



Team sport in Wales: Access and engagement for Muslim women. A specific focus on Netball in the region.

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MA DIP Islam in Contemporary Britain

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Wordcount: 17,500

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Acknowledgements 1.0

I would firstly like to thank my parents and God parents for their continued support throughout my studies, from school, to my undergraduate degree and into my postgraduate degree. They have encouraged me, believed in me, and built so much confidence in my ability. Without them, I would not have achieved the academic success I have to this point.

I also thank my friends in university for helping me throughout this journey, sharing in the stressful times, and the successful times. Their comradeship has been central to my past four years spent at Cardiff University. Particular thanks to Cardiff History Netball team, for all of their support, love and help over the past four years, and in providing the pretext for my research in this dissertation. I couldn't have done this without them.

A special thanks to the staff at SHARE who have encouraged me and believed in me over the last four years. Especially to Dr Mansur Ali, who encouraged me to apply for the Jameel scholarship and inspired my passion in this field, without his help I would not have had the confidence to apply for this scholarship. He truly believed in me, and I am so grateful for all of his support. My lecturers on this masters have provided me with expert training to carry out this dissertation, and I am truly grateful for all of their advice and help.

My supervisor Dr Riyaz Timol has been an incredible support over the last year and I am so appreciative of everything he has done for me.

Finally I would like to extend my gratitude and thanks to Mr Jameel and his family, whose generous funding not only maintain the Centre for the Study of Islam, but has provided me the most incredible opportunity over the past year on this scholarship scheme. I am eternally grateful.

Abstract / Summary 2.0

In this dissertation I have explored the relationship between Muslim women and sport, with a specific case focus on Netball. I consider the challenges that present themselves to these women, in the way in which they access or fail to access sport. I analyse netball as a case study, as to how and why it has successfully engaged with Muslim women, with a critical examination of policy and practice. I engage with some of the structural barriers and attitudes that hinder participation for Muslim women and girls, with a particular emphasis on the multifaceted dimension of the Muslim female identity. Considering the way in which culture, class, ethnicity and gender contribute to how Muslim women can or cannot access sport. My research is qualitative and was carried out in Cardiff, and therefore presents a specific "Welsh" case study.

Scholarship in this field is limited however is developing in considering the gendered experience of sport, and beginning to consider the religious element to this. My findings suggest that "Islam" is not the dominating barrier in which prevents Muslim women and girls

from accessing sport, but rather socio economic and class frameworks influence how attitudes towards sport have emerged, and the way in which accessibility can be limited. Gender is also particularly important in this instance, and so I have carried out this project with a social constructionist theory with particular reference to intersectional feminism. Whilst I do acknowledge that “cultural” attitudes are a relevant influence on participation, I explore how education, and improving facilitated access can override and deconstruct such “cultural” concerns.

Introduction 3.0

This dissertation aims to analyse the relationship between Muslim women and girls in Wales, and their access to sport. For the size and scale of this particular project I will be focussing on netball specifically throughout. There are a multitude of reasons for which I have based my analysis on this particular religious and gendered group, and this sport. Considerations of gender, class, race, culture and ethnicity are all prevalent when considering access to sport and personal experience with physical activity, team sport, and physical education. I am particularly passionate about this field in British Muslim studies, as I strongly believe that whilst many positive reforms and campaigns have encouraged the breakdown of gendered and cultured stereotypes, focused particularly on Muslim women, the lived experiences and reality of participation needs to be examined more closely from an academic perspective.¹ In doing so conclusions can be drawn regarding the intersectionality of participation, the extent to which social identities and structural barriers can effect access and participation, the success of what has been done, and what can be done to encourage further breakthroughs in this area.

I have chosen to conduct my research in Wales, and therefore my data will illustrate the specific Welsh narrative in this field. I have chosen to focus on Wales for both personal and practical reasons. Firstly, having played netball for the past fourteen years in Wales, both at school and university, I believe I have the advantage of understanding the environment and nature of the sport in the region, having first-hand experience. In terms of reflexivity, I believe that this will bolster my research, particularly when gaining access to participants and carrying out confident and cohesive field work. Secondly I believe focusing on Wales can reflect the diversity of the “Muslim community”, with larger towns and cities such as Cardiff, Swansea and Newport illustrating diverse intersectionality of this demographic within a relatively small radius.² For the scope of an MA project therefore, Wales is an ideal sample of a small diverse nation, in which can be navigated easily to present a fair project.

Wales has benefitted from government backed funding of a “BME SPORT CYMRU” initiative, the project itself ran for two years from 2016-2018, and continues to be supported by the Welsh

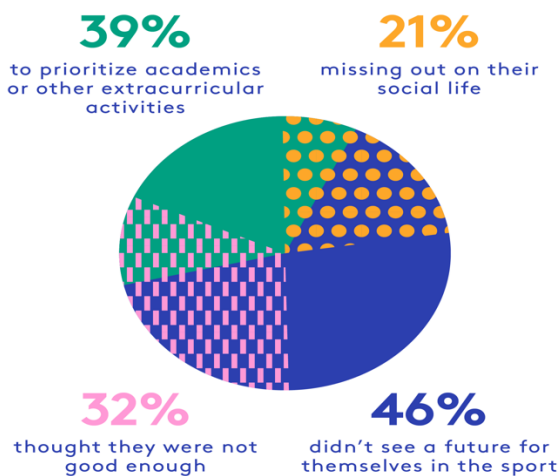
¹ Pfister, Gertrud "Islam and Women's Sports", In APCEIU. Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding. (Summer, 2006)

² Mohamed, N. (2019). *The town that pioneered multiculturalism | Nadifa Mohamed*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/07/multiculturalism-ethnic-diversity-butetown-cardiff> [Accessed 26 Aug. 2019].

Council for Voluntary Action, and other public sector organisations and third sector sponsors.³ This initiative aimed to transform the availability and access of sports clubs, and leisure facilities that catered to the needs and demands of a specific BME community, in a way that hadn't been done before. The project appoints sports development officers to carry out initiatives and training across the main regions of Wales, and produced a cohesive report into their findings, with conclusions and recommendations. This project and the report, exemplifies the growing demand in this field, particularly in Wales, to consider and respond to these developments. My work will aim to contribute to this emerging narrative that is supporting access to sport in Wales for marginalised communities.

I have chosen to specifically focus on the Muslim female experience, as this particular group are effected by attitudes to multiple emerging identities in which they are often categorised by, that can have a direct impact on their involvement and access to sport.⁴ Gender is a fundamental factor in this discourse, as problematizing engagement is not exclusive to Muslim women alone, but for all women. This is a gendered issue, and there has been a body of literature and social campaigns dominated by this wider consideration. Gatorade conducted a study regarding the involvement of women and girls in sport and concluded that girls drop out of active sports at a rate of 1.5 times faster than their male counterparts, and in addition to this, by the age of 17, half of girls will have quit all together.⁵

GIRLS' REASONS FOR DROPPING OUT



These statistics are certainly concerning, bolstered by evidence collated by the EY Research centre, who cited that 96% of C Suite female executives, those in positions of serious authority, and senior executive roles, had participated in sport.⁶ This emphasises the importance of active participation in the long term. These concerns are further exacerbated for Muslim females, as they face potential difficulty in accessing such opportunities through economic

³ Wcva.org.uk. (2019). [online] Available at: https://www.wcva.org.uk/media/5798816/bme_sport_cymru_year_1_report_sep_17.pdf [Accessed 26 Aug. 2019].

⁴ Sfeir, Leila "The Status of Muslim Women in Sport: Conflict between Cultural Tradition and Modernization". In *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. 20 (4): pp283–284.

⁵ Refinery29.com. (2019). *How Playing Sports Can Set Girls Up For Success In The Real World*. [online] Available at: <https://www.refinery29.com/en-gb/girls-quitting-sports-reasons> [Accessed 5 Jun. 2019].

⁶ Ey.com. (2019). *Women Athletes Business Network - perspectives on sport and teams*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ey.com/br/pt/about-us/our-sponsorships-and-programs/women-athletes-global-leadership-network--perspectives-on-sport-and-teams> [Accessed 5 Jun. 2019].

deprivation, with an increased likelihood of being from a less economically affluent family, according to statistical evidence. Finally there are also the additional concerns that are associated with religion, race and culture, and the compatibility of certain traditions and values with physical activity, and how these are accommodated for.

I have chosen to focus specifically on netball for a multitude of reasons. Firstly, netball is the most popular team sport for women across the United Kingdom, with approximately 1.4 million women and girls participating at some point through a typical season.⁷ Additionally it is the only women's sport that is covered weekly on the television, with its own channel on Sky Sports. It is a central sport in the UK PE curriculum, meaning most women and girls will have had exposure to the sport, marking it as particularly accessible.⁸ The fact that this game can be accessed easily, in terms of equipment and resources, and is predominantly female dominated, in demographic of players and coaches, marks it as especially appealing for women and girls, as a social sport. Netball has also taken proactive measures to improve and encourage the accessibility of the sport, with the introduction of walking netball to increase active participation for elderly women, women with mobility limiting disabilities, and "newbies" to the game. Additionally the 2018 Welsh netball equality and diversity policy ensured to reiterate "protected characteristics" for players and participants in netball in Wales, including religious belief and visible reflections of such beliefs, should not restrict or prevent an individual from participating.⁹ There is a body of literature and number of organisations in this sport, which will be very useful throughout the research process of my dissertation.

In terms of my aims and objectives in this project, I aim to identify the accessibility of team sport in Wales for Muslim girls, and draw conclusions around participation, where it stands and how it can be improved. My focus in this discourse will consider how religious identity may influence their engagement with team sport, whether that be through religious values, or cultural values, as well as systematic failures to accommodate provisions for such beliefs.

In order to successfully fulfil my ultimate research aim, I will focus on some specific objective questions which will guide my research and form the main body of my work. It is essential that I address, and consider the blurred lines between religion and culture, as this will heavily influence the experiences of my participants, and my data. Considering how these two social categories have shaped ideas, and the way values are understood in regard to the access of sport for girls.

I will consider the structural barriers and extent to which provisions have been made to improve accessibility. It will be important that whilst recognising the impact of cultural barriers, I delve deeper into the influence of structural Islamophobia within institutions. I will identify the positive impact that increased participation can have, not just individually but for communities and society as a whole.

For a realistic approach to successfully approach the aims and objectives I have listed, for an MA dissertation, I will be taking a qualitative approach with semi structured interviews. I will be interviewing the project leader for the BME Sport Cymru project. Whose knowledge and experience in this sector is central to the research I am carrying out. Reena is an active

⁷ Pidd, H. (2019). *England's netball success shines light on thriving UK club scene*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2018/apr/20/england-netball-commonwealth-games-uk-club-scene> [Accessed 26 Aug. 2019].

⁸ Pidd, H. (2019). *England's netball success shines light on thriving UK club scene*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2018/apr/20/england-netball-commonwealth-games-uk-club-scene> [Accessed 5 Jun. 2019].

⁹ Welshnetball.com. (2019). [online] Available at: <http://www.welshnetball.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Equality-Policy-v2-2017-Final.pdf> [Accessed 26 Aug. 2019].

manager in training and equipping facilities, schools and sports clubs with the knowledge and resources to improve access to sport for BME communities. She has lead campaigns for female only leisure facilities and team sport in Wales, and works directly with the Welsh government in navigating policy across to accommodate the recommendations.

My second participants will be participating in a joint interview, they are both captains of the only competitive Hijabi netball team at Cardiff University competing in the Inter Mural Games, "BRUSCASOC" a sect of the Bruneian society. This will give an insight into how the considerations of access and accessibility are organised and structured in a renowned institution – Cardiff University. This will hopefully provide some evidence of the progress or problems facing such institutions with their efforts to make team sport more accessible and accommodating, and in addition will provide some primary evidence from these girls about their own journey and the issues that they feel have effected them.

I will also interview Holly who runs and coaches a netball team in Wales. She will act as a gatekeeper to provide data from members of the team who have benefitted from the organisation of the netball club. The club is based in Cardiff, with a specific aim to recruit local refugees to the netball club, reaching out to Muslim refugees from mainly Syrian and African heritage, in the area. The aim of this group is to encourage a sense of "community" and build friendships and relationships amongst local women, in a safe environment where you can get fit and have fun. This programme is funded partially by the WCVA and is a programme supported by the BME Sport Cymru initiative.

Literature Review 4.0

In terms of literature in this field, the dominating body of work that has specifically centred around "Muslim" women has been carried out by Haifa Jawad, Tasnin Benn and Gertrud Pfister. The arguments and recommendations presented in their work will be central to my own research. Their book, "Muslim women in sport" was the first scholarly publication of its kind, that adapted a multi-disciplinary approach, and called upon Muslim and non-Muslim scholars to address the issue of participation of Muslim women, internationally, in sport. This core text will help formulate some of my central debates, as it has been especially influential in addressing how and why sporting facilities and environments have been problematic public spheres, for women and girls from Muslim backgrounds. Particular attention has been concerned with the "overwhelming narrative" facing these women, overtly concerned with perceptions of radicalisation, otherness and "oppression".¹⁰ The consideration of the "accept and respect declaration", as a framework to adopt for all sporting bodies and institutions is thoroughly examined in this work, to contribute to a progressive universal policy that can undermine some of the narratives and stereotypes facing Muslim women and girls, that often create barriers for their participation and access to sport, and opportunities within the sport sector.¹¹

The main principles of this declaration aim for Islam to be viewed as an enabling religion, to ensure the right to sport for all females, to respect diversity in the practice of religion and sport, to ensure all sports institutions show a commitment to accommodating dress codes, and opportunity for both participation and leadership. I aim to apply these values to my research which will focus on Wales, as a means of measuring how accessible sport is, and what provisions for these standards are made and how they are shaping the experience for Muslim girls in Wales. The concepts introduced by these scholars will be especially important

¹⁰ Tansin Benn, Gertrud Pfister and Haifaa Jawad, *Muslim Women and Sport*, (Routledge studies in physical education and youth sport). 2010, eds p14

¹¹ *Ibid*, p15

considering the “Welsh framework”, with their recommendations mirrored by the policy commitments of the BME Cymru project initiatives. It will therefore be particularly interesting to observe how their research applies to the specific “Welsh” context, which has not been written about in an academic way before. The work of Benn, Jawad and Pfister considers notions of intersectionality, and notes that it is important not to homogenise the experience of Muslim women, but that it is an essential and defining aspect of individual identity, and therefore must be recognised. This will be particularly important in my project, as I will be discussing these issues with Muslim women in Wales from a range of different ethnicities and backgrounds.

In a second publication these scholars produced a report centred around research conducted in England focusing on the experience of Muslim school girls in physical education classes. They worked closely with schools that had implemented policies celebrating cultural differences, and had henceforth built close relationships with the parents and guardians of pupils in order to understand, acknowledge and adopt practice that “preserved cultural and religious identities”.¹² They concluded that these relationships helped improve and strengthen the parental view of sport and physical education in school, recognising its importance and value. This consideration is especially important, recognising the importance of the wider family in the discourse of sport, and respecting cultural and religious values.¹³ Whilst I am not focusing specifically on engagement in school, I will consider how relationships with families and working collaboratively with them can benefit engagement and participation. When considering the factors that have led to attitudes and experiences of engagement I am aware that discussions around state education PE lessons will be brought up. Secondly, the approach in which I am taking with specific analysis of Wales, can provide further data to the work that these scholars have already built in areas around the UK, with their specific focus on England. It will be important to examine where the specific Welsh narrative fits within the wider body of scholarship, and will give an opportunity to broaden the body of literature to include examples from other areas in the UK, not just England.

Central to the scholarship in this field are the considerations of “homogenising” the community, when it comes to addressing the engagement and experiences of Muslim women in sport. Supporting the work of the scholars I have already mentioned, Samaya Farooq Samie conducted a study of a group of British South Asian women in a basketball team. Central to Samie’s thesis was the notion that much of the popular discourse and even policy frameworks associated with this demographic of women, were shaped by their relationship with the “veil”, and going beyond this notion has been mentioned infrequently in sporting literature.¹⁴ She reiterates that the monolithic orientalist narrative “sensationalises” the veil, and in doing so undermines other issues and contributing factors effecting participation or experience in physical activity.

Often conclusions are made about and around Muslim women by comparing them directly to the experience of “Western” women, and illustrates them as “firmly juxtaposed” against them.¹⁵ Such ethnocentric stereotypes encourage the continued misrepresentation of Muslim

¹² Tansin Benn, Symeon Dagkas & Haifaa Jawad (2011) Embodied faith: Islam, religious freedom and educational practices in physical education, *Sport, Education and Society*, 16:1, pp17-22

¹³ Ibid, p27

¹⁴ Samaya Farooq Samie, ‘Hetero-sexy self/body work and basketball: the invisible sporting women of British Pakistani Muslim Heritage’ (University of Tennessee, USA) in (Volume 11, 2013 - Issue 3) *Sport and South Asian Diasporas*, p257

¹⁵ Dwyer, Claire and Shah, Bindi (2009) Rethinking the identities of young British Muslim Women. In, Hopkins, Peter and Gale, Richard (eds.) *Muslims in Britain: Race, Place and Identities*. Edinburgh, GB. Edinburgh University Press.

women.¹⁶ Subject to being racialised, sexualised, ethicised and religionised.¹⁷ So frequently represented as the “other”, this has resulted in a lack of literature examining the gendered element of participation, with much of the gender centred research, neglecting to include women from this demographic. Samie’s research has undermined this, and her work confirms that much of the concerns facing western white women in sport, also influence the participation of South Asian and Muslim women. Narratives of the pressures of being “attractive, exhibiting heterosexual appeal and being thin” contradict the stereotypes presented around Muslim women, that they are “aphysical and submissive”, however her research confirms that these pressures are evident in the experiences of Muslim women too.¹⁸ One of her participants, Neelum, stated in her interview, “we’re not typical Paki women, not baby making machines or housewives”, and she continued to mention her desire to look slimmer, and how this strongly influenced her desire to participate in sport. It is therefore evident that such diversity within this religious identity, shape a multitude of different approaches and experiences of sport. With Samie’s research as an example, I hope that by adopting an approach which includes the experiences of Muslim women from different ethnic, economic, and cultural backgrounds will represent a more accurate illustration as to how these women navigate their various conflicting identities in their participation in netball, and how these contribute to the experiences that they have, as women. In doing so my work will embolden some of the existing literature which hopes to diminish the exclusion of the diverse experience of diasporic south Asians in sport, which as argued by Daniel Bursey is often based subjectively on race, religion and culture.¹⁹

It cannot be denied that policy seeking to respond to the growing concerns and debates around Muslim women’s engagement in sports and physical activity has increasingly emerged in the past fifteen years, however this literature must be critically analysed. As Peter Mandaville states, “Islam often offers the easy way out, both for analysts seeking a quick explanation and for the policy makers who want to side step the structural causes of gender equality, by referring to ‘cultural’ causes which are conveniently out of their hands.”²⁰ Such concerns have been raised within the community, and reports have been commissioned with the intention of informing and advising governing bodies to adopt policy that can reflect the reality of experience. Muslims in the UK: Policy for engaged citizenship provided recommendations for both the department for culture media and sport, and also the department for education and skills. Building upon the argument presented by Mandaville, the fact that independent bodies representing the community are continually approaching the government to build on their existing policy, emphasises the apparent continued failure to provide coherent solutions to the structural causes of equality that lead to poor health, or low participation rates in sport amongst this community. Some of the central recommendations that the report presented in 2005 focused on the Department for Media Culture and Sport, arguing that they should take the lead in improving the services and experience for Muslims in Britain participating and accessing sport. The key points in which they argue could ensure improvements are made include the provision of halal friendly sportswear, ensuring that practice is facilitated and accommodated during Ramadan, and that physical education in state schools collaborates with Muslim students and families. The Muslim Council of Britain in 2007 further highlighted some of these

¹⁶ Raval, Sadhna. “Gender, Leisure and Sport: A Case Study of Young People of South Asian Descent. A Response.” In *Leisure Studies* 8.1 (1989): 237–40.

¹⁷ Brah, Avtar, and Ann Phoenix. “Ain’t I a Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality.” In *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 5.3 (2004) p84

¹⁸ Adams, N., A. Schmitke, and A. Franklin. “Tomboys, Dykes and Girly Girls: Interrogating the Subjectivities of Adolescent Female Athletes.” in *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 33.1/2 (2005) p17

¹⁹ Daniel Burdsey, Stanley Thangaraj and Rajinder Dudrah, ‘Playing through time and space : Sport and South Asian Diaspora’, in *Sport and South Asian Diaspora: Playing through time and space* (eds Stanley Thangaraj, Daniel Burdsey and Rajinder Dudrah) 2014 p212

²⁰ Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics*, (London Routledge 2003) p58

recommendations, emphasising the continued failure of existing policy to fully enforce accommodating practice.²¹

The Muslim Women's Network was established in 2002, with an aim to consult from within the community and address their concerns and the reality of issues effecting them.²² The central and overriding concerns that this network raised centred around the poorer health of women in this demographic, and identified improvement in access to sport and leisure facilities as fundamental in challenging this structural disadvantage. Seventeen years on from the establishment of the committee and there is still a rigour of evidence illustrating structural disadvantages for Muslim women and girls. This exemplifies the argument presented by Mandeville, that "cultural barriers" are easily left out of policy and so progress is limited. I will consider this in my research, critically engaging with how and why such policy has failed, and look to some of the successful examples of accommodation and provision that should be adopted across the board. England and Wales netball is a central example of good practice in policy, with their official dress code stating: "if scarves need to be worn out of religious practice, the player and coach must ensure the head covering is soft and without embellishment for safety". It is evident that when such policy exists, participation can be improved.

The project report summary of BME Sport Cymru, exemplifies the failure in existing policy and how and why accommodating legislation is needed. This report illustrates the success of the 2-year Sport Wales funded strategic partnership project between WCVA and a network of delivery and supporting partners. The project developed and delivered fifty new sessions across Newport, Swansea, Cardiff and North Wales, reaching approximately 2800 individuals across the nation. Despite the success of the program, the report did identify some areas which need to be addressed in order to encourage further progress.²³ Much of the concerns raised in the report centered around education and the need for collaboration with existing institutions, such as state schools.

Concerns around the role of education in this discourse have been raised in academic literature since these debates began.²⁴ Writing in 1993 Bob Carroll and Graeme Hollinshead identified in a study they conducted, that the root of much mis understanding was caused by poor education and understanding of the experiences and needs of marginalized and ethnic minority communities, by teachers in state schools.²⁵ They concluded that "teachers would now admit to not knowing enough about Muslim beliefs and values, the children's' perceptions of the teachers' practices, and the need to do so. This is a matter of further education for the teachers."²⁶ Interestingly as this was written 26 years ago, recent literature and policy would look to suggest that education remains a prevalent issue in combating participation and engagement of sport for BME communities, and in particular Muslim, and Muslim females. I will build upon this rigor of evidence by engaging analytically with the lived reality and experience of the very women who are effected by such policies. In doing so I hope to go beyond the statistical data presented in such reports and gauge an understanding of how and

²¹ Mahfour Amara and Ian Henry, *Sport, Muslim Identities and Cultures in the UK: Case studies of Leicester and Birmingham.*, (Loughborough) p30

²² Ibid., p32

²³ Wcva.org.uk. (2019). [online] Available at: https://www.wcva.org.uk/media/5798816/bme_sport_cymru_year_1_report_sep_17.pdf [Accessed 26 Aug. 2019].

²⁴ Dagkas, Symeon; Benn, Tansin; Jawad, Haifaa (2011-03-01). "Multiple voices: improving participation of Muslim girls in physical education and school sport". *Sport, Education and Society*. 16 (2): 223–239

²⁵ Bob Carroll and Graeme Hollinshead, 'Ethnicity and Conflict in Physical Education' in, *British Educational Research Journal* Vol. 19, No. 1 (1993), p59

²⁶ Bob Carroll and Graeme Hollinshead, 'Ethnicity and Conflict in Physical Education' in, *British Educational Research Journal* Vol. 19, No. 1 (1993), p60

why gendered, ethnic, socio economic and religious identities can differ experience, how they can be accommodated for and why they have emerged.

Methodology and Methods 5.0

The entirety of this project has been both philosophically and analytically influenced by the theory of social constructionism, and it is with this approach that I have conducted this research.²⁷ The application of this social theory has been beneficial in deconstructing narratives of gender, culture and religion, all of which are central to this thesis, in order to fully understand their impact on my hypothesis.²⁸ Considering identity as created and shaped by interactions with others, and how individuals perceive themselves within society is pivotal to the analysis I am carrying out, of Muslim women and girls and their participation in netball.

The feminist approach of social constructionist theory, that gender itself is a construct, is fundamental to the way in which I will navigate my research. A core focus on the fact that gender and therefore any constructions and interpretations around gender, are created and imagined enables the researcher to understand how and why certain practices and beliefs about women have arisen, or structural disadvantages have established. With this approach it is clear that problems associated with access and participation for women is not due to being of a natural disadvantage, but as a direct consequence of socially constructed gender identities. Within the broader construction of gender, comes the micro identities and intersectional identities, which shape the discourse of my research greatly. Intersectionality can be incorporated in social constructionist theory as is considered by feminist social theorists Fenstermaker and West: class, race, sexuality, culture, and religion, are all examples of constructed identities within gender that can shape an individual experience, and how an individual is perceived by society.²⁹ These intersectional constructed identities will be particularly influential when analysing the data I have gathered and critically evaluating the experience of Muslim women and girls in their participation of netball. Additionally it enforces the extent to which I am able to share certain aspects of identity with these women, and how this may shape my work. Although critics of this theory argue that applying such an intrinsic approach can emphasis internal divisions over wider overarching structures and themes, I believe that acknowledging these social constructions and their influence in this discourse will only benefit the field by illustrating a full and representational reflection of experience.³⁰

The research methods I have applied for this dissertation have been entirely qualitative, the means in which I have carried out this approach have been through semi structured interviews, group interview, and finally through a gate keeper who elicited the data for me through a trusted

²⁷ Leeds-Hurwitz, Wendy (2009). "Social construction of reality". In Littlejohn, Stephen W.; Foss, Karen A. (eds.). *Encyclopedia of communication theory*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications. p. 891

²⁸ Lindsey, Linda L. (2015). "The sociology of gender" in *Gender roles: a sociological perspective*. Boston: Pearson. P4

²⁹ Fenstermaker, Sarah; West, Candace ., Incorporating intersectionality into social constructionist theory - (2002). "Reply - (re)doing difference". In Fenstermaker, Sarah; West, Candace (eds.). *Doing gender, doing difference: inequality, power, and institutional change*. New York: Routledge. pp. 95–104.

³⁰ Davis, Kathy (April 2008). "Intersectionality as buzzword: A sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful". *Feminist Theory*. 9 (1): p85

relationship with my participants. I personally interviewed four individuals, and through a participant who acted as a gatekeeper I accessed a further X number of women and girls. I have specifically chosen to adopt these methods for this project as I believe they were not only the most practically beneficial and accessible methods, but that the nature of these methods would also bolster the value of the data I have collected. Each structured part of the interviews lasted approximately half an hour, however with all of my participants I spent a further half an hour to an hour or so in their company in a more informal discussion, in which I transcribed some field notes in my journal. I will thoroughly examine each individual interview later in this section.

Data Analysis 5.1

In terms of accessing my participants in an ethical and professional manner I was certain to adhere to all of the commitments illustrated by Cardiff Universities ethical research committee. I produced consent forms for my participants to ensure they were fully comfortable and aware of their role in my project, and that they consented to the recording of the information they shared with me, seen in appendix. I was certain to reiterate that if for any reason during or after the interviews they wanted to withdraw their consent, they were able to do this at any time, with no consequences what so ever.³¹ They were also able to retrospectively withdraw their consent at any point during the write up of the data I gathered from the interviews. I mostly recorded my interviews on my phone, and using OTTER application technology to assist with the transcription of my interviews. Using a small phone was useful as it did not disturb the interview as noticeably recording the conversations, when the interviews began not being able to see the recording device relaxed the atmosphere and helped create a more informal environment for discussions. I was also certain to use a fieldwork journal to document any essential quotes, reactions or other points that the recordings may not pick up. My fieldwork journal was important to maintain a log of the informal conversations I had, and note the key points we discussed and themes that I extracted from these conversations. I adopted a manual practice to identify the key themes in my transcripts, and produced tables to mark the preliminary codes and final codes from the raw data, see appendix.

Introduction to BRUSCA Netball 5.2

I conducted a dual interview with two members of Cardiff Universities only exclusively Hijabi netball team, that plays competitively. The decision to conduct the interview in this way was beneficial as both of my participants felt more comfortable and confident in the presence of their team mate, to reflect upon their experiences and talk about their role in the team. Whilst the possibility of conducting an interview in this way may present the possibility of influenced data from the other participant, in this particular case I believe that the format of the interview encouraged by participants to draw on their experiences in a more thorough and supported way. Both participants encouraged each other, and often their conversation lead to further explanations of topics I had to cover with them. I doubt that the data I collected would have

³¹ Hannah Farrimond in the Guardian. (2019). *How do you make sure your research is ethical?*. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/may/20/why-research-ethics-matter> [Accessed 26 Aug. 2019].

been as thorough and as analytically strong had my participants not been interviewed together. One example of such conversation arose when my participants compared and contrasted their cultural upbringings in determining their views and experience of participating in mixed sports, recognising that their schooling had influenced their experience in playing school sports. I was also confident that my participants in this interview felt content and trusting in my presence. I was certain to choose a venue to conduct the interview that they felt relaxed in, and so we decided to meet on a campus coffee shop. I bought both participants a hot chocolate and they were very grateful of this small gesture, to acknowledge my appreciation of their time.

The first point of contact that I had with my participants from the BRUSCA Netball Society, was not in my position as a post graduate researcher at the Islam UK Centre, but as a fellow netball player, on the court. Considering debates around reflexivity in qualitative research, particularly those argued by Hammersley and Atkinson was important as I had some familiarity with my proposed field.³² When situating the influence of the researcher and the researchers characteristics in contributing to the data retrieved and interpreted, the fact that I had built a relationship with my participants in a manner that complicates the insider outsider binary was especially important. Within the context of netball, I was perceived in the same degree as my participants, emphasising the extent of identity as multi-faceted particularly in sport. Whilst my visual identification as a white Welsh player physically differentiated my experience from my participants, our mutual appreciation and role within this sport created a shared sense of identity. This reiterates the underpinning of this dissertation, adopting a theoretical approach considering notions of intersectionality and how this contributes to the experience of multifaceted identity, in how sport is accessed and experienced. I believe that this only bolstered my collection of qualitative data in this instance, and influenced by experience in the field. Some concerns may be posed regarding the degree in which reflexivity could shape or influence the communication I had with my participants and effect the content of the data which I gathered. In order to best combat this I took several steps to ensure thorough ethical research was conducted, ensuring that I would minimalise my own input to the interview.

Accessing BRUSCA Netball 5.3

Once I had made contact with my participants as a fellow player, I ensured that the next stage in the interview process would be carried out in a professional and ethical manner in my role as a researcher. In doing so this highlighted the difference in my role as a researcher to the one on the netball court, whilst I was able to utilise our shared interests to make contact and build a trusting relationship, it was essential that my capacity as a researcher was explained, to ensure my participants knew I would represent their experiences fairly and academically. In order to do this I went through the official secretary of the general Bruneian Society to inform them about the research I would be conducting, and to ensure that the group was happy to be represented in their capacity as a netball team by both captains. Once permission had been granted by the wider society and both captains agreed to participate completing consent forms, I was certain to send them both some of the key points I hoped we would cover in our interview, to ensure they were comfortable covering these issue, and give them any time to consider what they wanted to discuss, or ask any questions before hand.

³² Hammersley M and Atkinson P (1995) "Ethnography Principles in Practice" (2nd ed) London, Routledge, p63

Using a semi structured interview plan in this instance was extremely beneficial, as both of my participants informed me they had time to gather any thoughts they had beforehand, but the natural structure and flow of the interview made them both feel comfortable and unpressurised. In the process of the interview the conversation went further than my initial structured plan, which I was particularly pleased about. I believe that this was one of the benefits reaped from interviewing two participants together, who already had a strong and trusting friendship. Some of the work of Brinkmann and Kvale has reiterated the benefit of adopting a semi structured approach, with reference to the researchers ability to “steer” the conversation to widen the data collected.³³ I was certainly able to adopt this practice, due to the positive degree of my reflexivity, and the nature of the interview itself.

I was certain to ensure anonymity of my all of my participants, to protect the information that they shared and the individuality of their experiences. Whilst I removed their names, I made the conscious decision to give my participants culturally appropriate pseudo names, in this case Fatima and Malika, rather than the impersonal ‘Respondent 1’ and ‘Respondent 2’. I believe that doing so reiterates the reality of the lived experience which I hope to analyse and represent fairly and accurately. By giving my participants names it reaffirms their humanity and contributes to the general essence of the style of my dissertation.³⁴

Using the BRUSCA Netball Society in my research was particularly important and useful in my research centred around netball in Wales, and Muslim Women. This netball team is the only exclusively Hijabi netball team that plays competitively in the Cardiff University Intra Mural Games League. Whilst the team is a sub branch of the Bruneian Society, the players in the netball team are both Bruneian and Malaysian, and are all Muslim. The majority of the players in the team are international students who have lived in Wales between one and five years. Interviewing the captains from this team enabled an insight into how university sports leagues in Wales navigate their relationships with Women of Muslim faith, and how their faith is accommodated for or acknowledged in practice. I recognise that interviewing only two members of the team gave a very specific insight, it was a practical approach for the scope of this dissertation. My participants had both played for the team for three years, and both acted as captains. For this reason I felt they were able to represent a constructive and fair representation of the team and their experiences. My participants represented a very particular experience, and within the broader context of this project differ greatly to the back ground and identity of other Muslim Women whose experiences of netball in Wales I will be examining. Both of my participants were privately educated international students, from upper middle class backgrounds. This was also important for me to consider when they drew on their experiences and feelings, and the extent to which their socio economic status may have influenced their access to sport and education, in a way that speaking to working class Malaysian Muslims may not have, and I was certain to adapt these considerations to the data I drew from my other interviews.

³³ Svend Brinkmann., Steinar Kvale, *Interviews : learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*, Los Angeles ; London : Sage Publications Third edition. [2015] p194-195

³⁴ Hammersley, Atkinson., *ethnography.*, p209

Access to Cardiff Refugee Netball Team 5.4

My second interview was also a semi structured interview, but in this instance with a participant who also acted as a trusted gate keeper to retrieve sensitive data on my behalf. My participant acted as founder and captain of Wales first and until September 2019, only refugee netball team, in Cardiff. The team is made up of predominantly Muslim women, and so the organisation and accommodations for the team are exclusively Islamic.

My first point of contact with Holly was through the official organisation the “Welsh Council for Voluntary Action”, through their specific funding of the BME Sport Cymru programme. This programme had granted funding for the netball club Holly had set up, as it embodied the values of BME Sport Cymru, to improve access, representation and diversity across all levels of sport in Wales. It was important that my contact with Holly had been through my relationship with BME Sport Cymru, I had met with this organisation numerous times before embarking on this project and had built a trusted relationship. In doing so, Holly was assured that I was an ethical researcher who was not looking to distort or journalise a story about the netball team. The nature of the team, accommodating especially for refugees who had very traumatic backgrounds, emphasised the importance of how I made contact and approached my fieldwork, to confirm the value of my intentions, and how I would be using the data I collected.

I made the decision to conduct an interview individually with Holly, and after a discussion between ourselves we decided that it was most appropriate for everyone involved that Holly acted as a representative of the team, and collected data and information from the players on my behalf. I believe this was the most ethical approach to undertake, and the method in which would enable the best quality data to be analysed for this dissertation. Given the recent traumatic experiences that these women and girls may have experienced, I did not want to put any pressure upon them by introducing them to a new individual asking to share what could be very personal information, in an environment they may not feel comfortable in or confident enough to engage in dialogue with me. Holly had already won their trust, and she was able to act as a safe interlocutor on my behalf.

Holly had a trusted and secure relationship with all of the players, and they felt confident with Holly representing their experiences, and sharing their comments to questions that I had. There were also practical elements to this approach. As the netball season had come to an end it was also difficult to establish contact with all of the players at one time, and so Holly was able to contact them herself individually and speak to them about their experiences and gather any comments they wanted to pass on in regard to my questions. Additionally there was a language element, not all of the recent refugees could speak English confidently, and so sharing their experiences with Holly who was confident communicating with them, made it much easier for them to coherently voice their personal thoughts and feelings. By using this approach I was able to access the team, and draw upon their experience, but with modified methods.³⁵

³⁵ Denzin NK, Lincoln YS. *Handbook of qualitative research*. 2. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications; 2000) ., p279

The potential consequence of this approach was that the experiences of the players may be distorted, but from the time I spent establishing a working relationship with Holly, through the official organisation BME Sport Cymru, I was certain that the most ethical procedures would be carried out. Holly had previous experience and a degree working in social care, and was fully aware and competent in practicing ethical codes and methods, she was extremely passionate about the group and that they were represented in a moral way. One of the concerns that she had prior to the interview was that other netball players outside this team hadn't fully understood the purpose of the club, and whilst she ultimately hoped to improve diversity in netball, at this level it was important that the majority of the players were exclusively refugee or trusted Muslim friends, or professionals who had experience working with marginalised communities. I was able to affirm my record in this capacity and she was comfortable and confident in my ability to conduct research on the team. Her concern was rooted in some of the insecurities of players who at this stage were not fully confident in their play, or conversing with strangers, but she hoped that as the club continues, this would be improved.

My interview with Holly was conducted in the gardens of Sport Wales HQ, this was very fitting for the subject of our conversation. Whilst the interview itself lasted for approximately 25 minutes, we spent a further hour discussing the team and her journey in this field. This was very beneficial as it provided further context to my research, and on Holly's behalf cemented my commitment to the projects and assured she could trust me with the responsibility of documenting a group of vulnerable women. During the interview Holly confided the information from the women in the club to me, later in the week she emailed over some additional quotes some of the women would like to add. In the same approach as I took with the Brusca netball society, I have adopted pseudonyms to *Holly, and the women who she took the position to represent at the club.

Accessing BME Sport Cymru Representative 5.5

My final interview I conducted was with my participant Reena, who represented a multi-faceted identity in my research. Reena's official job as the lead project officer for BME Sport Cymru gave her the responsibility of conducting training for sports clubs across Wales, initiating clubs and participation for specific identities particularly Muslim women and girls, and conducting research projects to identify the success of such projects, with expert knowledge. Additionally, Reena had embarked on this role following her own experience as a Muslim woman in Wales who had struggled to access accommodated leisure facilities that responded to her cultural and religious requirements. In this capacity Reena demonstrates a variety of experience in this field, and conducting an interview with her and learning more about her journey was central to my work.

I first made contact the Reena through "BME Sport Cymru", when I first embarked on preliminary research on this project, about a year before I would have started my official field work. I felt it was important to build a strong trusted working relationship with this organisation,

to ensure their full support of my research, and to accommodate for any research questions they had, in a collaborative approach. By making contact with Reena in this way it also affirmed the professional nature of this project, rather than a journalistic approach. We met and had several phone conversations over months prior to the “official” qualitative interview.

Reena had made it clear that she was selective with whom she spoke with about her experience and the work of BME Sport Cymru, partly due to a popular approach by some media platforms and organisations in illustrating a “tokenistic” representation of Muslim women in sport. It was out of Reena’s understandable anxieties that I made every effort to assert my commitment to an ethical portrayal of this subject, and over the course of the past year we built a trusted and mutually respectful relationship. In terms of reflexivity in shaping my interview with Reena, it became apparent we had many shared identities, we both played sport competitively and recreationally, we were both Welsh and had been educated in Wales, we were both members and activists of the Welsh Labour Party, and discovered we had several mutual friends. Linda Finlay reiterates the possible benefits of such reflexive reflections in qualitative research, as “enhancing the trustworthiness, transparency and accountability of research.”³⁶ An awareness of such perceptions or misconceptions through my own reflexivity as a researcher can lead to specifically designed questions for the participant, that can clarify some of these concerns, or expand upon them. For example, my knowledge and comfortable relationship with Reena in discussing politics and our mutual political experiences, led me to confidently question how funding and politics can influence this field. Had I not been aware of our mutual identity in politics, I would not have felt so comfortable in asking such a personal question. In this instance this bolstered the data that I gathered. It was clear that Reena also felt comfortable in discussing the impact of austerity politics with me, and how this has affected the availability of accommodated leisure facilities and team sport for ethnic minorities. I doubt she would have felt so confident in doing so had we not shared this intersectional identity. Whilst these shared experiences marked our similarities, the identifiable difference in our ethnicity and culture emphasised the variety of dimensions to identity, however the trust and assurance I believe I was able to demonstrate with Reena enabled me to gain access and generate data it was important for me to present in a fair and ethical way.

Reena, unlike my other participants was able to reflect the specific “Welsh” identity and how the Welsh Muslim experience is navigated in sport. This was demographically important for the nature and scale of this project, I was able to demonstrate data from the Welsh Muslim perspective, the experience for Muslims in Welsh higher education, as well as Muslim women who have recently moved to Wales. Whilst my approach was not thorough or wide reaching within any of these specific identities, for the scale and scope of a Masters dissertation, with a qualitative focus, including data from women of all of these backgrounds will hopefully bolster my research findings, and demonstrate the diversity and the importance of diversity in sport, and in academically researching it.

³⁶ Findlay, Linda., ‘Negotiating the swamp: the opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice’, in *Qualitative Research*, (London, 2002) p213

Findings 6.0

I conducted all of my interviews using the same format. I had prepared a set of specific topics and suggested questions, but using a semi structured framework, often the points of our discussions went above and beyond the provisional themes which I had expected, and planned to emerge. I used a manual coding method when transcribing my interviews, and adapted a thematic analysis to illustrate the reoccurring final codes from the raw data, see appendix. Cross examining my transcripts against these codes clearly demonstrated the key points which I have used to formulate the basis of my argument. Thematic analysis according to Boyatzis is especially effective in qualitative research projects, granting responsibility and power to the researcher to extract specific themes or phenomenon's, that will form an understanding and data set of the research investigated.³⁷ Interpretation is central to this practice, as such codes do not simply "emerge on their own."³⁸ Such themes have been driven by my understanding from my time in the field and built from the themes that have already emerged in the existing literature and scholarship, also from the gaps in which I have identified in this discourse. The central themes that I have identified across my interviews are as follows:

1. Religion, Culture and the perceived barriers in sport.
2. Participation beyond the periphery of a religious or cultural identity.
3. Finance, funding and socio economic status.
4. Provisions to improve access, educationally and infrastructurally.
5. Barrier's and gaps in provision.
6. Responsibility to improve access.
7. The benefits of participation and access.

Religion and culture, perceived barriers in sport 6.1

Supporting the literature that exists in this field, many of my participants discussed the problems in homogenising the identity and experience of Muslim women, identifying the varying degrees of practice, and influence of a diverse range of cultural and ethnic codes and beliefs. Before examining the way in which such belief's may or may not act as a potential feature that could affect participation, we may consider how such beliefs vary.

"It's more to do with culture, which part of the world you are from. In Malaysia you don't see Muslim women stay at home, they go out and work. But Arab may be different."

Fatima, a Malaysian Muslim international student studying at Cardiff University, and the Captain of the BRUSCA Netball Society, considered how her identity as a Malaysian Muslim women, may cause her relationship with sport and physical activity to be very different to that of Muslim women in the Arab world, or from Arabic culture. Her team mate and co-captain Malika also commented on the homogenising of Muslim women who participate in sport:

³⁷ Richard E. Boyatzis., *Transforming qualitative information: thematic analysis and code development.*, (1998) p180

³⁸ Srivastava, P and Hopwood, N. (2009). 'A Practical Iterative Framework for Qualitative Data Analysis' In *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 8 (1), p77

“I think people think Muslim women don’t play sport and they stay at home doing house work but we are not like that.”

Malika emphasises how their identity as Malaysian Muslim women differs greatly to what the stereotypical view she believes is often associated with Muslim women. She is reiterating the importance of her cultural and ethnic identity, not her necessarily her religious one.

Reena, speaking from her personal experience as a Muslim woman accessing sport and in her authority as project lead at BME Sport Cymru emphasised the diversity in interpretation and application of such interpretations to participation in sport, within the community:

“Can’t be outside without covering, obviously this is general, there are some who won’t wear scarves, and that’s fine, their own choice. Some will mix with opposite sex, and play sport, but the majority require female only provision, if there is no provision that is a barrier. Religious barrier, there isn’t any thoughts around this from Islamic scholars, that we shouldn’t take part, we should but within the Islamic boundaries, like not take part in front of men in public, consider modesty”

She reiterates that there is no specific ruling in the Qur’an, and so interpretation and practice differs greatly amongst different families and communities. But she does recognise that certain interpretations can make it more difficult for women to participate, specifying the role of female only provision, and how the failure to provide this particular provision forms an immediate barrier. Reena then considers the cultural practice of familial responsibilities that is often fundamental in south Asian and diasporic families:

“family issues can also come in, men may not want young girls to participate. Or as girls get older they have responsibility in the home. Helping their parents. There is still some kind of perception of sport not being viewed as highly as other subjects in this communities”

Here Reena identifies two factors, the fact that family responsibility and presence at home is held very highly amongst the community, and such responsibilities can act as a barrier for the freedom to pursue other activities such as sport. Secondly Reena identifies the subjective importance given to academic success from within these communities, arguably built from a desire to gain a good education and secure a financially stable and reputable career. She highlights that some communities fear that such success may be compromised if more time is invested in sport. Additionally she also raises the point that alongside academic success, there is also a perceived fear that religious conduct may be compromised from participation:

“I bring talk to these communities around the benefits of sport. There are still a lot who worry that for girls from some sub community that if they do sport they may want to compete, or compromise their religion.”

Reena mentions that she brings educational talks directly to these communities, highlighting the fact that such attitudes based upon religious and cultural experience do exist, but can be deconstructed with effective dialogue and evidence. The practical implementation of participation with certain practices can also be difficult, and this was also a dominating feature across the interviews. Fatima from BRUSCA Netball considered this:

“I think one of the reason is in Muslim culture girls are brought up to cover up and not like your embarrassed of your body but you love it. So when you are playing and jumping and shaking it can be seeming to draw attention.”

Fatima identifies that interpretations of observing modesty and participating in active sport can be difficult, or perceived to be difficult for some Muslim girls. This is reiterated by Reena, who considers that even in female only spaces there is still practical difficult for some in observing modesty in line with their interpretations, beliefs or family values:

“Some parents though are not happy even though this a female only space, because it is outside. When I started women only swimming, some people again not happy, because they could be viewed. So I did a lot of work to get blinds. Language is also a barrier, having coaches who can speak the minority languages.”

Reena emphasises the role of the family in the discourse of participating in sport, and how the family unit are fundamental in shaping and contributing to attitudes and access to sport. Additionally she also recognises the practical cultural and ethnic barrier for families and women and girls looking to participate in sport, language facilities. This is a very practical element of participation and is also identified by Holly, coach and founder of Splott based netball team who recruit Muslim refugee women and girls:

“New to the language, and have been through hell and back.”

Holly enforces the traumatic experiences many of the women and girls have suffered, in their journey to refugee status, and how this can affect their access to joining a team sport. She also enforces the practicality of language, and how this can act as a barrier in itself, before the possible of stress disorders are even considered, without specific provision for language, the option for access is very limited. Holly goes on to consider the experience of refugee Muslims or first generation Muslim women and girls coming to the UK, and how attitudes and experiences in their country of origin can also shape if and how they access sport in Wales:

“Some of the ladies have played netball before but most haven’t, sport for women isn’t always a priority in some of these countries.”

Holly recognises how lack of experience in sport, or never having experienced a society that actively encourages physical activity may prevent some women and girls from participating. This is an exclusive issue for the Muslim women and girls in the club who have not been brought up in the UK, and have grown up in an environment that does not place so much value on sports participation for women, irrespective of religious affinity. A final point is raised in regard to British sport culture and practice, and that relates to the relationship between sport and alcohol, and how this incompatibility with Islamic values may be a structural barrier. Holly recognises this barrier as a practicing Christian, she empathises with such concerns recognising similar attitudes in her own faith:

“I am a Christian and it’s the same with us too, I know a lot of people in my church do not drink for religious reasons, so it’s important to make a safe space to include people and bring everyone together especially in sport.”

Holly identifies how concerns around the role of alcohol and sport can be an issue for those who do not drink alcohol for ethical, moral or religious purposes. Here she marks this issue and potential barrier as one that is not exclusive for Muslim’s, or Muslim women, and by signifying her personal understanding of this issue emphasises how this barrier can affect people from a range of different ethnicities, cultures or religions. Fatima and Malika also reflect upon the role of alcohol in team sport, and how this has affected their experiences playing netball:

“I think that there are girls who don’t want to join because of socials, I think there are people like that. With drinking. If you don’t want to feel left out. When I was interested to joining SocSci I asked my friend to join too so I had someone going with me with the same values as me.” Malika

Here they consider the notion of feeling “left out”, because of their religious values. They enforce the importance of values, and mention how bringing a friend with similar values was a solution to this problem for them, however they recognise that for some other girls they know,

they would not want to join because of the emphasis on alcoholic socials in the netball team. Marking the relationship between team sport and alcohol as a specific barrier to participation and access.

Sport outside the periphery of religious, cultural and ethnic identity 6.2

The second theme that I identified throughout my transcripts, was discussions centred around the role of a cultural, ethnic or religious community in sport, the sense of security within these groups, and possible concerns associated with stepping outside of this periphery. The girls from the BRUSCA Netball society, identified and described how their cultural and ethnic identity was prevalent in how they have accessed sport:

“We trained under the Malaysian soc in first year, but every year there is a big Malaysian sports event in Nottingham. And seniors recruit people. In second year we recruited a lot of people, we recruited more from Brunei. And in second year we knew Brunei also have annual games for netball, but didn’t have enough people to play, so they asked us to join” Fatima

Here they identified that their ethnic identity as Malaysian Muslims was pivotal in how they have participated and accessed sport, with specific events organised for Malaysian students in the UK. When questioned about whether they considered trialling for one of the more competitive teams in the league, they admitted that they had considered joining, moving away from the exclusively Malaysian sports network:

“I want to join SocSci though but I am afraid to be with them, I should join but I am afraid, if I have one more year I will do it” – Malika

“We were interested to join the SocSci netball team when we were in second year. We asked if we could join. We didn’t feel actually restricted in terms of religion but in terms of me being too small, something like that, it was self-criticism.” – Fatima

“More to do with self-confidence. Then we just decided to play under Malaysian team.” – Fatima

Both girls identified that putting themselves forward for the Social Science Netball team would be beneficial for their performance, as a more competitive team higher in the league. However both girls eventually chose not to trial for the squad, stating that this was due to a lack of confidence on their behalf. Whilst they state that they did not feel in any way prejudiced by the group, or unwelcome, they emphasise their fear and lack of self-confidence to step outside of their comfort zone, from the exclusively Malaysian club, to a group with mixed nationalities and cultures. Similar instances of cultural, ethnic and religious exclusivity were also discussed by Reena from BME Sport Cymru. I asked Reena to consider how players and participants had felt about accessing accommodating sport:

“Some do a lot of victim blaming or like “we should just be grateful we are here we can’t expect all needs to be met”. I think we need to meet in middle. we cannot favour a particular ethnicity, I said if you are uncomfortable use the cubicle. One woman said “there could be lesbians” I said, don’t flatter yourself! We cannot meet everyone needs, we need to meet in the middle. A good way of looking at it.”

Reena considered how many of the classes that she organised were women only and open to women and girls from all different backgrounds and religions. She identified the varying attitudes of the community, that some women lack in confidence and are reluctant to seek provisions, however she mentioned how one woman in particular felt uncomfortable with the presence of different cultural attitudes to changing. Reena identified that these conflicts obviously do exist, as conflicts always do with people with different opinions and experiences, however this was the only case she mentioned.

Holly, coach from the refugee netball team also identified some of the reasons for cultural, ethnic and religiously preserved groups, in reference to her group in particular:

“exclusively for women from these backgrounds // feel safe and secure, some trusted friends or women from similar backgrounds / cultures / religions have come to support, but right now our aim is to build confidence in a trusted environment.”

Holly recognises that the purpose of her group in particular is to build confidence at a grass roots level, and acknowledges the benefit of the trust and security associated with belonging to a specific religious, cultural or ethnic group, as considered by Fatima and Malika. Holly later reiterates that the eventual goal of the group is to encourage interfaith dialogue and community engagement, but to achieve that initial confidence and security must be ensured, and this can be done by organised a group based on specific identities and experiences.

Finance, funding and socio economic status 6.3

Building upon some of the earlier points raised regarding identity, socio economic identity and financial support and access is also fundamental in this discourse. These themes were highlighted on numerous occasions throughout all of the interviews with my participants. Fatima and Malika were both privately educated in Malaysia, and both described how fantastic sporting facilities were at their schools, both competing in sport from a young age. They identified how their experiences of school in Malaysia shaped their attitudes to participating in sport in Wales:

“I’ve always played sports since I was little. I went to a girl’s school. I used to think guys are scary. It depends on your experience with people around you. When I was in school I thought guys seemed scary but when I came here it was better.” – Fatima

“But I went to a mixed school so this wasn’t a problem for me” – Malika

Both girls recognise their education as pivotal in exposing them to sport, and the way in which they were exposed. Female only accommodation was not a problem in Fatima’s school as it was explicitly accommodated for female only access. Malika went to a mixed school so had participated in sport with boys. It is important to reiterate that both of their schools were private schools, with generous funding into facilities and leisure activities. Concerns associated with funding to support leisure facilities, sport and the logistical management of organising teams was addressed repeatedly, by both Reena and Holly. Holly emphasises the extent to which funding, volunteering and donations ensure that the women and girls can access the netball club:

“We have had kit donated from the Welsh Netball team”

“At the moment we rely a lot on donations but have also received some generous funding from the welsh governments BME Sport Cymru initiative. Me and Hayley both work full time and didn’t expect the club to be such a success. Money is definitely the biggest issue, the taxis being the biggest outgoing but we will always try our best to ensure we can keep that service as it is so important.”

“Manpower and funding. We are thinking about becoming an official charity as this will make it easier to manage our accounts and treasury”

Here she identifies the socio economic factors that shape the ability and access of participation. The economic status of the players means the club requires kit donations, and the club is organised entirely by volunteers who also work full time. She reiterates how in order

to implement the correct provisions and facilities for access, funding is central. Reena further exemplifies the points raised:

“I am going across the country to give training across clubs, so they can consider equality right from the start. Sometimes coaches and officers are keen but they need support to ensure it will happen” (As the only person in this job)

Reena emphasises the importance of her job in delivering the correct training across organisations, boards and sports clubs all over the country. However she also notes that she is the only person working in the capacity of this role in Wales, and the responsibility to deliver such services relies solely on her. This is down to funding and budgeting, and Reena informed me that due to these limitations there is only so much work load she can take on as an individual, despite the prevalence of these services. She then reiterates the importance of investing in facilities, and how without investment in these facilities participation is limited. She emphasises that the impact of the availability and investing in correct facilities is the most important factor influencing participation:

“barrier of facilities, and then the individual barrier to the girls because of their family background, religious or cultural. I think it is more facilities, that is what I am trying to say”

Reena further examines the Welsh context of the funding, and how as a nation geographically distinct from the British capital, London, the specific Welsh context, and requirements are often neglected. With investment nationwide injected in to larger cities such as London:

“in London there is Muslim women sport foundation, but they have not done much work in wales although they are meant to represent whole of UK sometimes Wales gets left behind.”

Provisions to improve access 6.4

Building further upon the considerations of funding and socio economic influences, comes the provisions to improve access, both infrastructurally and educationally. Identifying the aspects that are creating structural barriers or difficulties to participate, and creating working solutions to resolve them. One of the first key points addressed relates directly to the previous section highlighting socio economic backgrounds. Reena identifies how many Muslim women and girls live in distinctly working class communities, and sometimes the best possible way to engage them in sport is to bring the sport directly to them:

“we will bring it to them, in Butetown pavilion, I know girls who attend a sports club there and there is a hall.”

Central to accommodation is female only provision, or the option for female only provision, from a grass roots level. This is emphasised by Reena, and reiterated by Holly when she considers some of the features that have made her netball club so successful and attractive to refugee Muslim women and girls:

“like female staffing, the dress codes, so it is not dictated, there should be flexibility, a lot are not competitive, it is grass roots” Reena

“training takes place inside, and it is exclusively female, this is important and the women and girls feel very comfortable. Most arrive in Hijab or Jilibab and then take them off when they arrive.” Holly

Reena critically evaluates the “female only” provisions, emphasising how just because a group or team is ‘female only’ doesn’t necessarily mean they are equipped with the knowledge to engage in cohesive dialogue to encourage or facilitate the needs or experiences of some individuals. She gives an example of an early campaign initiated by Welsh Netball:

“A coach came in with t-shirts for the girls to play in, a lot of the girls wear the full gowns, and the coach said “go change into these”, and the girls were like “oh” *shocked face*, I said you know it won’t work like that we can’t dictate”

Reena then explains how she informed the coach that this was probably not the best approach to take with these women and girls, and directed her to adopt a different strategy:

“Give them the tops and say if you want to change into them you can, or put on top of your gown you can, or take it home and wear it next week if you feel comfortable. Most of them like put it on top of their gown, you know if they had a long sleeve top on they put it on top. And then they were all ok, I think if I hadn’t been there though, we would have lost them, it was a learning curve for welsh netball”

Reena highlights the significance of her role in encouraging successful dialogue between the players and the coach, as she was able to *laissez* between both and understand both positions, through her educated understanding of some of the requirements of these girls, and through her own experience as a Welsh Muslim woman. This instance exemplifies the importance of education as a provision that can deconstruct barriers and improve participation and communication in communities and beyond. Reena explores this further and considers how equipping coaches and volunteers with the correct education to respond to the Muslim community improves engagement:

“I remember going to a rural town in west wales about 5 years ago, giving training to clubs, netball, football and athletics, I seen I lost the people, they were not engaged. But two months ago I went back, I did a full day training coaches, and then managers. Usually I only take 12 people, when I arrived there was 30 people, I said oh I have only prepared for 12 but the assistant said they all wanted to come! When I look at the stats I said there are 2000 people of BME background in this town, and most people said “we need to engage them!”

Reena then recalls how much young women she has engaged with in her role, and through her own experience have faced negativity in sport, particularly through lack of education and understanding from teachers in school. She emphasises how fundamental early experiences of sport are, and how this can put some young women off participating in the future:

“negative experiences happen in PE and that puts them off. Some girls may be on their period, and I hear bad stories that teachers keeps diary of when they are on their period. In my case I had to copy lines, I felt being punished for my religion. Teachers didn’t understand and it put me off”

One of the key features aside from facilities and education, is representation and inspiration, and this is emphasised by Reena, when she recalls her experience supporting and establishing clubs for women and girls. She highlights the role of the coach, and visual representations at all levels, encouraging women to take up positions of authority and responsibility in sport:

“coaches can become role models. If you can see yourself in a position, you can do it. Then the sessions were so busy because we broke down those barriers.”

Emphasising the role of representation and the impact of inspiration for women and girls in sport, she also recalls how Welsh Netball arranged for their programme that was aimed at Muslim women and girls to take the team to the commonwealth games, and international matches, to inspire them. Again this also acknowledges the impact of funding and socio economic considerations, Reena discussed with me how this was one of the only opportunity these girls had to attend professional high profile sports events and it was an important tool in inspiring them:

“We have taken them to international matches, to inspire them. Small things like that, it may be a women’s only session with a family, but your approach and dialogue is important.”

Reena reiterates the success of netball in Wales, in particular, in engaging with this demographic of women. She considers how the gendered element of this sport is central to its success and appeal. She spoke in depth to me about sexism that women from all ethnic and religious backgrounds have faced in football, particularly in football coaching. She emphasised how this is not an issue in netball, as a female dominated sport:

“As a woman much training is very men centred, I had a lot of negative experience, I think some women would be put off becoming trained in football. This isn’t a problem in netball you know”

Additionally, recognition of the importance of the community and family as central to the cultural values of many Muslim families is also important to encourage access. Reena, Holly, and Huda who plays in the refugee netball team, recognise and acknowledge this. Reena explains how she brings educational talks directly to the communities and families of women and girls who are participating or want to participate, so they can feel encouraged to support them:

“I bring talk to these communities around the benefits of sport”

Holly also explains how many of the families of women and girls who attend her netball club are concerned for their safety travelling alone, or getting to training. By organising group taxi’s families can come to training together and women can also bring their children, who can benefit from the child care provisions. Accommodating for the family is an essential feature of this club, and is a credit to their success:

“ladies live further away, can’t drive, or do not feel safe walking alone, for this reason we book and pay for group taxis to pick up the ladies for training. This has been very important and comes from our community chest. Without this feature many ladies would not be able to come. It also confirms that the club is a safe place, for their families. We also host childcare, this is organised between our members in accordance with safe guarding”

Holly goes on to explain the collaborative approach her club has taken with the families of the team members, and how this has been received very positively:

“We finish in the summer, because most have children and they can be with them over summer holidays. But we always host a party and activities, this is great and goes down really well. It brings everyone together and we have had great feedback.”

The benefit of such an approach is clear through the comments of Huda, who plays in the refugee netball team. She reiterates the success of the collaborative family approach taken by the team, and describes how this has created a harmonious family environment for her at home:

“kids are so happy on Wednesday mornings, because they have the play group to go to in the evening whilst I play netball” Huda

Failure to accommodate provisions and other negative experiences 6.5

With evident and reoccurring discussion of successful provisions and consideration for accommodating facilities and providing the necessary education, there is also evidence of failures to accommodate and the unfortunate consequences of such failures, as well as some of the structural barriers that contribute to this. This was discussed frequently in my interview with Fatima and Malika from BRUSCA Netball Society:

“In IMG (Cardiff University Intra Mural Games) we are the only Hijabi netball team. This is the first time we have played in the league, and it is our final year here.” Fatima

They describe how their team is the only exclusively Hijabi netball team that plays competitively in the Intra Mural Games at Cardiff University. And that in 2018 this is the first time the team have ever entered the league, so up until that point there was no exclusively hijabi netball team represented in the league, which spans all the schools at Cardiff University. I went on to ask Fatima and Malika whether they are aware of any other Hijabi or Muslim teams or representation in netball at Cardiff University, or whether they could imagine the Saudi Arabian society, for example, organising a netball team in the way they Malaysian society have. They confirmed that there is an ISOC* Netball team at Cardiff University, however they do not train on campus and do not compete competitively in the University league. They did state that the team have reached out to BRUSCA Netball as they are aware they too are an exclusively hijabi team, to organise a match:

“ISOC have a netball team, they don’t play in IMG because they don’t play outside, they asked us to play with them in a match. They have to make sure there are no guys at all.” Malika

I decided to explore this point further, and so asked the girls whether they think that ISOC would play against other teams in the league if they were able too. They confirmed that if there was appropriate provision implemented, ISOC would be happy to play:

“If it (the matches) were inside and there would be no guys, then yes. They can’t play outside because people would see.” Malika

This highlights a structural barrier that the University Netball league has created. As a women’s only game, with all female umpires, the opportunity to organise a championship or matches that accommodated to the needs of the ISOC team, would arguably be straightforward. Holly considers how encouraging such provisions however, can be met with criticism and backlash, and this in itself can act as a barrier for people to encourage or initiate provisions:

“A man commented on our news story, saying how ridiculous it was that money was being given to ferry these women around in taxis, or so he put it. He said some nasty things. I think the rhetoric like that is horrible but we have largely had nothing but positive comments, recognising how much the club is doing and helping women.”

Whilst Holly acknowledges that she has faced criticism, and how this has affected her personally, she is certain to reiterate that majority of communication she has had with the public and other organisations has been positive. Thus highlighting the importance of implementing provisions for accommodation in sport.

Responsibility in providing access 6.6

A reoccurring theme was highlighted throughout my interviews, and that centred around debates of “responsibility”, as to who should be responsible to ensure that sport is accessible and accommodating for the needs of individuals, in this case Muslim women and girls. Reena emphasises the role of policy in this discourse, reiterating how the equalities act should in practice protect sport for Muslim women and girls, and ensure their access and participation can be accommodated for:

“falls under the equalities act, so the government does have a legal responsibility. If Muslim women cannot access because of facilities that are not attempting to break down barriers, they have a moral duty, and if they are inadvertently putting a group at disadvantage it is discrimination”

Here Reena exemplifies the role of the government, highlighting the commitment of policy specified to diminish discrimination in all forms. The role of the government was also emphasised by Holly, as she considered the financial influence of the government in ensuring

that participation can happen. She discloses how the funding from the Welsh government secures her netball club:

“Generous funding from the Welsh governments BME Sport Cymru initiative.”

Here both Women identify the two fold responsibility and influence of the government, in ensuring policy can accommodate to make real change, and inject the correct level of funding into institutions and facilities to provide the correct service for communities. Despite Reena and Holly considering the government role so important, Fatima and Malika from the BRUSCA Netball Society did not believe this responsibility to fall on institutions and governing bodies:

“I don’t think the university has to you know (make provisions for Muslims in sport), just because of this community they have to sacrifice something else, we are a small community and within that there are only small number who follow this, having to be sex segregated” – Fatima

Interestingly Fatima did not believe that this was a problem that needs to be addressed through policy or funding by the University (in this instance), she believes that those who do not participate because of religious beliefs or other factors are in the minority. Her view is mirrored by Malika, who believes that those who wish to participate will find a way:

“Actually I think that those who want to play don’t mind and you will find a way to wear leggings or whatever. Society uniforms are very pretty the short skirts, if I wore it I would wear leggings inside and it doesn’t look as good, it looks so good on you guys” – Malika

Neither Fatima or Malika had faced hostility or difficulty in accessing sport in Malaysia, or as international students studying in Wales, and drawing on their own experiences they found it difficult to justify why the university or other official institutions or organisations should be liable to accommodate for those who do not participate.

Benefits of participation and accommodation 6.7

The final dominating theme that reoccurred in every interview emphasised the benefits and positive impact that provisions in sport for Muslim women and girls has had. The benefits described by my participants went beyond individual and personal benefits, and included community benefit as well as increasing the revenue of leisure facilities.

Most of my participants emphasised how being able to play netball has improved their confidence, and created a new social circle, forming trusting friendships. Fatima considered how her overall confidence has improved since she has played netball, and as a result she feels she has improved her performance in university and finds it easier making friends:

“I think that it has made me much more confident and I feel like that in everything now” Fatima

“Yes I think it has helped me in university, make more friends.” Fatima

Malika emphasised the points raised by Fatima, in terms of how playing in the netball team this year has improved her confidence, that she now feels able to put herself forward for the Social Science Netball team:

“I think now I will have the confidence to take on a position in the Social Science Netball team, I feel more confident now. I do not want to have regret, I think I should join.” Malika

Holly described the extent to which her players have developed in confidence, and how shared humour and friendships are developing each week:

“ladies developing so much in confidence each week, we had a funny moment when one of our ladies came late and apologised and so did our coach. One of our ladies said “no excuse to being late unless

you walked all the way from Syria to play on this court!" it's great to see senses of humour growing, friendships, and a great way to keep fit."

Here Holly reveals the way in which the Netball club has benefitted the women and girls not only through improved fitness and physical health, but helping improve their confidence, and creating a safe space to share jokes, humour and friendship. Reena exemplifies these points, and uses them in her delivery to communities to encourage families to support their daughters and wives to participate:

"if you want the kids do well in studying, sport will help, they will sleep better, be less stressed and confident."

Here Holly illustrates how the relationship between sport and academic success is pivotal to encouraging participation, and is an essential feature when highlighting the benefits of sport to families and communities. The accounts from the women and girls from the refugee Netball team reveal the true extent to which participating in sport can transform lives:

"Netball club on Wednesdays has become my family" – Halima

"I am so much more confident, and I suffered with anxiety but it is better since playing netball" – Amena

"team has given me so much bravery, being able to train makes me so happy" – Laila

All the women reveal how being a part of the club has improved their mental health, confidence, and solidified a trusting circle of friends. Had the club not been there to accommodate for these women the issues they raise such as anxiety and lack of confidence may have worsened. In addition to these personal benefits associated with health and wellbeing, Reena also identifies the practical benefit of providing accommodation can have for clubs, facilities and institutions:

"I had meetings with managers who said we will lose money, by doing women only, but it also encourages white British women. And this is what it is all about is using sport to get people together and understand each other better. That has worked really well. We understand their needs and what the barriers are, but we have proved that the facilities can make money too."

Emphasising the revenue that can be gained from opening women only classes, Reena marks a clear commercial benefit that will encourage sports centres, clubs and facilities to implement provisions. Additionally Reena also argues how these classes encourage women from all backgrounds to join, thus improving social cohesion and diversifying friendship groups, "bringing people together". The impact of positive social cohesion on individuals and society cannot be undermined in its significance.

Discussion 7.0

With the findings that I have presented, I now turn to the discussion of the data I have illustrated, and an analysis of their significance. I considered in my introduction and methodological chapter the considerations associated with the theoretical underpinnings of "intersectionality", and how central this is to the experience of women, and Muslim women in how they engage with and experience sport, this was evident and reoccurring throughout my findings. Not only is access itself highly influenced by gender, race, socio economic status and religious / cultural interpretation and practice, but also fundamental in shaping community standards and opinions about sport. This is reiterated in the work of Stuart Hall, regarding the multifaceted essence of identity:

“Identity as a contextual and relational *positioning* rather than as a fixed essence.”³⁹

It is therefore impossible to homogenise the experience, and the specific provisions for individual Muslim women and girls, as each individual case differs greatly. This can also lead to conflict within a homogenised identity group itself, in this case “Muslim women”, with the absence of empathy and understanding for the conditions of other women which may or may not prevent them from accessing sport. In the data I have collected, the apparent conflict of experience between the BRUSCA Netball team and the ISOC Netball team, illustrates such problems. Both my participants from the BRUSCA Netball team believed that if Muslim women wish to participate they will, and they did not recognise that this was an issue that should be liable for the University to accommodate for.

I identified the existence of such debates in my literature review, and how scholars such as Daniel Burdsey have emphasised the consequences of failing to acknowledge and consider the impact of multifaceted identities within the Muslim community.⁴⁰ By over sensationalising visual religious markers of identity such as the veil, which is worn by some Muslim women, an argument of “culture conflict” between Islam and the west can be presented as the main cause for lower representation in the field of sport and physical activity, amongst others.⁴¹ Early literature arguing such cultural conflict as solely responsible for causing issues such as lower participation in sport is wholly incorrect. My data enforces the arguments that emphasise the role and influence of class structures, and in this study are particularly significant in shaping how women and girls are able to access sport.⁴² Neither international students, Malika or Fatima, from the BRUSCA Netball team had experienced any problem with participating in sport from a young age, however both went to private schools in Malaysia which were facilitated to provide sport for them, this differs greatly to the experiences cited by Reena, from her personal account and that of other girls she hears from (state educated in Wales). She also emphasised how often sport in school was the only way many women and girls have accessed sport, so when the facilities are limited for them, it can prevent them participating in the future, and shapes their attitude towards it:

“Negative experiences happen in PE and that puts them off // it put me off” – Reena

As Muslim families in Britain are statistically more likely to come from “working class” backgrounds, the socio economic and class based discussions are central.

“A large proportion of the Muslim population, like the BME population, live in the poorer, deprived neighbourhoods. There are well-established correlations between neighbourhood deprivation and poor general health, or between low family income and educational underachievement. These are not

³⁹ Hall, Stuart. (1992b). New ethnicities. In James Donald & Ali Rattansi (Eds.), *“Race”, culture and difference* (pp. 252–259). Originally published in 1988 in Kobena Mercer (Ed.), *Black film, British cinema* (pp. 27–31). London: Institute of Contemporary Arts.

⁴⁰ Daniel Burdsey, Stanley Thangaraj and Rajinder Dudrah, ‘Playing through time and space : Sport and South Asian Diaspora’, in *Sport and South Asian Diaspora: Playing through time and space* (eds Stanley Thangaraj, Daniel Burdsey and Rajinder Dudrah) 2014 p40

⁴¹ James L. Watson., *Between two cultures: Migrants and minorities in Britain*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford (1977)

⁴² Kim Knott, Sajda Khokher., ‘Religion and ethnic identity among young Muslim women in Bradford’ in *New Community*, 19 (4) (1993), pp. 593-610

exclusively Muslim concerns and the impact is felt by individuals and communities irrespective of ethnicity or faith."⁴³ - Muslim Council of Britain

One of the fundamental points raised by Reena when considering the influence of family values, emphasised the importance of academic success amongst many South Asian and diaspora communities. Ambitions for younger generations to succeed and access professional industries, that their elders may not have had access too, to provide for the family and improve their socio economic status, are important to consider.⁴⁴ Reena enforces how many communities fear an emphasis on sport may result in the neglect of academic study, however when these communities are educated about the benefits of physical exercise on academic performance, many of these fears are diminished.⁴⁵ Thus emphasising the significance of funding appropriate education systems, both at a community level, and to schools and those professionals/ teachers/ coaches running sports clubs and PE classes, to acknowledge some of the provisions that should be implemented to encourage participation amongst Muslim women, relating to the various features of their multifaceted identities.

The impact of financial factors cannot be undermined in this discourse, when accommodating for a predominantly working class community. This was fundamental to the way that sport is successfully presented to the women and girls in my fieldwork. Reena describes how she ensured that Netball was "brought to the girls", in a working class estate with a high population of Muslim women and girls. By bringing the sport to the local pavilion it immediately reached out to the women and girls in this area, and accessing the facility was much easier, as it was a close and familiar space. By providing accessible sport for communities in this way, sport can be reached by all women and girls in similar working class communities, who may struggle accessing transport to training that takes place further away.⁴⁶ Holly's account further evidences this argument, as she explained how providing funding for taxis for the ladies who attend her club is a significant feature in ensuring their attendance. This is partially due to the economic background of the ladies who attend the netball club, with refugee status, disposable incomes are not a luxury to spend on transport. Additionally there were circumstantial reasons for why these women needed taxis, associated with their experience as refugee's, suffering with PTSD, concerned with traveling alone to and from training. Cultural concerns around travelling alone can be argued to have influenced some of these attitudes.

Cultural and religious features of identity must also be considered to some extent, however what I have taken from my data suggests that compared to other contributing factors, the influence of religion is relatively minimal when compared the role of funding and education. The central example can be taken from the ISOC Netball team at Cardiff University. These women are already participating in netball, and showing an interest in the sport. An

⁴³ Mcb.org.uk. (2019). [online] Available at: https://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MCBCensusReport_2015.pdf [Accessed 26 Aug. 2019]. (p48)

⁴⁴ Sophie Gilliat Ray, *Muslims in Britain*, (Cambridge) p214-215

⁴⁵ Culpepper, Chuck (2016-07-13). "Marriage, motherhood, education, maybe sports: female Muslim athletes' expected priorities". The Washington Post.

⁴⁶ Girls drop-out at different rates depending on where they live. Sabo, D. and Veliz, P. (2008). *Go Out and Play: Youth Sports in America*. East Meadow, NY: Women's Sports Foundation. At Women's Sports Foundation. (2019). *Factors Influencing Girls' Participation in Sports - Women's Sports Foundation*. [online] Available at: <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/support-us/do-you-know-the-factors-influencing-girls-participation-in-sports/> [Accessed 26 Aug. 2019].

accommodation as simple as providing a male free space for them to participate, in what is already a female only sport, would not require excessive funding and special requirements, but it would enable them to compete competitively in the university league. Additionally, the popular debates around hijab and modesty as the central concern in preventing women from accessing sport are not central in netball. With the official dress code including the observation of hijab as completely compatible with the competitive game. Extending dress provision in sport to accommodate hijab or other forms of religious dress do not cost institutions any money, but do enable more women and girls to feel comfortable with participating. The gendered element of participation in sport is central in this discourse, when institutions do invest in providing female only classes and clubs, they are popular not only amongst Muslim women but amongst women and girls from all backgrounds, and this is reiterated by Reena:

“By doing women only, but it also encourages white British women.”

Further reiterating the gendered element to the problems associated with accessing sport for Muslim women and girls has been the male dominated narrative in the sporting industry.⁴⁷ Reena explained this with her experience with FA Wales:

“As a woman much training is very men centred, I had a lot of negative experience, I think some women would be put off becoming trained in football.”

As my research has focused on netball, a female dominated sport, negative experiences of sexism in the sport have been absent from my fieldwork. As netball successfully provides a safe and accommodating environment for women and girls, other sports should adapt similar policy and practices. Other mainstream team sports such as football are now making more asserted efforts to do so, recognising the benefits.⁴⁸ The concerns of practical issues such as language, can also effect some women and girls within the broader “Muslim identity”, particularly those of first generation, or those with refugee status. Language provisions are not exclusive to a Muslim identity, and is a provision that benefits all non-native women and girls looking to participate in sport. Holly recognised the importance of language, and how a lack of confidence with English, and suitable facilities to accommodate act as a barrier to accessing sport. This is a feature which is also reiterated in government policy as a key factor to improve integration and community cohesion for refugees.⁴⁹

It is evident that many of the provisions than can improve participation and access for Muslim women and girls, also improve access for other communities and groups who share features of identity. Concerns over compatibility of sport and culture were considered frequently in the interview with the BRUSCA Netball team, particularly in reference to the association of team

⁴⁷ N., & Williams, N. (2009). *Her Life Depends On It II: Sport, Physical Activity, and the Health and Well-Being of American Girls and Women*. At., Women's Sports Foundation. (2019). *Factors Influencing Girls' Participation in Sports - Women's Sports Foundation*. [online] Available at: <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/support-us/do-you-know-the-factors-influencing-girls-participation-in-sports/> [Accessed 26 Aug. 2019].

⁴⁸ Mouncey, H. (2019). *Inclusive history of women's football behind success of AFLW* | Hannah Mouncey. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2018/feb/01/inclusive-history-of-womens-football-behind-success-of-aflw> [Accessed 26 Aug. 2019].

⁴⁹ Intergrating Refugees (2019). [online] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/812891/intergrating-refugees-2019.pdf - [Accessed 26 Aug. 2019]. p5

sport and alcohol, especially in university. However, this notion was also raised by Holly, in her capacity as a practicing Christian. She mirrored some of the concerns that Fatima and Malika raised that affect some Muslim women and girls when they are considering joining netball teams. This is therefore an issue that should be accommodated across the board with regard for the health and wellbeing of all players, regardless of religious affinity, as reduced alcohol consumption is a central policy of the National Health Service.⁵⁰

The ultimate aim of all of the groups and policy campaigns to improve access to sport for Muslim women and girls present improved social cohesion and sense of “bringing together” communities through sport, as central to their commitments.⁵¹ However, often groups are organised with a particular focus on reaching out to Muslim girls, critics may argue that this simply encourages cultural and community isolation and does not encourage diversity. They may for example, look to the refugee netball club or the BRUSCA society as evidence for this claim. However, what my research suggests is that by introducing sport that is particularly targeted at this specific group, it can improve confidence, ability and communication skills at a grass roots level, which go on to positively impact cohesion and bring communities together. The BRUSCA Netball team exemplify this, whilst their membership solely consists of Malaysian and Bruneian players, they play competitively in a league with dozens of other teams, engaging in friendly competition weekly. Malika explained how her confidence has been bolstered and she now hopes to trial with a team higher in the league, that is open to women from all ethnic and religious backgrounds. This is also the aim of the refugee netball team, to improve confidence initially before encouraging intercultural communication and cohesion, through sport. Holly reiterated how the team will soon be playing against friendly local teams in the area.

It is evident through the data I have presented that when provisions are implemented, access and participation is improved. The BME Sport Cymru project exemplifies this, citing that they were able to reach over 2000 BME people in Wales and engage them in sport, when they invested the correct training and facilities to reach them.⁵² This is bolstered by the fieldwork I have collected through the interviews and accounts taken from the refugee netball team and the BRUSCA Netball team. When funding is injected in the correct places, improvements can be made. From the data I have gathered I believe that education is central in facilitating access, when communities are aware of the benefits of exercise on academic performance as well as physical and mental health, their co-operation and collaboration is fundamental to the successful delivery of sport. A direct result of such education is improved visibility of BME women in sport, and much research emphasises how visualising individuals with shared identities in leadership positions, can inspire participation.⁵³ Infrastructural provisions such as

⁵⁰ Boseley, S. (2019). *New report reveals staggering cost to NHS of alcohol abuse*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/jul/04/staggering-cost-nhs-alcohol-abuse-report> [Accessed 26 Aug. 2019].

⁵¹ Fred Coalter., ‘The Social Benefits of Sport An Overview, to Inform the Community Planning Process’ In *Sportscotland Research Report* (no. 98 Institute for Sports Research University of Stirling) p19

⁵² Wcva.org.uk. (2019). [online] Available at: https://www.wcva.org.uk/media/5798816/bme_sport_cymru_year_1_report_sep_17.pdf [Accessed 26 Aug. 2019].

⁵³ Kirsty Howells, Laura Gubby (2019). *We need more female role models in sport to inspire the next generation* | *Expert comment*. [online] Available at: <https://blogs.canterbury.ac.uk/expertcomment/we-need-more-female-role-models-in-sport-to-inspire-the-next-generation/> [Accessed 26 Aug. 2019].

specific women only sessions, coaches, life guards and changing facilities do require funding, and this is an obligation of national services, through a commitment of government policy. Such provisions can only be carried out successfully with education from the provider, with an acknowledgement of the specific needs and values that Muslim women and girls carry, and education from communities with the knowledge of the benefit of sport. The government commitment to ending discrimination through the equality act of 2010 means that it is technically illegal for women and girls to struggle with access to sport because of their gendered, religious or cultural identity.⁵⁴ However as considered earlier, many of the barriers of access are related to socio economic and class identities, and so often specific accommodations can be overlooked.

It cannot be denied that improvements have been made, and that there is an increasing awareness of the work that needs to be done to encourage participation and ensure it is fully accessible at a grass roots level.⁵⁵ Reena identified that geographically Wales experiences some disadvantages in receiving the same level of support from charities and organisations that are centred in London. As the only individual in her role in Wales, the responsibility for delivering education and training to communities and sports clubs lays solely with her, this is a central disadvantage. This is reiterated by the fact that Holly's club is the only one of its kind currently in Wales, with a sister group in development in Newport. Without the correct funding, education and facilities can only go so far.

Conclusion 8.0

This project has illustrated the current relationship between Netball and the participation and accessibility of the sport for Muslim women and girls in Wales. The dominant and fundamental theme in this discourse has reinforced the multifaceted identity of Muslim women, and how these various represented identities differ, and require specific provisions for access. The relationship between identity, gender, class and culture has been reiterated throughout, with Islam a feature that is often enforced as the dominant factor in influencing access, whereas the reality of the situation proves that other facets of identity are also central in how and why women and girls do or do not access sport. Netball has been identified as a sport that can accommodate provision for these contributing identities relatively easily, returning to the recommendations presented by Pfister, Benn and Jawad in the accept and respect declaration.⁵⁶ Netball has presented an inclusive uniform policy, women only facilities and equality policy commitments, however the data has exemplified how simply providing accommodations are not always enough, that they need to be bolstered with the correct delivery, education and understanding.

⁵⁴ GOV.UK. (2019). *Equality Act 2010: guidance*. [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance> [Accessed 26 Aug. 2019].

⁵⁵ Wcva.org.uk. (2019). [online] Available at: https://www.wcva.org.uk/media/5798816/bme_sport_cymru_year_1_report_sep_17.pdf [Accessed 26 Aug. 2019].

⁵⁶ Tansin Benn, Gertruf Pfister and Haifaa Jawad, *Muslim Women and Sport*, (Routledge studies in physical education and youth sport). 2010, eds p31

Had there been a larger time scale for this project, more time could have been spent in the field. Due to the time and scale of this project, school term had finished and so access to state school netball teams was not readily available. For a further and more intrinsic study, fieldwork specifically focused on how netball is delivered to Muslim girls in school would be extremely beneficial to illustrating a more thorough understanding as to how and why attitudes towards sport emerge, and how they can be improved. This is an area for study which can be built upon, with the foundations of which lay in this project. Additionally, as this study has presented a specific focus on depicting the experience in Wales, a comparative study could be carried out to portray the contrast to the experience in Wales to another area, such as England or London in particular.

This project has contributed to a growing body of literature that considers not only the role of religion and sport, but in deconstructing a suggested singular identity of “Muslim women”. This study supports the work of leading scholars in the field such as Burdsey, Pfister, Jawad, and Benn, that considerations of Muslims in sport must go beyond religion, or in this instance “the veil”, to truly reflect and represent the lived reality of how they access sport.⁵⁷ In this discourse the overarching narrative has exemplified the role of gender and class in contributing to the structural barriers that can effect access. By accommodating for these multifaceted identities women from vast and diverse backgrounds can all benefit the positive influence of team sport, which have been addressed in this dissertation. Most of the provisions required that have been examined throughout this work are not exclusive for Muslim women, and problems associated with access are not solely due to associations or influence of a singular “Muslim” identity. This bolsters arguments in the theory of intersectional feminism, that contributing identities are central to the experience of individual women.

⁵⁷ Daniel Burdsey, Stanley Thangaraj and Rajinder Dudrah, ‘Playing through time and space : Sport and South Asian Diaspora’, in *Sport and South Asian Diaspora: Playing through time and space* (eds Stanley Thangaraj, Daniel Burdsey and Rajinder Dudrah) 2014 p42

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Appendix 1 – Consent form for interview 10.0

Topic of interview: Engagement of Muslim Women in Netball in Wales

- I give full consent for my voluntary participation in this interview
- I understand that I can avoid, or refuse to answer any questions, with no consequences
- I understand that I can withdraw my participation if I do not feel comfortable at any time
- I have had the project and purpose of my involvement in this process explained clearly and I am aware of how my information will be used
- I understand that my participation involves a recorded conversation about my experiences playing for / organising sports teams, and my personal thoughts and experiences about Islam and sport
- I agree to being audio interviewed for this project
- I understand that in any report I will remain anonymous or be given another name, the names of anyone I mention will also be disguised
- I understand that extracts of my interview will be quoted in this project
- I am confident in conversing through the medium of English language
- I am comfortable in the interview environment that has been agreed

Signature: _____

Dated:

Appendix 2 – Example of some data in coding table 10.01

RAW DATA	PRELIMINARY CODES	FINAL CODES
<p>“I think that there are girls who don’t want to join because of socials, I think there are people like that. With drinking. If you don’t want to feel left out. When I was interested to joining SocSci I asked my friend to join too so I had someone going with me with the same values as me.” Malika</p> <p>“ISOC have a netball team, they don’t play in IMG because they don’t play outside, they asked us to play with them in a match. They have to make sure there are no guys at all.” Malika</p> <p>“I think one of the reason is in Muslim culture girls are brought up to cover up and not like your embarrassed of your body but you love it. So when you are playing and jumping and shaking it can be seeming to draw attention. Fatima</p> <p>“We trained under the Malaysian soc in first year, but every year there is a big Malaysian sports event in Nottingham. And seniors recruit people. In second year we recruited a lot of people, we recruited more from Brunei. And in second year we knew</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural barriers • Drinking culture • Accessibility of socials • Feeling like an outsider • Importance of share values • Issues with accessibility • University failing to accommodate • Variation in religious practice • Compatibility issues between cultural values associated with the religion • Perceived issues of initial access • Identifying as different or outsider in this context • Culture and ethnicity as central to engagement • Problems with recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns over the compatibility of sport with religion and culture • Failure to accommodate resulting in lack of access • Concerns over the compatibility of sport with religion and culture • Role of culture and ethnicity in encouraging participation

<p>Brunei also have annual games for netball, but didn't have enough people to play, so they asked us to join" Malika</p> <p>"I want to join socsci though but I am afraid to be with them, I should join but I am afraid, if I have one more year I will do it" Malika</p> <p>"I went to a girl's school. I used to think guys are scary. It depends on your experience with people around you. When I was in school I thought guys seemed scary but when I came here it was better." Fatima "but I went to a mixed school so this wasn't a problem for me". Malika</p> <p>"In IMG we are the only Hijabi netball team. This is the first time we have played in the league, and it is our final year here." Malika</p> <p>"If it (the matches) were inside and there would be no guys, then yes. They can't play outside because people would see." *in regard of ISOC netball team - Malika</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of joining • Desire to join • Acknowledging that it would be beneficial • Socio economic status and upbringing • Stepping out of comfort zone • Opportunities of mixed friendships in university • Minority group • Recent development that they have played competitively • Acknowledgement of accommodation needed • Desire to participate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety towards joining a group that is not organised specifically for Muslim or Malaysian players • Socio economic background in shaping views towards mixed sport • Impact of British university system in changing views • Failure to encourage Hijabi netball teams to participate previously. • Provisions recognised in order to increased Muslim participation
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