and it's not like they make properly fitting tops for people like me. I'm always afraid I'll spill out." Tanya's fear of exposing herself due to improperly fitting swimwear was echoed by Ayesha and Suraya, both introduced in Chapter 4.

Another barrier to pools was the mostly co-ed nature of most pools. Some women described attending women's-only swim times but reported still having a male lifeguard or an open gallery where anyone could walk in and watch them swim. As noted by Ayesha, "It's not, it's like not always really thought out. Like for me to be comfortable, it needs to be women. If the lifeguards aren't women, it's a no for me. Like there can't be men wandering around or coming in and out of the pool area. There shouldn't be men looking at us, period." For Ayesha,

having a single-gender space means that those working on the pool deck should be women and that viewing galleries and windows should be closed to men.

Some pools offer this all-encompassing women's-oriented service during women's swim times, but there are not many of them. Ayesha frequents a private gym that offers entirely secluded women's swim times with a privacy screen that covers the windows, and the lifeguard is female. Pools seeking to improve their accessibility could do so simply by adding women's-only swim times, with some simple precautions to keep the space women's-only.

A different barrier to swimming is skillset availability. For many participants in my study, gym class in childhood was a formative time when they would learn how to interact in the gym and practice fitness. Many Canadian fitness curriculums for children involves swimming. For some individuals, like Leila, who came to Canada in her youth, swimming was an area of apprehension because she had not learned swimming skills. Leila had to learn how to swim outside of school because her peers had already learned how. For other individuals like David, swimming is still an unlearned skill. Swimming appears to be an area that is less accessible to new Canadians than other types of fitness.

Leila remarked on her surprise at swimming when coming to Canada. In her country of origin, Somalia, she was not taught swimming in school:

> There is one thing that we didn't have that I wish we had, was learning how to swim. When I came to Canada, sort of the only one… You learn how to swim in here, in Canada, but not there…. Yeah, like I said, that's one thing that we learned and had a class. We had a swimming class, and I was shocked. What the hell is this?... Even though we had beaches there, nobody taught us how to swim. I remember I almost died when I was a baby, I almost drowned, and my uncle saved me.

Leila found swimming very anxiety-inducing because she had had such a negative experience of almost drowning in Somalia. She felt it was very important for her children to learn how to swim due to the number of lakes and rivers in Ontario. She also thought school lessons were a good

equalizer for children whose parents did not teach them how to swim. Leila remarked that some individuals who immigrate to Canada at an older age might miss this type of instruction and never have the opportunity to learn how to swim.

David is a twenty-five-year-old Christian bodybuilder who said swimming was a point of anxiety for him. When David came to Canada, his mom enrolled him and his older brother in a small Christian private school outside of the public school system, which is part of why he did not receive the learn-to-swim gym classes found in many Ontario districts. David did not have a strong grasp of English when he immigrated and received ESL lessons for several years, which took him out of many elective classes such as gym, where swimming trips and skills would occur.

David mentioned that he has not learned how to swim, despite enjoying sailing as a recreational pastime. I asked how he navigates his insecurity around swimming when sailing, and he said that when he is sailing, he "puts a lot of trust in God and my life-jacket." Because David immigrated to Canada at a later age (in his early teens) and never got a chance to learn how to swim in school, he avoids pools without lifeguards. At one point, his bodybuilding coach encouraged him to do water workouts after an injury. I asked David how that worked out for him, and he said, "I stayed in the shallow end and skipped anything where I wouldn't be able to touch. It was okay, though, cause there are lifeguards in the university pool just in case."

David hopes to pursue adult swimming lessons in the future but mentioned his hesitation: "It's kind of like being an ESL student all over again, but this time I'm an adult." David, unlike Leila, missed out on having the opportunity to learn swimming as a young child, making it less accessible for him to learn as an adult. He feels there is a stigma when people learn he does not know how to swim, and some of his friends tease him for not knowing how. In explaining this,

David expressed shame for not knowing how to swim as an adult. He has support and encouragement from a close friend who immigrated from the Philippines, however, and his friends who sail.

David's experience is not unique. A 2010 study conducted by Ipsos Reid on behalf of the Lifesaving Society suggests that new Canadians are less likely than other Canadians to know how to swim.[319] According to the study, 20 percent of new Canadians do not know how to swim, compared to 4 percent of the Canadian population who are not recent immigrants.[320] Additionally, one-third of new Canadians in the survey reported being uneasy around water.[321] The study also highlighted that 93 percent of new Canadians in the study, and 89 percent of Canadians who are not recent immigrants, believe that learning to swim should be part of the school curriculum.[322]

This insight into the heightened challenges new Canadians face around swimming is helpful when considering the accessibility of fitness facilities with pools. There are simple ways to improve pool accessibility, from offering women's-only swim times to offering free adult swimming lessons, especially for new Canadians who may not have received instruction in their countries of origin. Free swim times could also encourage use of pools and swimming as a form of fitness.

As seen, different physical fitness spaces can provide different benefits and challenges, including those found outdoors. In the next section, I explore how participants perceive both

[319] Ipsos Reid. (2010) New Canadians Most at Risk of Drowning Eight in Ten (79%) New Canadians Plan to Be Around Water but One in Five (19%) Are Unable to Swim. Retrieved from: https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/new-canadians-most-risk-drowning
[320] Ipsos Reid, New *Canadians Most at Risk of Drowning Eight in Ten.*
[321] Ipsos Reid, New *Canadians Most at Risk of Drowning Eight in Ten.*
[322] Ipsos Reid, New *Canadians Most at Risk of Drowning Eight in Ten.*

physical and mental safety in fitness spaces outside of the gym and how these spaces, too, provide barriers and boons to fitness.

6.10 Safety in Fitness Spaces Outside the Gym

There are two ways of conceptualizing safety as identified by participants in the study. One way is physical safety, as raised by the participants who struggled with swimming. The other is mental safety for individuals who have anxiety or other concerns. These concepts will be considered in that order.

Talia, an evangelical Christian introduced in Chapter 4, describes her concerns about physical safety and why she prefers running a particular route:

> Yeah, so like, especially in the neighbourhood we live in now there is like, lots of traffic and lots of cars which is good um, but I know like where I used to live with my family in Ottawa, we lived kind of in the country, so I was always a little worried because there aren't many people around in case like something happens. Even if you like sprain your ankle like it doesn't have to be something with another person or anything. Like, if I were to get hurt at least I know there would be people around and stuff because sometimes I just like to run without my phone because it's just kind of like a nice break. So, knowing that I'm around a lot of people if I ever needed help, or if something was to go wrong, I could like… that feeling of safety of knowing that there are people around. Like I don't really mind people watching me run because I just like, kind of like knowing that there are people who will look out for me in case I get hurt or in case something happens or whatever.

Talia's concern about physical safety was common to other women and gender-diverse individuals in my study. Concern about physical safety while exercising may also be due to these demographics' higher risk of experiencing (or having had experienced) gender-based violence.

The other way of conceptualizing safety is mental safety. Participants suggested they could improve their mental safety in fitness settings by eliminating or lessening triggers or points of anxiety. Some participants, like Talia, found that the space of the gym or being in certain situations, such as exercising outside, caused feelings of anxiety or mental discomfort.

Both physical and mental safety concerns arose when participants discussed their experiences doing fitness outside of the gym. Many of these concerns were relayed through fears of injury by cars and are symptomatic of unsafe infrastructure prioritizing cars over bikers, pedestrians, and runners. Understanding these concerns can help improve accessibility in fitness spaces outside the gym.

Being outside can also provide positive spatial aspects for fitness practitioners. Next, I discuss nature and spirituality in fitness, as described by participants.

6.11 Nature and Spirituality in Fitness Spaces

Throughout the interviews, there was a reoccurring theme of enjoying spaces that allow the ability to see nature from inside the gym or enjoy fitness activities outside. The theme of nature was something that a significant number of participants in the study remarked when discussing what they enjoyed about certain aspects of spaces.

Lena, a 25-year-old female nursing student from Northern Ontario who practices traditional Indigenous spiritual teachings finds enjoyment in the space of her gym. In her interview, she describes the joy of looking out of the large, broad windows in front of the cardio machines in her post-secondary institution's gym while working out. Lena, who is undergoing a diet and fitness regimen for weight loss, prefers the outdoors but also appreciates windows. She said, "I prefer to be outside, but if I can't be outside because it's winter or the exercise I'm doing doesn't work outside, being near a window is the next best thing." When I asked her what she could see from her gym, she described: "…I think ours is nice for what we have and it kind of looks out over like a… some wooded areas as well so it's not just like you're looking outside, like you're just staring into concrete or something. You're looking out. You're looking at the uh,

wooded areas as well." Lena finds the broad windows in her gym make her experience more enjoyable.

Like Lena, Alex, a 22-year-old male, identifies as spiritual but not religious. He enjoys being able to "connect" with something "greater" when enjoying recreation outside: "Whereas I believe there is… like, like Mother Earth is a big part, and …but I think there is a higher being, and I'm just not really sure what it is, but I think that when I am out in nature, I am able to like… connect with that feeling." Alex centres his fitness experiences outdoors to enjoy the feeling of connection he has with nature.

Another male participant, Jeremy, identifies as spiritual and Buddhist. He described the freedom of working out outside in juxtaposition to the indoor environment:

> So, I feel very… like that was a big thing whenever I'd do my training for the triathlons, it was exciting when I'd hop on my bike and go biking for thirty-forty kilometres and just see, see where it went. Like if I went on a trail through the forest, or if I went on a highway and went to a different town or did I just bike around [city redacted]. It was just kind of go wherever I felt. And the same kind of thing, just get off your bike and go for a jog and am I going to do a loop around my neighborhood? Am I going to go up to [university name redacted] and back? Am I going to jog around [landmark redacted] a couple times? It was always kind of… I can just go, and I'm not stuck. I've got the freedom to go wherever I want, and my body will take me there. But I felt with the gym… this is it; this is just where you are.

We can see from Jeremy's description that by working out in nature, he feels little to no constraints on where his workout could take him. The novelty of doing fitness outside is a motivating factor for him.

Imagining gym spaces as confining is something future work might consider. Many participants connected their relationship with nature as part of their worldview and their preferred setting for fitness activities.

In the next section, I will explore how gym spaces can also be the site of religious rituals or practices. Despite popular conceptions of gyms as secular, gym space is not necessarily

neutral and can take on a religious significance depending on how people ascribe meaning to or use the space.

6.12 The Space of the Gym During Religious Rituals and Practices

As Kim Knott's work mapping religion in an English medical centre suggests, seemingly secular spaces are often embedded with "religious" meaning when examining the mental, physical, and social aspects of the space.[323] In the gym, this can look like a studio room used as a prayer space, amended hours of team practices during Ramadan fasting, or having a team of athletes oriented around a shared religious identity. Ali, introduced earlier as the student who created a cricket club at his school, also remarked on how his team—which had many practicing Muslims—trained through Ramadan: "We would rent the field late at night, after sundown, at like eleven and midnight. Everyone could feast before coming. The boys on the team who weren't Muslim didn't care either. It worked around everyone's schedules to do it that way too." This change in hours highlights a compromise that allows the team to practice comfortably while enabling them to observe the fast.

As mentioned in Chapter four, Tanner, a Jewish participant does not wear the kippah, but would play against private Jewish schools where students would wear a kippah as part of their uniform. He highlights a disadvantage his rivals have by wearing the kippah when it would fall off during the game. Yet, by all accounts, they assumed the disadvantage incurred from respecting their religion and remained adherent even while working out in a competitive space.

[323] Kim Knott, and Myfanwy Franks, "Secular Values and the Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis of an English Medical Centre," 226.

These players' wearing of the kippah also changed the dynamic of the space by introducing a religious signifier into a space that is typically assumed to be secular and devoid of obvious religious items. Throughout my study, it became apparent that participants broke the perceived secularity of the space by wearing religious items into the gym like the kippah, hijab, cross, or rosary. Their actions within the gym also challenged the idea of fitness as a neutral space devoid of religion, particularly when small gestures like the kissing of the kippah when it fell on the floor, or a post-Ramadan-fast practice, took place inside it.

6.13 Fitness Spaces Conclusion

Analyzing the themes raised in the interviews using a spatial analysis approach allows us to see how the gym's mental, physical, and social space is multidimensional and shaped both by the people inside of it and the organization of the physical space itself. The participants' experience of features of fitness spaces such as mirrors, changerooms/washrooms, and the controlled nature of the gym was shaped by their behaviours, experiences, perceptions, and preferences as much as by the physical space itself. Individuals from diverse backgrounds use their agency to carve out their own space to meet their unique needs, from Jessica choosing to use the women's-only space to Ray changing in a stall or family changeroom.

Participants were resilient but were quick to identify ways fitness spaces could improve their access. Women's-only spaces have the potential to increase accessibility for women from a variety of backgrounds, including the religiously adherent. LGBTQ+-inclusive spaces, programs, or signifiers would also improve access for LGBTQ+ users. Even minor physical changes, such as having more separate changing stalls, fewer mirrors, or washroom stalls without large gaps that people could see through, were suggested by various participants, religious and not, as potential improvements to their fitness experience.

These areas of consensus shared by the participants prompt a need for future research in the area of fitness spaces and inclusivity. Some problem areas raised, such as concerns and impediments to women's-only spaces in fitness, require further in-depth qualitative and perhaps quantitative study. As this study focused on religious and non-religious identities rather than general inclusivity, its scope was naturally limited. Further study in other areas would contribute holistically to our academic understanding of fitness spaces.

Chapter 7 Identity and Belonging

"My mom put me in hockey so I could develop a sense of belonging in the Canadian community."-Ferez

Bao immigrated to Canada with her family when she was 14. The family moved to Vancouver and quickly fit into the Chinatown community. Bao's little brother, Li Jun, who was nine at the time, struggled a bit more with the move than Bao did. Bullies targeted Li Jun in school for being in the English Second Language program and for having traditional Chinese cuisine in his lunches.

Bao felt bad for Li Jun's struggles. She loved her brother and wanted things to be easier for him at school. She spent her evenings with him after school, and when they were both done with their homework, they were allowed to watch television. Bao liked watching MTV, and Li Jun was usually okay with that, but one night, after about six months of living in Canada, he asked if it was okay to watch Hockey Night in Canada on CBC. She was a bit surprised that Li Jun was interested in sports, as he had never really seemed interested before. "Sure," Bao replied.

Although she was familiar with many sports, she only had a passing knowledge of hockey. So, they finished their homework and turned-on hockey. Bao quickly found out why Li Jun was interested: the Calgary Flames were playing the Edmonton Oilers, and the Flames had a player of Chinese descent named Spencer Foo on their team. Li Jun was extremely excited watching Spencer Foo play and was captivated by the announcers and the game's fast pace.

Later that night, Bao overheard Li Jun telling their dad about the game they watched as he was getting ready for bed. "Do you think I could play?" he asked. She could hear her dad's non-committal response: "We will see."

Over the following weeks, Li Jun did not lose interest in hockey. In fact, he watched all the NHL games that came on and was persistent in begging his parents at every opportunity to play. Finally, Bao asked Li Jun point-blank, "Why do you want to play so badly?" Li Jun was thoughtful for a moment, then responded, "I want to feel included. Everyone likes hockey here, and if I play, I just know I will make friends." Bao understood this; it was kind of like how she begged her parents for an iPhone so she would have the same phone as her friends and be able to iMessage. Plus, she thought exercising was not bad for Li Jun, as he was not a particularly active kid.

She decided to talk to her parents about how she thought it would help Li Jun adapt to his new home and school. Her parents were surprised that she was taking up her brother's cause, and they decided that if Bao and Li Jun could get all the relevant information, they could discuss it further. Li Jun already knew the community league he wanted to join and quickly got the registration information. Bao investigated the different ways they could procure the equipment. Hockey equipment is quite expensive, she quickly realized, but there were many second-hand sales.

They had a family meeting shortly thereafter, and her parents were impressed by the fact-finding mission their children did together. They supported registering Li Jun in the league and getting equipment at an upcoming church sale that advertised used hockey equipment. The only thing to figure out was who would take Li Jun to the arena. They concluded that Bao would need to accompany Li Jun to practice three times a week, since both her parents would be working in the evenings. Bao agreed, although she would occasionally resent this decision on evenings when she had other things she wanted to do.

Li Jun was so excited to start. He did not know how to skate, so they started going to open skate times outside of the hockey practices so he could practice. He quickly got the hang of it, first mastering skating forwards, then backwards. Seeing him become so confident on the ice gave her a sense of pride.

She started to notice his newfound confidence spill into his day-to-day life. He made fast friends with the boys on his team, and soon she no longer needed to take him to hockey for every practice since his friend's parents were happy to bring him most of the nights. He was proud to share his Chinese culture with his new friends, too, bringing extra snacks in his lunches to share and talking about his family's practice of Buddhism with his classmates.

Li Jun was still bullied occasionally and even taunted with racial slurs, but Bao found him more resilient in dealing with it. He did not internalize it like he did when they first moved to Canada. He would address the prejudice, and over time he became less of a target for schoolyard bullies.

Bao credits hockey with helping her brother adjust to Canadian society. It helped him make friends, be active, and feel included. Hockey gave their family new traditions, like eating fast-food takeout on Christmas while watching the World Junior Hockey League and spending long weekends holed up in hotel rooms for Li Jun's hockey tournaments. Li Jun plays competitively now and hopes to be a hockey coach someday.

Composite*

7.1 Why Hockey?

I did not set out to study hockey within the parameters of my study, but as most participants brought up hockey organically in some way, it became clear that it was important to them. They either played hockey growing up, currently play it, watch the National Hockey

League (NHL), or had memories and associations of hockey as part of their Canadian identity. The sheer volume of discussions around hockey was surprising, and I quickly realized while coding the interviews that hockey played a significant social role in the lives of many Canadians during their youth. By observing the role of hockey in participants' experiences, we can derive a perspective on the role of sport in fostering community and a sense of belonging in Canada. This perspective can lend insight into the social role of sports in general as a tool for fostering a sense of belonging for those who have recently immigrated to Canada or are marginalized in some way, like Li Jun in the composite. Embedded in the often-cheery participant narratives about hockey are glimpses of struggles—with racism, feeling like an outsider, and attempting to make social connections. For many participants, hockey acted as a refraction point for identity, belonging, and understandings of fitness and religion.

Sport is dynamic, and the experience one has while participating depends on the intersection of various identities. Some participants noted that their parents put them in hockey so that they could make friends and find a sense of belonging. Other participants initiated playing or watching hockey to make and be around friends.

It may be helpful to see the significance of hockey as an extension of Canadian nation-state identity through Benedict Anderson's work on "imagined communities." As Anderson posits:

> The fellow members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of the communion... Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity or genuineness, but in the style in which they are imagined.[324]

[324] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London; Verso, 2006), 6.

Hockey is one such styling of the Canadian identity and I will discuss Canada's branding later, particularly stereotypes around hockey and Tim Hortons. Ron Schleifer and Ilan Tamir further tie sport to how imagined communities operate geopolitically through their study of sport in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

> Sports groups are identified with political ideology, together with status consciousness, an economic reality, and even with a broader worldview. In the national context, it can be said that modern sports are directly connected to the geopolitical ideology of nationalism.[325]

This thread of nationalism through sport becomes poignant when participants describe their associations with hockey and its affiliated symbols tied to their sense of belonging in Canada. As an activity that offers a sense of community and identity, hockey is also an organic coping mechanism for avoiding feelings of not belonging. The desire to belong is rooted in shame, as Lisa Guenther describes:

> The burning feeling of shame, the sense of being out of place, judged by others as unworthy, unwanted, or wrong—not only in this or that particular action but in one's very existence—leaves the shameful subject nowhere to be, and yet nowhere to hide or escape.[326]

I will highlight this last point through participant excerpts describing their parents' thinking for enrolling them in hockey over other sports.

I first explore the role of hockey in belonging and how some study participants constructed their Canadian identity in relation to stereotypes and assumptions to avoid shaming. Then I consider the positioning of hockey as part of Canada's national brand and as a tool of nationalism, before turning to how hockey operates in community building.

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[325] Ron Schleifer and Ilan Tamir, "The Use of Sport in the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *Israel Affairs* 24, no. 1 (2018): 47. doi:10.1080/13537121.2017.1398466.
[326] Guenther, "Shame and the temporality of social life," 23-24.

7.2 The Role of Hockey in Belonging

Some study participants who were children of immigrants were encouraged to do activities like hockey that their parent's thought were part of the Canadian collective identity, while discouraged by their parents from less popular sports in Canada, such as cricket. Identity construction through sport for these participants resulted from parental conceptions of what it means to "be Canadian." Erin C. Tarver describes this notion of identity construction in her work studying sports fandom in the United States. Although participants in my study often discussed playing hockey rather than being a fan, some of the concepts Tarver raises are at play due to the place of hockey in national identity. Notably, we will see how one participant's mother chose to put him in hockey to solidify her son's place within the broader Canadian imaginary. As noted by Tarver:

> Sports fandom in the contemporary United States prescribes a variety of ritualized practices that contribute not only to communities' persistence over time but also to the racial and gender hierarchies that characterize those communities. Sports fandom is, to borrow a term from Foucault, a practice of subjectivization—a means by which individuals are regulated and, at the same time, achieve a sense of their own identities. Sports fandom matters, then, because it is one of the primary ways in which we tell ourselves who we are—and, just as importantly, who we are not.[327]

While Tarver's study focuses on the United States, sports communities operate in much the same way in Canada as highlighted by Shannon Kerwin and Larena Hoeber in their research.[328]

This subjectivization is evident in the case of Ferez, a 21-year-old Lebanese-Canadian, Orthodox Christian participant. His mother chose to put him in hockey rather than soccer, "knowing that she wanted us to be Canadians," said Ferez, "just the identity of a Canadian… A

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[327] Erin C. Tarver, *The I in Team: Sports Fandom and the Reproduction of Identity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 2.

[328] See Shannon Kerwin and Larena Hoeber, "Sport Fandom: The Complexity of Performative Role Identities," in *Routledge Handbook of Sport Fans and Fandom*, ed. Danielle Sarver Coombs and Anne C. Osborne (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2022), 140.

Canadian plays hockey and speaks French and English." Ferez's family perceived learning French and English and playing hockey as ways to ensure a place of belonging in the Canadian community. Ferez also explained that his mother was very protective of him and his brother and was worried about bullying. She viewed the best way to limit the potential for prejudice would be to, in Ferez's words, "assimilate" as closely as possible with what she imagined the broader Canadian public to be.

Ferez's mother's worries about her children fitting in were because of her assumptions of what it meant to be Canadian. As Lisa Guenther posits, "this self of which I am ashamed does not already exist prior to the encounter with the Other; rather, it is conferred upon me by the Other's gaze."[329] His mother's understanding of the "other's" perception includes proficiency in the official languages—despite many Canadians being unilingual—playing certain sports, and participating in certain holidays as essential for integration. Ferez said that his mother experienced shaming for having an accent and not "speaking English properly," and that some of her fears about her son's belonging may have arisen from those experiences.

It is important to highlight that Ferez's mother was not ashamed of her identity; rather, her caution was informed by being shamed by others based. She desired her sons to find a place of belonging in their new country and culture, and not struggle as she had—a struggle created by the conventions and prejudices of others.

Noor, a 21-year-old hockey fan who immigrated to Canada from Syria as a child, gave a similar account. Noor's mother enrolled him when he was a child in French school so that he could be fluently bilingual, and also enrolled him in hockey:

> That's why my mom put me in a French school, also because of France's occupation of Syria, and that's a whole other thing. I digress. Yeah, so my mom put me in hockey so I could develop a sense of belonging in the Canadian community. She wanted me to live as

[329] Guenther, "Shame and the temporality of social life," 26.

> a Canadian. She did not want me to live as a child of an immigrant that didn't know how to live like the locals.

By blending in and identifying themselves as "not" what they believed other Canadian's dislike, Noor and his family found a sense of belonging. In the process, however, they also contributed to the notion that those "that did not know how to live like the locals" were not "normal" in Canadian society.

This fear of being shamed or belittled for being an immigrant is rooted in the historical oppression of new immigrant groups. Canada has a long history of racism and xenophobia towards immigrant groups. One example of such was the turning away of the *St. Louis*, a ship full of Jewish refugees:

> The *St. Louis*, [Mackenzie] King felt, was not a Canadian problem, but he would, nevertheless, ask Skelton to consult on the matter with Lapointe and Blair. Lapointe quickly stated that he was "emphatically opposed" to the admission of the *St. Louis* passengers, while Blair claimed, characteristically, that these refugees did not quality under immigration laws and that in any case, Canada had already done too much for the Jews. No country, Blair added, could "open its doors wide enough to take in the hundreds of thousands of Jewish people who want to leave Europe: the line must be drawn somewhere."
> And the line was drawn, the voyagers' last flickering hope extinguished, the Jews of the *St. Louis* headed back to Europe, where many would die in the gas chambers and crematoria of the Third Reich.[330]

Another example of othering can be found with the treatment of Chinese-Canadians, who worked on the railroad. As soon as they had completed their work, Canadians pushed for their deportation and the stripping of many "civil, economic and political rights."[331] The following excerpt highlights the sentiment and othering towards Chinese-Canadians after the Canadian Pacific Railway was built.

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[330] Irving Abella and Harold Troper. *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 64. https://doi.org/10.3138/j.ctt2tv09d.
[331]Avvy Go and Dora Nipp. "Shades of Immigration Past: The Experience of Chinese Immigrants." *Canadian Issues (Association for Canadian Studies: 2017)*, 36.

> As soon as the last spike of the CPR was driven into the ground, Canadians demanded to expel the Chinese workers and to introduce a prohibitive tax on new arrivals. The Canadian government complied. Chinese Immigration Acts were introduced to curb Chinese immigration and to penalize those who were already here.[332]

These are two examples in a long history of both social and political othering. The targeted immigrant groups change over time and geopolitical context. Sometimes, targeting is due to country of origin, culture, or religion. Throughout Kagedan's research, there are more examples of societies selecting outsiders, including wartime "othering,"[333] anti-Semitism,[334] and the othering of Muslims.[335]

Augie Fleras observes that Muslims are the out-group in Canadian society even now, noting:

> An online poll of 1,522 Canadians commissioned by the Association for Canadian Studies and Canadian Race Relations Foundation demonstrated how 52 percent of the respondents believe Muslims cannot be trusted (70 percent Quebecers versus 43 percent among English Canadians). Nearly as many believe discrimination against Muslims is mainly their fault, while the Internet is fingered as the main conduit for spreading racism in Canada.[336]

Despite the national narrative of multiculturalism and policy emphasizing inclusion and diversity, there are expectations imposed on those who fall into out-groups. When people fall short of those expectations, the fault is perceived to belong to the minority. As we will see below, some individuals are conscious of this prejudice and take steps to distance themselves from the perceived out-group to avoid discrimination.

Aaron, a second-generation Christian Lebanese-Canadian who enjoys hockey, highlighted his fear of this othering. Much like Ferez's mother, Aaron's mother immigrated to

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[332] Go and Nipp, "Shades of Immigration Past," 36.
[333] Kagedan, *The Politics of Othering*, 69.
[334] Kagedan, *The Politics of Othering*, 46.
[335] Kagedan, *The Politics of Othering*, 134.
[336] Augie Fleras, *Racisms in a Multicultural Canada: Paradoxes, Politics, and Resistance* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014), 104.

Canada and put her sons in hockey over soccer to distinguish their identity as Lebanese Christians. As it was shortly after 9/11, Aaron's mother feared discrimination toward her children, aware that people who appeared Arab were the target of societal shaming. Aaron described his mother's position against her sons playing soccer:

> …And my mom didn't want us to be identified with that. And Arabs, generally speaking, love soccer. I've never met an Arab who doesn't love soccer and …so my mom didn't want us to be in soccer… actually no, she chose us to be in hockey because Arabs don't usually play hockey.

Aaron's mother's position is an example of seeking to belong in a post-9/11 context by distancing her family from activities seen as associated with the out-group. We see this desire to belong in the way Aaron's mother purposefully placed her children in hockey, which has a stereotype of being a Canadian pastime. Choosing to abstain from soccer to distance their family from "Arab-ness" is her reaction to the intense backlash towards Arabs (and Muslims) in a post-9/11 world.

For Aaron's part, he emphasized his Christian identity by wearing a Christian cross around his neck, which he wears to this day. He gestured to it as we spoke, stating, "I want people to know right away that I'm a Christian—not a Muslim." For Aaron, this distinction is important because he sees how Muslims are treated poorly in Canada and still wants to avoid being mistaken as one, which he says often happens due to his Arab identity. He was careful to note that he does not see anything wrong with being Muslim; he just wishes to avoid the discrimination Muslims face.

These ideas on what it means to be a "good" Canadian, such as playing hockey, being bilingual, and being Christian, are propagated by leaders in the USA and Canada and can harm new Canadians. For example, they refer to white citizens whose families emigrated generations

ago as “old stock Canadians”[337] and disseminate narratives such as a “war on Christmas”[338] to set up a dichotomy between “us” and “them” for political purposes. Interwoven in the participants’ stories is a desire to belong. Sport can contribute to belonging because we do it in relationship with others.

In the next section, I explore the concept of Canada having a nationalistic “brand” that feeds into tropes about what it means to be a Canadian. Through exploring stories from participants that are recent immigrants, the pervasiveness of these stereotypes becomes evident.

7.3 The Branding of Hockey

One of the first programs offered by the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission was Saturday Night Hockey, which in 1934 became The Imperial Oil Hockey Broadcast and ultimately became known as Hockey Night in Canada, which for many years aired on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (hereafter the CBC).[339] The role of hockey on the earliest iterations of Canada’s state funded media highlights the longstanding relationship between hockey and Canadian identity.

Hockey was something most participants who were first- or second-generation Canadians brought up as part of “becoming” Canadian or as an intrinsic part of Canadian identity. Astur, a Muslim born in Somalia who immigrated to Canada in 2009, said: “To be Canadian is to love Tim Horton’s, hockey, and free healthcare.” She said that her assumptions about being Canadian were influenced by the 2010 Winter Olympics commercials she saw when she first came to

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[337] Former Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper and politician Jason Kenny referred publicly to “old stock Canadians.” See Tristan Hopper, "Taking stock of ‘old stock Canadians’: Stephen Harper called a ‘racist’ after remark during debate," *The National Post,* Sept. 15, 2015, https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/taking-stock-of-old-stock-canadians-stephen-harper-called-a-racist-after-remark-during-debate.

[338] President Donald Trump of the USA routinely discusses the “war on Christmas” within his platform of the Republican Party. This sentiment has bled into some right-wing groups in Canada.

[339] See Craig Baird, host, “The Birth of the CBC,” Canadian History Ehx (podcast), 29:20, https://canadaehx.com/2022/06/04/the-birth-of-the-cbc-2/

Canada and Buzzfeed articles about maple syrup and hockey. We both recalled a particularly touching Tim Horton's commercial, showing a man greeting his family in the airport with warm clothing and a Tim Horton's coffee. As he passes his wife the coffee, he says, "Welcome to Canada." The commercial then cuts to his wife and children in winter clothing heading outside into the snow, and the phrase "welcome home" appears on the screen. [340] Astur explained how that specific commercial elicited a strong emotional response for her, as a recent immigrant from a country in distress. I also recalled feeling emotional seeing that commercial, despite not being a recent immigrant. We mused at the idea that eating a donut was arguably all the initiation needed to "become Canadian."

Leila, who I first introduced in Chapter 4, immigrated to Canada from Somalia when she was ten. She also brought up hockey in her interview talking about how she had not heard of hockey until coming to Canada and learned about it in school. "It's like I learned hockey in Canada," she said; "I didn't even know what hockey was. It was like, what are they doing? What is it? It's called hockey, I'm like wow." She had never seen an ice rink while living in Somalia and hockey was about as foreign to her as a sport could be. Leila grew to love the sport and has enrolled her young son in "Timbits" hockey this season.[341]

Commercials airing on CBC during the 2006 Turin Olympics even explored Hockey's role in recent immigrant families. In his article, "Forget Hockey Dad. Meet Anti-Hockey Grandpa," Tony Keller remarks on a Tim Horton's Olympic ad portraying three generations of

[340] See "Tim Hortons True Stories: Welcome Home," YouTube video, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0pjW2ltKwI.

[341] Timbit's hockey is an introduction to hockey program for children under the age of seven, intended to teach children basic skills and love for the game. The motto is "Fun, Fitness and Fair Play." See https://www.hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/hockey-programs/coaching/under-7.

Chinese-Canadian men responding to hockey. Keller provides a summary of the commercial as follows:

> …a plot summary: somewhere in Canada, Grandfather, stern first-generation patriarch of a Chinese-Canadian family, has come to the rink to watch his grandson, Tommy. The father is surprised to see grandfather, who has never been to see Tommy play before. As they sit, the proud father, making small talk, says that Tommy is a good player. "Better than you," shoots back grandpa.
>
> The father shakes his head, asking: "How would you know?" You are, after all, Anti-Hockey Grandpa. You never came to see me. You hated hockey; thought it a distraction from school and homework. Flashback to the early 1970s, and the son being dragged out of a road hockey game by the patriarch. "You must study harder," admonishes the old man, leading him into the house while blond neighbourhood boys play on. "Not just hockey all the time." He spits out the word, "hockey."
>
> So how can grandfather know that Tommy is a better player than the father? "I come watch," says grandfather. The son can't believe it. "Okay, what team did I play for?" asks the son. "You right wing," says the old man, pulling out his wallet and finding a fading photo of a preteen in a yellow sweater. And so, the secret is revealed: 30 years ago, he watched at least one game. "Thanks Dad," says the son, as our tear ducts swell. To which Grandpa replies, never making eye contact with his son, "Gimme my picture back."[342]

This portrayal is revealing not simply because it strongly stereotypes Asian immigrant families but because it suggests that integration occurs when hockey is accepted. This portrayal still pervades in ideas about Canadian-ness, as reflected by study participants. Several participants unironically talked about these hockey stereotypes they saw in commercials suggesting this cultural mythos is enduring.

In the next section, I explore the role hockey plays in building community and making friends. Similar to how Li Jun in the composite saw hockey as an opportunity to build relationships, some participants framed their playing as a way to strengthen relationships with friends and family.

[342] Tony Keller, "Forget Hockey Dad. Meet Anti-Hockey Grandpa," *Macleans*, March 6, 2006, 82.

7.4 Hockey and Community

Many participants frequently raised hockey and its links to belonging. Theo, a practicing Catholic of Italian-Canadian heritage described how hockey was influential in the small town in Ontario where he grew up. He also noted that hockey provided him the opportunity to spend time with his father. He talked about the tradition of his dad playing hockey with his grandpa and how that set the stage for their relationship around hockey: “They go on the Georgian Bay, and they play hockey all the time, and it was one of those things, like one of the few things my dad got to do with his dad, and so I think he wanted that kind of relationship with me, and I’m more than happy to do that.” This example Theo provides shows an intergenerational tradition around hockey which reinforces the idea that hockey is an intrinsically Canadian thing to do.

Another participant, Dustin, a non-practicing Catholic, talked about how he played hockey in his basement with his father before going to the ice rink:

> We have a ... basically, we call it the hockey basement, and it’s just a completely non-finished, all pavement hockey basement, and he’d go in that, and I’d shoot on him for hours, and we’d stay there for hours until it was time to go on the ice. You know, we’d go to a local arena and probably skate for hours. I don’t know how many years I did that, but yeah, most of my childhood.

For Dustin, playing hockey was his most memorable time with his father and a positive marker of his childhood identity.

Another non-religious participant, Matthew, discussed how he begged his family to allow him to play hockey to fit in with his friends. His eventual withdrawal from hockey resulted once a family move broke the “routine” of going to hockey:

> P: I think it had begun with friends at school. I think my first year of hockey, I joined so that I could play on the same team as my friend [redacted]. We were line mates, and I think my friendship with him is what spurred me into it. And I think there is just a part of it where it becomes routine, especially if you’re in a small town.
>
> I: Why did you end up stopping hockey?

> P: Well, there were two factors really, one was that I was moving to [redacted] and I think this was also when I was starting high school so when I was moving, I was also starting at a new school, and it would have been a new league with new registration and things that were just foreign to me so I just… the routine was broken. And two I would have wanted to stop anyways. I had reached an age where sports disinterested me entirely. In fact, I can remember playing hockey and thinking "Why am I doing this? This is ridiculous."

At a certain point in Matthew's childhood, playing hockey was a source of social connection with his friends and a way to belong. However, as he got older and moved into a new city with a new school, the desire for this social connection did not transfer.

An Indigenous participant, Michael, grew up speaking Northern Cree as his first language and lived on a remote reserve in his early years. He played goalie for his hockey team in Northern Saskatchewan from when he was a young child into his early teens. He played on a half-white, half-Indigenous team up north until his family moved to Winnipeg. The team he joined in Winnipeg was entirely white other than himself. When his family moved to Winnipeg, it was a big transition for him, and hockey played a role in him finding a sense of acceptance:

> It was a huge culture shock moving from the North to Winnipeg, and the one thing I found that could bridge the gap between myself and the white kids was hockey. It was the main common element that I could find since I didn't watch the same TV, dress the same, and it was the only thing that I thought could help in being accepted. In a lot of ways, it was, most of the friends I ended up having were from hockey. If I didn't have hockey, it would have been a really rough time.

Michael raises the notion of hockey as a tool for "bridging and bonding." Michael used hockey in a way that Steven Fink noticed among Muslims in America, who used basketball to connect with the dominant group to find belonging. [343]

On one level, hockey was a means for Michael to fit in, but the sport also played a role of cultural significance. He described his sense of Indigenous pride as tied to hockey:

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[343] Fink, *Dribbling for Dawah*, 2.

> One thing I noticed over the years, up north and on reserve, hockey is our fucking sport. It evolved from our sports, so there is a sense of cultural pride. We talk up north about how we basically spawned hockey, like hockey wouldn't exist without us.

This pride towards the integral role Indigenous culture played in creating the sport is something I also heard explicitly from another Indigenous participant Lena. When asked why she brought up hockey she said, "well obviously hockey and lacrosse, those are ours, we created them, and now they're the two official sports. We [referring to Indigenous peoples] did that." This pride is particularly important given the racism Michael discussed about his time in hockey. When his family moved south to urban Winnipeg, the dynamics around hockey changed, both on and off the ice:

> The biggest thing was the racism. Our coach… the one time he called us in between periods: "You're all playing like a bunch of fucking savages out there and that's only okay for Michael," and everyone started laughing and at the time I didn't realize that the term savage was specifically in relation to me being Indigenous. I wasn't familiar with the slight yet.

He described this racism from his coach as pervasive. His coach would "compliment" him when he did well by calling him "chief." However, when he let in a few goals, his coach would call him "Pocahontas." The audience was the same; when he was doing well, the opposing team's fans would heckle him. "When I would skate out, they would do the war-whooping noises." His supporters would also do the "Tomahawk chop," which Michael, at the time, viewed as a sign of encouragement but now sees differently. Racial euphemisms were regularly bestowed on Michael's equipment as well. For example, he describes his coach using the word "dreamcatcher" for his goalie gloves. His hockey stick was also euphemized: "My coach would call my hockey stick my tomahawk." I asked Michael what he thought about this, and he said it was complex for him. He viewed his coach as a loving figure, not a tormentor, and he did not see it as racist at the time, although he does now.

Even as a spectator, Michael experienced racially charged harassment. He remembers attending a hockey game in eighth grade and having grown men behind him bullying him: "They called me a faggot for having long hair and dumped their beer on me. They made war-whooping noises as well." Michael described the slurs he experienced as providing him with empathy for what immigrant's experience. When he moved to Winnipeg, he described that people would yell at him in the arena to "go back to the reserve, go back to where you came from." This phrase of "go back to where you came from" is a common one Michael hears to this day used towards minorities, and he makes a point to stick up for those who receive this insult due to that experience.

Some of his childhood memories demonstrate the connection between hockey as a universal Canadian symbol. As a child, he "thought the whole winter Olympics was about hockey as a kid. I remember seeing speed skating in the Olympics and thinking, 'Wow, they're really practicing hard for hockey.'" It speaks volumes about the pervasiveness of hockey in Canada that a child could mistakenly believe that hockey was the entire point and only sport within the Winter Olympics.

Michael also discussed his decision to play hockey over other sports because of something his grandfather said. He recollected, "My grandpa said, you live in Canada, you play hockey… 'Football is for Americans,' when I told him I wanted to play football." Michael said he has since always associated hockey with Canada and football with the United States. He cited his grandfather's comment and the culture of his town as the major factors in his decision to play hockey. Michael's grandfather's association with hockey as a Canadian pastime is another example of hockey as an accessory to Canadian nationalism.

7.5 Hockey: A Site of Embodied Practices

With hockey explored as a site of belonging, a national brand, and a community, I will now explore a trait hockey shares with lived religion. Sport offers what Meredith McGuire terms "embodied practices," a concept first explored in Chapter 2.[344]

Embodied practices according to McGuire are those routine and perhaps mundane ways of doing everyday things, such as walking the dog, or getting the mail. While the tasks, may produce practical ends, those practices can, "over time, affect physical, emotional, and spiritual developments for the individuals who engage in them."[345] Tracey Trothen in her research on hockey and religion has made this comparison. She highlights, in line with McGuire's lived religion, that organized religion is often missing embodiment, which hockey provides. She argues:

> Although it may be true that hockey, in and of itself, "cannot offer, nor does it even profess to offer, answers to some of life's most enduring questions: Who are we? Where are we going? Why are we here?... it can serve as a spiritual discipline and a counter-cultural practice. Much of what is missing in organized religion, as I have argued, is related to embodiment: hockey underscores that longing for a sense of connection with something more, it can impart an awareness that this is not all. Hockey can provide a taste of protest and insistence that relationships can flourish across and because of diversity by making clear that we are human replete with limitations, possibilities, and the capacity to lose as well as win and even to do both simultaneously. Hockey can also assist us to reclaim and celebrate both pleasure and pain when one plays or watches for the love of the Game.[346]

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[344] McGuire, *Lived Religion*, 14.
[345] McGuire, *Lived Religion*, 14.
[346] Tracy J. Trothen, "Hockey: A Divine sport? —Canada's National Sport in Relation to Embodiment, Community and Hope," *Studies in Religion* 35, no. 2 (2006), 303. doi:10.1177/000842980603500206.

This embodiment of hockey offers possible insight into why there is a body of literature introduced in Chapter 2 that argue sport can either be a functional equivalent to religion[347] or as something that can be integrated into the larger framework of religious practice.[348]

7.6 Identity and Belonging Conclusion

For many of the participants, hockey played a role in establishing and strengthening relationships, no matter their background. Ferez, Noor, Aaron, Astur, and Leila all experienced hockey as a way of creating relationships in Canada as new immigrants and participating in the Canadian mythos that loving hockey is to be a Canadian. Ferez's mother put him in hockey instead of soccer to distinguish his "Canadian-ness," whereas Leila decided to put her young child in hockey after seeing the sport's importance for social connections in Canada. Meanwhile, Theo, Matthew, Dustin, and Michael, whose families were not recent immigrants, also used hockey in their childhood for social connections, often in a family-focused way. For these participants, their Canadian-ness was self-assumed; none of them spoke about hockey as a means to "be more Canadian." Matthew even quit hockey when he became tired of it and did not express any feelings of inadequacy as a Canadian or that his desire not to pursue hockey made him feel less involved in the social fabric of Canada. For both groups, a by-product of playing hockey was that it advanced their social connections with their community.

This suggests that hockey, or sport in general, can be a significant factor in creating social connections for youth in Canada, regardless of a person's background. The experiences the participants shared about hockey highlight positive and negative formative lessons from the sport. Teambuilding, making friends, and achievement can also be met with adversity, racism,

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[347] Milton, "Sport as a Functional Equivalent of Religion."
[348] Hoffman, "Evangelicalism and the Revitalization of Religious Ritual in Sport"

and complex identity questions. This speaks to hockey having a role of prominence in social conditioning akin to religion. Hockey is viewed as imparting social cohesion, developing character, and maintaining social values that are often also attributed to church belonging.

In summation, this chapter highlights the role hockey played in the participants' experiences of Canadian-ness. Per Benedict Anderson and Erin C. Tarver's work, hockey operates as an accessory to upholding the nation-state of Canada and fostering a collective sense of Canadian identity. We see a different origin of shame than the shame associated with modesty explored in earlier chapters: the shame of not belonging, and the role sport can play in avoiding this shame. For many participants, hockey acts a way to bridge differences like country of origin, religion, and cultural and racial diversity.

Chapter 8 Conclusion: Accessibility Challenges in Fitness Spaces

8.1 Modesty Values in Sport

At the beginning of this study, I described my experience working in a fitness centre that was implementing a women's-only fitness space. During that process, the university community engaged in abundant dialogue on the topic. This dialogue ranged from support for the idea to questions, criticisms, and rude comments online against women who indicated they would benefit from the space. This controversy brought many intersecting identities to the fore on axes such as religion, sex, gender identity, body image, insecurities, and the policing of bodies and space. As we have seen from participant interviews, people with intersecting identities may have preferences (such as working out in a single-gender space) that they consider when meeting their fitness needs. I was curious about the motivations of those who requested a women's-only space at my university gym. Based on the dialogue online during the expansion, I wondered whether there were other barriers individuals faced based on modesty values.

This controversy at my gym coincided with ongoing FIFA and FIBA hijab bans in the media spotlight. Although I began my study thinking about modesty values, as I went into my interviews, the participants raised other essential issues linked to religion and fitness, such as observing fasts and wearing religious clothing or symbols unrelated to modesty. Additionally, many non-religious participants provided a rich discussion of their values and practices and how they intersected with fitness. While I focused on modesty, I wound up mapping where religion and non-religion fit in everyday life and sport.

8.2 Revisiting the Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

As outlined in Chapter 2, this study relied on Lori G. Beaman's framework of deep equality for understanding processes of diversity negotiation in fitness. I used a similar approach to the following excerpt to map the negotiation of difference by considering micro-processes:

> ... micro-processes ... make up the everyday negotiation of difference. The rush to 'solve' the problem of diversity has produced a blindness to both the ways in which people resolve or work with difference as well as the needs of diverse groups themselves. Imagined or constructed difference and a failure to consult the 'Other' has produced top-down philosophies, policies, and solutions to problems that often did not exist in the first place, or whose contours were completely different than imagined. [349]

Considering micro-processes of diversity negotiation allowed me to highlight what people actually do rather than what scholars theorize that people do.

Kim Knott's work on spatial analysis, meanwhile, was useful for examining the role space plays in places of fitness.[350] Robert Orsi and Meredith McGuire's work on lived religion helped inform how I unpacked the practices and beliefs of the interviewees.[351] I also sought to articulate the nuance often overlooked when scholars, institutions, and other authorities frame diversity as a "problem" to manage. To do this, I drew on deep equality to move the focus from conversations of difference to those of similarity. I found doing this was natural, with many participants organically highlighting how they overcame barriers and negotiated differences with minimal conflict.

Deep equality is conceptualized as a counter to frameworks of accommodation that hierarchically organize power dynamics of tolerance by cultural and religious hegemonies to religious minorities situated as receivers.[352] This study sought to give power to individual voices

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[349] Beaman, *Deep Equality in an Era of Religious Diversity*, 2-3.
[350] Knott, *The Location of Religion*.
[351] See Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street,* and McGuire, *Lived Religion*.
[352] Beaman, *Deep Equality in an Era of Religious Diversity*, 2.

through qualitative semi-structured interviews that provided the opportunity for participants to share what they felt was important to them in the context of my research.

To study the spatial aspects of recreational spaces, I applied spatial analysis. This spatial approach considered the physical layout of university recreational facilities, and how individuals, many of whom in my study are minorities, “read” the space. Studying the dimensions of fitness spaces by considering physical, social, and psychological features, this analysis probed how a space presents barriers or challenges to different gym users. Participants’ perceptions and experiences of the space allowed me to draw conclusions about the inaccessibility of open-area changerooms due to psychological factors such as modesty and insecurity and physical reasons like lack of privacy.

Lastly, Robert Orsi’s and Meredith McGuire’s contributions in the subfield of lived religion inspired me to probe into my qualitative data to learn how people live their faith in their day-to-day lives. Adopting a lived religion approach provided a richness to my research that may have been absent in a heavily structured or prescriptive study. For example, insight into how some Muslim women practice modesty through “humble thinking” in their day-to-day lives seems unlikely to have been captured through other approaches.

8.3 Discoveries

This study focused initially on two research questions: (1) how are individuals navigating their religious identities in athletic spaces, and (2) what is limiting full accessibility in these athletic spaces? In addressing the first question, I noticed that students were navigating their lived religious expressions in fitness spaces on university campuses in novel ways. Some women went to women’s-only fitness spaces, while some preferred co-ed spaces. Some avoided changerooms and washrooms and came to the gym pre-dressed to work out. Others sought out

fitness spaces outside the main gym in studios or fields on campus. Some pursued fitness spaces separate from the university campus in private gyms such as GoodLife. A couple participants involved their sports teams in their practice of religion. Even the styles of fitness routines ranged from weightlifting to team sports, to fitness classes, to individual activities, with many participants incorporating a mixture of these. A few participants did not "do" exercise as commonly understood yet considered how they lived their lives to be health focused. For example, some participants expressed that they did not do structured exercise but incorporated a lot of walking in their daily life.

In addressing my second research question, I found several barriers faced by some individuals were rooted in modesty values. Barriers to modesty values included: a lack of single-gender fitness spaces or classes in their gyms, privacy issues in existing women's-only spaces, and discomfort changing around others. Barriers not directly related to religious modesty included personal insecurities such as body shame, gender dysphoria, and trauma. Despite these barriers, I also learned of the resourceful and resilient ways participants worked towards and achieved their fitness goals.

Furthermore, I found that there are convergences between groups where their needs have different roots, but the same solution would increase accessibility, which surprised me. For example, we see some reasons non-religious people would seek out a single-gender space rooted in shame, such as embarrassment, feeling intimidated around the opposite gender, or body shame, whereas religious individuals may seek out a single-gender fitness space because of their modesty values. Both groups benefit from single-gender fitness spaces despite having different reasons for requiring them. This importantly shows how similarities and shared interests across diverse groups exist, despite it not being apparent at first glance.

I also learned about tangible changes that could facilitate greater access and user equality, as shared by participants. One recommendation was for individual changing rooms and washrooms, or stalls that are floor-length with no large gaps. Both men and women found the open area of changerooms challenging to navigate for various reasons and spoke of changing inside washroom stalls or avoiding the changeroom altogether because of the lack of a suitable private changing space. A couple gender-diverse individuals, like Ray in Chapter 6, indicated they would be more comfortable using floor-length changing stalls. Some mothers with young children indicated this preference as well because the "family" changeroom was often unavailable, requiring them to change with their children in narrow bathroom stalls to go swimming. Including private stand-alone, floor-length changing spaces could help many users who are making do with inadequate spaces and resources.

Another suggestion to make changerooms more accessible was to reduce the number of mirrors and limit the number of weight-scales, as voiced by Jessica in Chapter 5. Many women and a few men indicated that excessive mirrors in gyms and changerooms caused them to feel self-conscious. Two participants spoke of the gym they attend having no mirrors other than a small one in the washroom area and one scale that users had to seek out. They perceived these absences as methods their gym used to seem less intimidating and more body positive. Having designated mirrorless spaces is a small change that could help increase comfort for some individuals.

Furthermore, active inclusion in fitness spaces should be the default approach to make users of these spaces feel safe, secure, and comfortable. This inclusion may involve using representative images of women and men on posters in the gym showcasing body diversity. It can highlight that the gym is a "safe space" for LGBTQ+ individuals by displaying pride flags

and having a zero-tolerance policy for harassment. This zero-tolerance policy for harassment should extend to racial, gender-based, and religious harassment, highlighting the fitness centre's commitment to inclusion. Gender-neutral washrooms or changing spaces could provide an alternative option for those who feel uncomfortable in gender-segregated changing areas. Also, opportunities for women's-only fitness spaces (and men's-only) could remove a significant barrier to inclusivity in university and private sector gyms, as many participants reported feeling surveilled and self-conscious in co-ed spaces.

The self-consciousness described by participants also occurred for reasons other than exercising among the opposite gender. I found that throughout the interviews, it became apparent that many people felt uncomfortable within gyms due to their lack of experience or knowledge of equipment. One idea to combat this is having "beginner gym tutorials" for new users. This tutorial may include a tour of the gym, an explanation of the different machines and how to use them, and the available programming offered at the gym. This introduction to the gym would be helpful for people who are anxious to attend a new space because they do not know what to expect, and it would improve the confidence of new gym users.

One of my study's highlights was learning about the mental aspect of modesty values. Some Muslim participants explained that they consciously tried to maintain humble thoughts in their daily lives, like Sara, Azra, and Zahra in Chapter 4. This conscientiousness meant, for one participant, to challenge any thoughts of being better than others when winning in sports. For another, it reminded them of God's role in their successes when they felt a sense of pride. Learning that modesty values were all-encompassing for some individuals with "mental humbleness" was something I had not considered at the outset of my research.

My two research questions guided me through the study and framed my interpretation and analysis. The first research question proved fruitful in learning about experiences relating to intersecting identity categories. As this research evolved, I determined that athletic spaces' limitations included mental barriers—not solely the physical construction of the space itself. Pursuing these research questions led me to explore how shame acts as a mental barrier to full participation in fitness for some individuals, as shame was a dominant theme throughout the interviews. This project mapped religion in circumstances and contexts that we rarely study, providing a richer understanding of social life and religion's role in day-to-day fitness. As the field of religious studies is ever evolving, the way we seek out religion as scholars needs to change to capture how religion functions in everyday life.

8.4 Research Detours

While the study focused on modesty values, the research entered territory that I had not considered in the study's initial design. One notable detour it took was with hockey. As I was coding, I was taken aback at the thematic prevalence of hockey across interviews. Participants shared vibrant personal stories of family and friendships developing through playing hockey or the love of watching it. Hockey, in many ways, took on a bridging and bonding role for several individuals. There was a story to be told of a shared and perhaps idealized role that hockey played in Canadian belonging and identity.

This idealization stems to some degree from stereotypes. Study participants who immigrated to Canada talked about how they knew they were moving to a place where it was cold and snowy and where people played hockey. Ferez highlighted this romanticism about hockey in Chapter 7, saying his mom enrolled him and his brother in hockey so they could "be more Canadian." This idealization of hockey exists because it is a nationalistic narrative widely

present in Canada. Even those who did not play hockey themselves talked about Tim Horton's commercials, the Olympics, the National Hockey League (NHL), and Canadian patriotism entwined with hockey.

Hockey is a part of Canada's national narrative. As a sport, it is slowly becoming more accessible; for example, there is now a Punjabi language broadcast of the NHL. Increasing diversity among participants is evident on the ice and in the broadcasts of the sport across Canada—a nod to the country's increasingly diverse population. The detour we took to explore participants' experiences with hockey highlighted one way that identity, religion, and belonging can merge with sport.

8.5 Limitations

My study was limited in three ways: resources, time, and geographic access to members of certain religious groups. Constraints were due to the nature of collecting data for a doctoral dissertation and the limited funding available. This restricted where I was able to travel to recruit participants. Therefore, my study was focused geographically on Ottawa, a relatively diverse medium-sized city with two universities and a college. Another constraint was time. The resource and time constraints required me to narrow my objectives and scope to a realistic workload for a doctorate. Lastly, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a point where participant recruitment became difficult because I could not access student groups, and the campus essentially shut down for in-person access. Thus, I had to rely heavily on snowball sampling towards the end of my study. Snowball sampling led to a higher representation of specific groups such as Muslims, Christians, and non-religious individuals and less or no representation of Jews, Buddhists, Mormons, and those who practiced Indigenous spiritualities. Greater financial resources, more time, and the absence of a global pandemic would have

allowed me to extend my sample to include more voices. Despite these limitations, my research develops an understanding of how religion intersects with fitness and sport. My study's non-religious participants highlighted the diversity of non-religious views and showcased the overlap between modesty values derived from religion and modesty values informed by other sources.

8.6 Areas for Future Research

Throughout this dissertation, I highlighted some areas that could be critical topics for further research. I mentioned earlier that a more extensive study that captured other religions could bring more insight into the ways people live their religion through fitness. I reached saturation with the populations I did have access to; however, including other groups outside of those core areas of Islam, Christianity, and non-religious participants could provide valuable insight not captured in this research.

Another area that would be fascinating to explore further is the concept of Catholic guilt that arose in Chapter 4. Catholic and ex-Catholic participants frequently brought up the notion of a shared Catholic sense of guilt that at times manifested as shame. They often spoke of how Catholic guilt affected their body image and self-esteem. Conducting a qualitative study into how Catholics and ex-Catholics frame themselves concerning their religion, modesty, shame, and guilt would be worthwhile. The connection of purity culture with shame would also be interesting to explore further with both Catholics and Protestants.

I found another possible line of study in my analysis of Chapter 4, where I discussed how Muslim women spoke about maintaining humble thoughts as part of their practice of modesty. The literature I was reading did not capture the notion of "humble thinking." As other

participants in this study did not explicitly bring up modesty of thought, it seemed unique among the Muslim participants. Most of the Muslim women in my research were of Somali or Djiboutian origin, so it is hard to say if modest thinking is unique to the practice of Islam in a particular geographic area or more widespread. Regardless, modest thinking is a topic of study that would benefit from a more extensive qualitative analysis of Muslims from different countries and sects.

I would also recommend additional research on the limitations of support from religious groups for people who have experienced sexual assault. Some ex-Catholic participants articulated anger toward the Church for its handling of sexual assault perpetrated by clergy—both in the institutional abuse of children by priests and the treatment of assaulted individuals by the church community. Indeed, two Muslim participants and one orthodox Christian participant also expressed anger toward institutional abuse and approaches to mistreatment by their respective religious bodies. It would be invaluable to research the experiences of survivors of sexual assault who disclose their assault to their religious community across different religious groups. It was shocking how many people spoke about how gender-based violence and sexual assault inform their religious experiences and fitness practices. Perhaps further insight through research could improve services.

Another area for improvement raised by gender-diverse participants was the role gender played in how they approached fitness and sport. A few participants emphasized how recreational team sports are difficult to navigate and identified the need for both inclusive and private changerooms and washrooms in fitness facilities. This topic could benefit from further academic discussion and research, particularly how access to private or individual washrooms and changerooms could improve accessibility for gender-diverse people in fitness.

Future research into muscular forms of religion, and the impact and reinforcement of rigid gender roles and ideal body types for women and men, would also be valuable to the study of both religion and sports. The reinforcement of masculine attributes by these ideals has historically subjugated men viewed as feminine or weak, and oppressed women who fell outside of feminine ideals. The muscularization of religion and its intersections with body image and gender warrants further research.

Additionally, while Muscular Christianity and Muscular Judaism are well-documented topics in the literature, Muscular Hinduism and Muscular Islam are less researched. The field of sport and religion could benefit from detailed mapping of the muscularization process that religions undergo when under real or perceived threat and how the development of these muscularized ideals varies for different religions in different contexts.

Lastly, I was limited to studying consenting post-secondary students aged 17 and above. There is no question that children are traditionally on the periphery of Religious Studies research, as highlighted by Robert Orsi in his chapter, "Material children: Making God's Presence Real Through Catholic Boys and Girls."[353] I think it would be invaluable to study how children and teens frame their lived religious practices concerning sports. Childhood memories were fundamental to how many of my participants felt about sport, and it was clear that their experiences in childhood shaped how they felt about fitness and their bodies as adults. Data from children would enhance the study because we would gain perspectives from the ages my participants identified as holding influencing experiences.

[353] Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 73-109.

8.7 Concluding Remarks

As with other day-to-day activities, the practice of fitness and sport reveals the complex ways that people negotiate and navigate their religious identities. This “lived religion” aspect of sport allows us to see glimpses of sacredness in mundane activities such as going to the gym. It can look like breaking your Ramadan fast at sundown with your cricket team or kissing your kippa that fell on the floor during your basketball game. It can sometimes manifest in more complex ways, such as doing burlesque and keeping it a secret from your religious community.

These lived religious practices, and the motivations behind them, are meaningful and, at times, visceral. Some individuals negotiate their space in fitness by changing in a toilet stall for modesty. Others play the game they love while bystanders hurl racist slurs at them. A few may opt not to participate at all in fitness. These negotiations can be challenging, but we can see authentic compromises and resiliency among gym-goers of varied backgrounds ensuring they stay true to their deeply held beliefs and values.

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Appendix A- Interview Questions

1. Could you describe your level of involvement in recreational activities?

2. What type of spaces do you usually take part in recreational activities? (Gym, pool, field, track, dance studio, etc.)

3. Are your recreational activities solo or group activities? If group, who do you do those activities with?

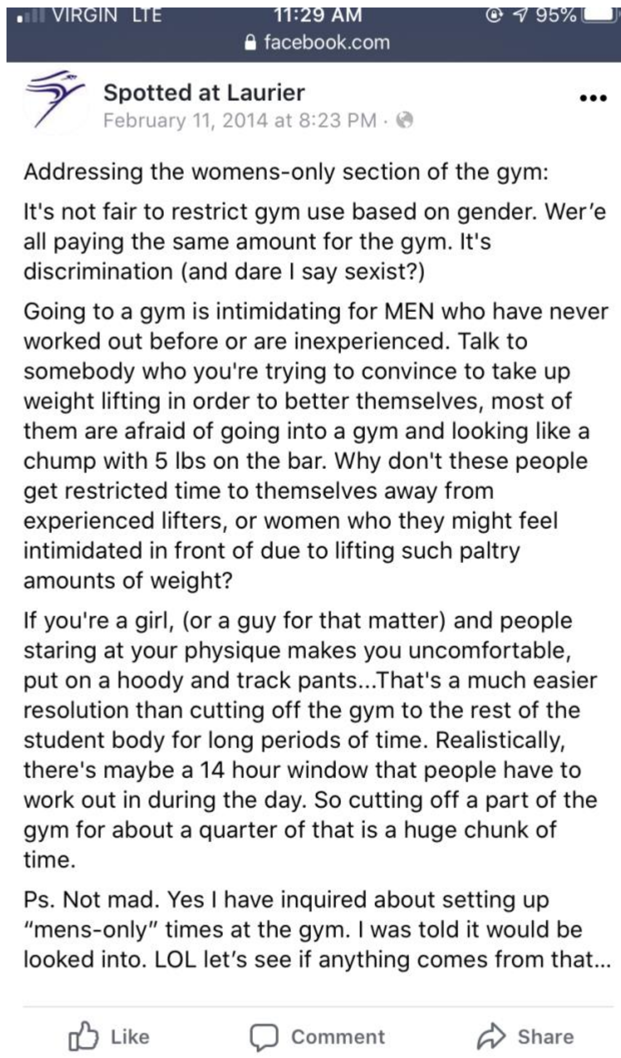
4. What role does religion play in your life?

5. Are there modesty values associated with your religious beliefs/practices? If so, could you describe those?

6. Do your religious beliefs and practices impact on your participation in recreational activities? How?

7. Do you see any connections between your religious practice and your recreational activities?

Appendix B – “Spotted at Laurier” Screenshots


VIRGIN LTE 11:29 AM 95%
facebook.com

Spotted at Laurier
February 11, 2014 at 8:23 PM ·

Addressing the womens-only section of the gym:

It's not fair to restrict gym use based on gender. Wer’e all paying the same amount for the gym. It's discrimination (and dare I say sexist?)

Going to a gym is intimidating for MEN who have never worked out before or are inexperienced. Talk to somebody who you're trying to convince to take up weight lifting in order to better themselves, most of them are afraid of going into a gym and looking like a chump with 5 lbs on the bar. Why don't these people get restricted time to themselves away from experienced lifters, or women who they might feel intimidated in front of due to lifting such paltry amounts of weight?

If you're a girl, (or a guy for that matter) and people staring at your physique makes you uncomfortable, put on a hoody and track pants...That's a much easier resolution than cutting off the gym to the rest of the student body for long periods of time. Realistically, there's maybe a 14 hour window that people have to work out in during the day. So cutting off a part of the gym for about a quarter of that is a huge chunk of time.

Ps. Not mad. Yes I have inquired about setting up “mens-only” times at the gym. I was told it would be looked into. LOL let’s see if anything comes from that...

Like Comment Share

Rayna Veleva
Ok, no. Zumba is nothing like the gym, I don't know why you are comparing the two it is not an alternative. . It is not an alternative for any of the gym equipment, and you didn't even bother to consider people who don't like directed classes and prefer to work out on their own schedule.

Yes, the gym is busy but it also got larger so it can accommodate more people and they can actually try this, before there would have been no room and it would be impractical.

Also consider this: there are women that can't work out in the gym for religious reasons and have never had the chance to until now. They also pay gym fees and should have the option of using the space.

3

Mark Onany
I'm sorry can you please quote the religious issue we have at hand here? I keep hearing about it but no one has said what it is. All your arguments are based off nothing, it's literally just garbage being spewed out at this point.

1

6 yrs Like More

Rizwan Alimohamed
For a women, in Islam they wear the head scarf to not be looked at ̀in "that way" and lets be honest its not ideal for anyone to be wearing head scarves as well as being fully covered when theyre sweating. They arent allowed to be seen without it infront of men unless they're their husband or family. By having a womens only time, it allows them to work out without being fully covered and not boil under their clothes when they work out. Don't know why so many guys are making a big deal out of this, its only 4 hours

13

6 yrs Like More

Zeuz Umirino
fucking feminists sluts and wks. Nothing worse then these type of people

8

6 yrs Like More

Laura Jany
You're hating and blaming men for things they didn't do. You want to ban them from going placesl. Pretty sure Hitler did the same thing with the Jews....

6 yrs Like More

Laura Jany
Its just common sense though, don't wear something that's going to draw attention to yourself if you don't want the attention. You can exercise perfectly comfortably in a regular t-shirt and shorts that cover your ass...

1

6 yrs Like More