Females and sport in Saudi Arabia: An analysis of the relationship between sport, region, education, gender, and religion

Mamdouh Dawish Alruwaili

University of Stirling

Faculty of Health Sciences and Sport

PhD

_____

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Stirling

February 2020

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself, and that it embodies the results of my own research. Where appropriate, I have acknowledged the nature and extent of work carried out in collaboration with and/by others included in the thesis.

Signed: …………………………………………………………………………………..

Date: …………………………………………………………………………………..

Acknowledgements

Dedication

For my family.

"The soul of my parents"

My wife Manal, my children Anas, Muzun, Hatun, Abdulaziz, Talya.

Abstract

Background: on a number of widely used international measures, Saudi Arabia ranks very low compared to other countries with regards to gender equality. For example, according to the World Economic Forum's 2017 Global Gender Gap Report, the Kingdom is only six places above the worst performing country in the world for gender equality (out of a total of 144 that were ranked). A key feature of this gender inequality is manifested in the domain of sport. Saudi Arabia has only very recently begun to allow sports centres for women and physical education for, initially, girls in private and, more recently (in 2017), in public education. Moreover, even when women and girls have access to opportunities to take part in sport in principle, in practice significant barriers often remain. For example, the agreement of male families or restrictive dress codes, as embodied in laws and social expectations. There is a clear need, therefore, to develop a better understanding of the possible causes of this state of affairs alongside potential policy responses. This need is exacerbated by a relative lack of literature which specifically addresses these issues.

Aim: The aim of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of the inclusivity-relevant relationships between sport, gender, education, region, and religion. Moreover, based on that understanding, this thesis aims to make recommendations on how best to improve gender-inclusivity in sport in Saudi Arabia, in particular to advocate for any improvements to be led by an indigenous Islamic feminist movement. In order to gain the required understanding, the following four research questions will be asked. First, what are the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Second, what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Third, how do different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia? Fourth, how are the ideas about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia changing?

Methods: a mixed methods approach was employed. An exploratory survey was undertaken via a questionnaire which was distributed to 890 individuals (444 responded, 196 women and 248 men) in two locales: the relatively more urban locale of Dammam and the relatively more rural locale of Al Jouf. The questionnaire consisted of structured questions that required the

5

participants to simply select either one or more of the options provided (depending on the question). There were five sections in the questionnaire and each one was designed to provide data relevant to aspects of the research questions. The questionnaire data was designed to produce descriptive statistics to help frame the study. I also conducted some basic relationship analysis of those descriptive statistics. Further, 24 interviews were conducted, 13 in Dammam, and 11 in Al Jouf. In addition, thousands of 'tweets' from the micro-blogging site Twitter were examined with a representative sample of 96 selected for discussion. A thematic analysis of both the interview and Twitter data was performed.

Alongside this, I developed a theoretical framework that I call 'pragmatic Islamic feminism' which is partly inspired by the work of Judith Butler and Michel Foucault, particularly the latter's analysis of power and the former's anti-realist arguments about gender. The underlying philosophical approach I endorse is a pragmatist one in the sense that I decline to resolve the constructivist-positivist debate, or the realist versus anti-realist debate about gender, on pragmatic grounds in both cases. The theoretical framework is also inspired by the Islamic feminist movement which has recently begun to gain momentum in the Arab world. The movement combines feminist ideals with Islamic doctrine and a post-colonial geo-political outlook.

Results: Generally, in the sample there is support for women to participate in sport and physical activity, most frequently on health grounds. This support was not explicitly constrained by male authority or Islamic teachings, although religiously-motivated reasoning was apparent in a proportion of the sample. In particular, sex segregation in sport and physical activity was strongly preferred, for a mixture of explicitly religious and social reasons. More specifically, across the data support for women to participate in sport and physical activity was relatively high across education levels, city of origin and gender. However, one restriction on this participation that a majority of respondents across all data-gathering methods agreed upon was that women's participation in sport should be in accordance with the teachings of Islam, sex segregated, and occur in private settings. The segregation and privacy restrictions often appeared partly motivated, in both the responses to the questionnaire and in interviews, by concerns about women's sexual virtue. Further, although I do identify some relationship

6

between gender and participants' attitudes towards women's participation in sport, which one might expect, the relationship is perhaps less strong than might be predicted, and other relationships between education level or region appeared to be more significant.

A key unexpected result from the questionnaire data was the relatively lower degree to which male authority was rated by respondents relative to the other options such as sex segregation and modesty and chastity, which were rated most and second most important respectively. Relatedly, Islamic teaching was rated lower than male authority by respondents in the questionnaire when they were asked to choose between possible barriers to women's participation in sport, and Islamic teaching was not taken by most respondents to prohibit women's participation in sport. Nevertheless, in the interview data, religiously-motivated reasoning about women's participation in sport was frequently apparent.

Recommendations: My key recommendation is that there should be a pragmatic approach towards improving gender-inclusivity in Saudi sport. In particular, I recommend that the project of women's emancipation as a whole, which includes women's participation in sport, has perhaps the greatest chance of success in Saudi Arabia and socio-politically similar places if it is pursued via an indigenous Islamic feminist movement relatively free from colonial relationships. I also propose approaches that both indigenous and non-indigenous allies of the feminist movement might take to best achieve its goals. Chief among those is what I call the 'health argument'–which appeals to the Kingdom's pre-existing significant commitments on improving the health of its female citizens, such as the Vision 2030 development goals, and the overwhelming evidence for the many significant positive mental and physical health outcomes that physical activity can bring. The role that sport can play in increasing physical activity is very significant, I highlight, opening the possibility of increasing gender-inclusivity in sport in the Kingdom by appealing to the health implications of doing so.

Finally, I propose that further research should be undertaken to assess how effective the health argument might be across the Saudi population as a whole, and for a qualitative analysis of how Islamic feminism may best navigate the socio-cultural tensions between the desire for progress versus the desire to defend Arabic and Islamic norms in the Saudi populace.

Table of contents

List of tables and figures

15

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Researcher journey

I will begin by outlining some of the details of my journey as a researcher. I first began teaching physical education at the turn of the millennium, initially at the Ministry of Education in Al Jouf, before moving to a post teaching at the University of Al Jouf in 2003. As a physical education teacher, I have always been concerned with the role that physical activity in general and sport in particular can play in people's lives, and I feel a professional obligation towards broadening the reach of the subject across the genders. I have also encountered a range of experiences which fuelled my interest in the issue of gender-inclusivity in sport.

I have long observed the obstacles in the way of women practicing sport in Saudi Arabia. I have been aware of the unfolding health issues faced by women in the Kingdom that are linked to physical activity. And as a practicing Muslim I have direct experience of Islamic teachings and have had the opportunity to interpret them. Indeed, as I outline below in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4), based on plausible readings of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH)[1] teachings, I have also come to the belief that there are not religious grounds for the current restrictions on women practicing sport in Saudi Arabia. But outside of these general views that I have had for many years, there were specific experiences I had that spurred me towards the research project of this thesis.

For example, every time my wife became pregnant (we have five children) her doctor always recommended that she engage in some light to moderate exercise, such as walking, particularly late in her pregnancy. I recall many challenges in finding places where my wife could do this.

Also, in 2011, my daughter, who was 14 at the time, was diagnosed with adiposity and was prescribed a physical activity program. My wife and I supported my daughter as best we could, but we often found it extremely difficult to find places where my daughter could exercise or pursue sport. We would make journeys by car of an hour and 20 minutes out to the countryside to find a private space on land owned by my father for her to exercise. This brought me face-to-

---

[1] The acronym 'PBUH' stands for 'peace be upon him'.

face with the, in my view, unnecessary obstacles in the way of females practicing sport. I saw the toll it was taking on my daughter. This gave me extra motivation to try and change matters.

Nevertheless, I have found grounds for some cautious optimism as well. For example, Taif University, located in the west of Saudi Arabia close to Jedda, has recently become the first University to offer a bachelor's degree in physical education for women. I have also become aware of trends which are beginning, perhaps, in small ways to increasingly normalize women's participation in sport and other forms of physical activity in the Kingdom. For instance, due to increasing travel opportunities for women, they can more easily access sport and fitness opportunities outside of Saudi Arabia, and many do so and then share their experiences privately with their friends and families, sometimes using social media to do so. Indeed, I have heard many first and second-hand accounts of women commuting frequently abroad to places like Bahrain, Jordan, and Kuwait, to fully undertake a health-improvement program of physical activity (travelling, for example, to other countries for two or three weeks at a time to exercise).

1.2 Situated knowledge

As a scholar, also, I came to appreciate the relative lack of research in Saudi Arabia on sport in general and women's sport in particular. So much of the research on these issues comes from places like Europe or North America, which differ in very significant ways from Saudi Arabia and similar countries. As an indigenous Saudi and practicing Muslim I came to believe that I had a relatively unusual and useful perspective which could be brought to bear. In other words, I came to understand that I have what Haraway calls 'situated knowledge' (1988: 581). As she states:

> Situated knowledges are about communities, not about isolated individuals. The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular. The science question in feminism is about objectivity as positioned rationality. Its images are not the products of escape and transcendence of limits (the view from above) but the joining of partial views and halting voices into a collective subject position that promises a vision of the means of

ongoing finite embodiment, of living within limits and contradictions–of views from somewhere (1988: 590).

I can offer, therefore, a 'view from somewhere'–a perspective of significance. As an indigenous Saudi and practicing Muslim I can offer an important partial view to help constitute the collective subjective position. I also recognise that, although I believe my perspective has significance, that it is a *partial* perspective. I am male and that gives me one kind of epistemic standpoint, and not another, say: the female standpoint. This comes with costs and benefits. On the one hand, as a male, particularly a Saudi male, researching gender, my standpoint is not a crowded one. This makes my contribution relatively unusual and, to that extent at least, rarer and potentially more valuable. On the other hand, given the gender asymmetries in Saudi Arabia generally, and in the issues I am investigating, my maleness at the very least requires me to reflect carefully on my own gender perspective and how that relates to the perspectives of those whose gender differs. This is an ongoing journey for me, and although this thesis is an important landmark in that journey it is very far from the end of it.

Always with me on that journey has been the understanding that being male, educated, and relatively well-off, puts me in a position of privilege: the very opportunity to conduct research on the nature of this thesis is symptomatic of that. It is far less likely that a female (never mind uneducated or not well-off) would have the same opportunity or be able to take advantage of that opportunity with as relatively few obstacles as I have faced in virtue of my privileges. And nowhere was this privilege more apparent than during my fieldwork. I was able to directly converse with other males who were otherwise unknown to me in a way that would have simply been impossible for a Saudi female to. It is perhaps a deep irony in my research that, although it concerns the issue of a lack of female gender-inclusivity in Saudi sport, this kind of research could not, practically speaking, have been carried out by a Saudi woman. Nevertheless, I am hopeful that this is no longer the case, or at least will not be the case for very much longer as the recent change in government has resulted in some significant gender liberalisations (I discuss key examples of these below).

Until such time as gender and other inequities are in the past, in participant-centred research there remains a requirement for what King first called 'power-sensitive conversations' (King 1987–cited in Haraway 1988: 590n17). These are conversations that are sensitive to the power asymmetries which exist between the conversers. How to be appropriately sensitive to such asymmetries is itself a difficult issue to fully resolve, but it includes understanding that a researcher perceived to be an authority figure or outsider must come to terms with how that perception will influence their interactions. This will require a high degree of self-awareness and reflection on the process of communicating effectively with participants. In particular, there is the issue of how participants can be motivated to give responses that they feel are expected of them rather than more authentic responses. I do not believe that it is possible to guarantee that every participant in my study did not give inauthentic responses, but I do believe that the overwhelming majority felt comfortable enough to express themselves freely and openly. The range of responses revealed in my data is evidence of that, I contend.

Other parts of my situated knowledge include my general cultural knowledge of Saudi society and key parts of its institutional structures, especially the education system. I am hopeful that I can use that knowledge to view the culture with a sympathetic, if critical, eye. Indeed, this highlights something of a dilemma faced by those who are endeavouring to investigate social phenomena to some significant degree from 'the inside'. Although one's situated knowledge can provide insight, it can also be a veil: obscuring truths from view behind a wall of assumption. Navigating this dilemma can be difficult and requires continual self-reflection, something that I have keenly pursued throughout the course of my research.

1.3 Thesis topic background

Women's sport in Saudi Arabia is currently heavily restricted and these restrictions form part of a wider of pattern of gender inequality in which women often struggle to access the same opportunities as men. Indeed, according to the 2017 Global Gender Gap Report, which assesses countries along four key indicators: economic participation and opportunity, educational

attainment, political empowerment, and health and survival, Saudi Arabia currently ranks 138 out of 144 countries (Schwab et al. 2017: 11).

In the realm of sport, women, particularly women who are not very wealthy, often struggle to access sporting facilities, although there have been recent improvements in that regard. In 2013, the first sports centre for women was opened and private schools were allowed to provide physical education for girls for the first time, opening the way for this also to occur in public schools, which then began to occur in the Autumn of 2017 (see HRW 2017). However, even when women do have access to sporting facilities it often comes with significant obstacles: it can require the agreement of male family members, and various codes of behaviour must be followed, including dressing 'modestly' and adhering to strict sex segregation.

Nevertheless, there is arguably a general trend towards liberalisation in the Kingdom. Most significantly, the Vision 2030 goals, which form part of Saudi Arabia's commitment to the United Nations Strategic Development Goals. For example, the Quality of Life Program 2020, which forms a major part of Vision 2030, is intended to improve the basic living standards for citizens and the extent to which citizens are able to live 'pleasant and comfortable' lives (QoL Program Document 2017: 10).[2]

Further evidence of this liberalising trend can be found in such facts as that in 2018 women spectators were allowed in sports stadiums, private women's soccer clubs were licensed, and women were allowed to drive for the first time. This latter change in policy should have a general benefit for the accessibility of sporting infrastructure and opportunities for a significant proportion of women.

Hence, the situation for women in general, and women's sport in Saudi Arabia, appears to be undergoing significant changes. This provides fertile ground for research which this thesis is intended to exploit.

---

[2] Vision 2030 should not be conflated with Saudization or Nitaqat, which is a part of the of the Vision 2030 goals and involves targets for increasing the percentages of Saudi's in employment.

1.4 Thesis overview

I examine how gender, education, region, and religion may play a role in attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia. As this is an exploratory study, it is focussed on two places in the Kingdom: Dammam and Al Jouf. The former is a relatively more urban setting, the latter relatively more rural. I use a mixture of interviews involving 24 participants and survey data involving 444 participants. I also examine attitudes expressed on the social media platform Twitter, discussing the content of 96 tweets.

I argue that the overall spread of this evidence suggests that there is a strong majority in favour of women's participation in sport in the samples that I provide descriptive statistics for. This majority in favour of women's participation in sport seem to hold their view for a variety of reasons, including: personal autonomy, religious endorsement, and–most frequently–health benefits. And yet, the evidence also reveals that there is a strong majority in favour of women's participation in sport occurring only within certain explicitly Islamic boundaries, including, in particular: sex segregation.

In the samples, I also identify relationships between gender and participants' attitudes towards women's participation in sport, but this is less strong than the relationships between education level and region, with more educated participants displaying the most liberal attitudes towards women's sport, especially those from Dammam.

I call the theoretical framework for the study 'pragmatist feminism' which is inspired by the work of Judith Butler and Michel Foucault. In particular, I adopt an analysis of how social power persists and is distributed in society which resists 'top-down' style analyses that view power as persisting in concentrations (typically institutions) which is then exercised on the rest of those who do not have power. Instead, I adopt a Foucault-inspired analysis of power which employs an analogy involving how 'micro-physics' views ordinary objects like tables and chairs. According to micro-physics, the properties that tables and chairs (and other ordinary objects) have emerge from the complex interactions of countless sub-atomic particles. Societies, a reading of Foucault suggests, are like this in so far as the power relations in those

societies emerge from the complex interactions of all the individual units in the societies: the people (in particular their psychologies). As he states:

> power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere… power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society (1978: 93)

I apply this model to the data when analysing it in order to explain some of the results; observing, in particular, that the most powerful restrictions on women's sport (in so far as they currently seem the most deeply embedded) are powerful because of the current widespread acceptance of those restrictions across the population. Alongside this, I adopt a pragmatist agnosticism regarding the essentialism/anti-essentialism and realism/anti-realism debates about gender. This is partly inspired by some of Butler's anti-realist arguments (which is significantly informed by large parts of Foucault's approach), according to which terms like 'woman' and 'man' can be usefully employed without a complete conceptual analysis that determines the essential features which all women, or all men, share (be that feature social, biological, or anything else). I agree with Butler to the extent that we should resist the temptation to employ an over-reaching and potentially exclusionary definition, although I also resist the conclusion that there is no such thing as gender at all. As it might be put: I reject nihilism about gender while accepting scepticism about the realistic possibility of fully analysing it.

A further key part of the argument presented in this thesis is that the relationship between health and sport is key. As I detail in Chapter 2, there is overwhelming evidence for a causal relationship between physical activity and mental and physical health outcomes. This, I further suggest in Chapter 6, indicates the importance of the connection between health and sport, a central form of, and way of achieving, physical activity. Indeed, as I discuss in Chapter 6, participants who were surveyed, or interviewed, and who were broadly positive about women's participation in sport seemed most frequently to cite health grounds in support. This suggests, I contend, that arguing in favour of greater gender-inclusivity in sport in Saudi Arabia (and perhaps elsewhere in the Middle East) on health grounds may prove fruitful.

Moreover, I also highlight how Saudi Arabia's commitments to such international frameworks as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development appears to be an underappreciated formal commitment to making significant progress towards greater gender-inclusivity in sport. For example, in the first 'Voluntary National Review' of Saudi Arabia's progress towards achieving the Vision 2030 goals Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman stated:

> Women's work is very important. Women make up half of society and we want it to be a productive half (Voluntary National Review KSA 2018: 61).

And in the review, the section related to Goal 3 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly highlights 'prevention against health threats' and promoting 'sports activities in society' (Voluntary National Review KSA 2018: 46). On the one hand, the review does not give any details about how the promoting of sport (or physical activity more broadly) is being used as a preventative health measure, or about how promoting sports activities is playing a role in improving gender equality. But on the other hand, the review appears to demonstrate, I suggest, that key institutional inclusion-promoting principles are to a large extent in place, which would appear to offer significant opportunities for political progress.

Relatedly, I put forward some recommendations based on the data and my analysis for how to further women's sport in Saudi Arabia. Chief among these is the suggestion that furthering women's emancipation as a whole, of which women's participation in sport is but one part, is best pursued in Saudi Arabia and socio-politically similar places if it is championed by an indigenous Islamic feminist movement free from colonial relationships. I discuss the details of that movement in Chapter 3, Section 3.6, and how it might best move forward with the issue of sport in particular in Chapter 6.

Indeed, as I discuss in Chapter 6, a major challenge facing the indigenous Islamic feminist movement and its allies is how to resist the threat of real or perceived colonialism with regards to feminist ideology. The very notion of an *Islamic* feminist movement is born in significant part out of the need for a post-colonial feminist movement in many parts of the Islamic world. A key feature of this thesis is the outline that I provide for how indigenous and non-indigenous elements might fruitfully interact in propelling the movement forward. I identify two general

roles that might be occupied: 'in group' and 'out group'. Examples of those who would likely occupy the latter role would include Islamic men or non-Islamic Western women. Examples of the former would include Islamic women. I also identify an important way in which those two roles might work together modelled on what I suggest is an important driver in the history of feminist progress in other parts of the world: a process of idea exchange I call 'interlocution'.

I also discuss in some detail how this process of interlocution is likely playing, and will continue to play, a major part in the progress of the Islamic feminist movement. For example, I examine how dissemination, revaluing, reinforcement, and elimination can often occur independently of the intentions of interlocutors. As one might say, the road to failed political change is paved with good intentions. A significant part of my examination of this concerns what I call 'meta-beliefs', where a meta-belief is an individual's belief about the degree to which other beliefs are open to change. This, I suggest, demonstrates that an important consideration for those engaged in interlocution with the Islamic feminist movement, or Islamic women more generally, is to focus on what the dominant meta-beliefs are and how they might be navigated. I also situate this within my neo-Foucauldian analysis of power in 'microphysical' terms and use some of the exploratory research in this thesis to help generate useful avenues for further research.

1.4 Research aims

The aim of this thesis is to attain a better understanding of the inclusivity-relevant relationships between sport, gender, education, region, and religion. Moreover, based on that understanding, this thesis aims to make recommendations on how best to improve gender-inclusivity in sport in Saudi Arabia, in particular to advocate for any improvements to be led by an indigenous Islamic feminist movement. Along the way, I propose a pragmatist feminist framework in which to situate this understanding and help justify my argument in favour of a specifically Islamic feminist movement, alongside a mixed-methods approach to data collection. In order to gain the required understanding, the following four research questions will be asked.

First, what are the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? In answering this question, I intend to shed some light on the current state of views on the topic in the sample of participants in order to act as a barometer for the rest of the research.

Second, what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? My goal in answering this question is to develop a better picture of the non-religious factors that might influence attitudes, and how malleable those factors may be.

Third, how do different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia? Given the importance of religion to Saudi life, this question is intended to provide the relevant degree of focus for that issue.

Fourth, how are the ideas about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia changing? This question is intended to help shed light on the extent to which there may be hope for progress on the issue of women's participation in sport in Kingdom, and in which directions.

1.5 Thesis outline

In Chapter 2: Participation, Health, and Physical Activity, I explore relevant parts of the literature on women's participation in sports, including: global data on women's sporting participation rates and the health benefits of sporting and other forms of physical activity. The global participation picture is, broadly, that in most parts of the developed world there are relatively small male-female participation differences, with greater disparities in many parts of the developing world. I then provide an extended review of the empirical literature which demonstrates overwhelming evidence for the causal relationship between physical activity and mental and physical health.

Finally, I detail the literature relevant to Saudi Arabia's international public health policy commitments. I conclude the chapter by proposing a 'health argument' in support of increasing participation rates in sport for females in Saudi Arabia supported by the empirical data demonstrating a causal connection between physical activity and sport combined with clear,

pre-existing, high-level Saudi policy commitments to 'model' international health guidelines that strongly emphasise increasing rates of physical activity.

In Chapter 3: Education, Gender, and Religion, I explore relevant parts of the literature on the social mechanisms that play a role in women's sporting participation; the link between education-level and liberal attitudes; the relationship between religion and sport; and the relationship between feminism and Islam. In the chapter I highlight the strong evidence that education can have a major liberalising effect, and the evidence that Saudi Arabia is becoming increasingly well-educated and has achieved a degree of gender equality in access to education that is comparable in many respects with places in Northern Europe and North America. Nevertheless, I also contend, in Saudi Arabia there remain significant cultural, religious, and political barriers in the way of improving women's participation in sport. I also suggest that the remaining barriers will most likely best be surmounted by an indigenous Islamic feminist movement, the general form of which I outline and discuss.

In Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Methods, I outline the philosophical foundations of my thesis. In particular, I introduce and justify my pragmatist-feminist approach, inspired by the work of Butler and Foucault. I outline the ontological, epistemological, and methodological underpinnings of the study, comparing objectivist and constructivist ontologies to my preferred pragmatist one. I also contrast positivist and interpretivist epistemologies with the critical realist approach, the latter of which I adopt. I then show how the critical realist epistemology supports my mixed methods approach.

From these foundations, I then fill in the details of my pragmatist-feminist paradigm, describing Butler's influential anti-gender realist arguments, which partly motivate my pragmatist response to the gender realism anti-realism debate. Concomitantly, I explain Foucault's analysis of power (which heavily informed Butler's work): as to be understood analogously to 'micro-physics' (as Foucault puts it)–in that the properties of material objects, it seems, arise out of the complex interactions of the underlying micro-particle constituents of those objects, rather in any 'top-down' way. Similarly, Foucault suggests, power relations in any society emerge out of the complex interactions of the basic societal constituents, namely: individual psychologies, which

make up the 'veins and arteries' through which the power flows. And once this analysis of power has been adopted, questions arise about where exactly the main arteries of power are in the distributed network of power that exists in any society. Indeed, one way of understanding the goals of this study is to identify some of those arteries, in particular to begin to distinguish the social, cultural, and religious 'flows' of power, and how they influence the participation of women in sport in Saudi Arabia.

In addition, I give an overview of the data collection instruments and summarise the research and thematic coding process, and discuss some possible methodological and ethical issues, alongside other limitations of the research.

In Chapter 5: Results and Analysis, I present the descriptive data from the interviews, questionnaire survey, and Twitter. In doing so, I identify relationships between, on the one hand, individual's level of education, city of origin, gender, and beliefs about culture and Islam, and on the other beliefs about women's participation in sports in Saudi Arabia. I break down the data into four themes: (i) the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sports in Al Jouf and Dammam; (ii) the key social, cultural and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia; (iii) how different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia; and (iv): ways in which ideas towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia are changing.

In Chapter 6: Conclusion, I begin by outlining in the chapter introduction the argument for my central contention: there are key social and policy changes which can align with some of the central goals of Islamic feminism via a health-centred movement with the promotion of physical activity and sport for girls and women at its core. I summarise my key findings, reflecting upon them in the light of my broader Foucauldian and Butlerian framework, and show how both can support the health-centred movement I advocate. In addition, in Section 6.1, I discuss existing Saudi policy on health and women and put forward further policy proposals which could plausibly be pursued by the Islamic feminist movement. I inform my discussion of policy by parts of my data as well as my broader theoretical framework that I introduced in my introduction to Chapter 6. In Section 6.2, I outline my health argument, which

contends that the Islamic feminist movement is well-placed to pursue greater gender-inclusivity in sport in the Kingdom by appeal to health considerations. In Section 6.3, I offer reflections on how further progress with gender-inclusivity might be made, summarise my overall recommendations, and suggest two avenues for further research. Namely: (i) a quantitative, representational survey of the Saudi populace on their views on gender-inclusivity in sport; (ii) a qualitative analysis of how Islamic feminism might best make progress with the socio-cultural tensions between the desire for progress versus the desire to defend Arabic and Islamic norms.

Chapter 2: Participation, Health, and Physical Activity

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores relevant parts of the literature on women's participation in sports, including: global data on women's sporting participation rates and the health benefits of sporting and other forms of physical activity.

In Section 2.2, I describe the literature search process relevant to participation, health, and physical activity.

In Section 2.3 I discuss the limits of my literature search process.

In Section 2.4, I discuss my conceptualisations of gender, 'sport', 'physical activity', 'exercise', and 'physical fitness'. I employ definitions of 'physical activity', 'exercise', and 'physical fitness' which are in very wide currency in the literature, and a definition of 'sport' which builds on recent philosophical inquiry into the term's meaning.

In Section 2.5, I outline the data relevant to determining global participation rates in sport. I discuss how determining rates of sporting participation is challenging because of a lack of accessible data. Nevertheless, I present a range of studies which, when collated, allow a global picture to emerge. That global picture is, broadly, that in most parts of the developed world (particularly Europe and North America) there are relatively small differences in participation rates between males and females, whereas in many parts of the developing world there are greater disparities.

In Section 2.6, I provide an extended review of the empirical literature relevant to the health benefits of sport. Much of the literature focusses on physical activity or physical fitness and health, which I outline key parts of. I suggest that although there is some scope for criticism of that literature, the main conclusion to be drawn is that there is overwhelming evidence for the causal health benefits of physical activity across a wide range of mental and physical health outcomes.

In Section 2.7, I discuss some of the evidence which relates to specific sports rather than physical activity in general. I outline and discuss evidence which might suggest that participation in sports which typically encourage higher intensity physical activity, such as competitive team sports like football, may be more likely to lead to health benefits.

In Section 2.8, I discuss some of the central literature on policy approaches to increasing physical activity in general, and I reflect on some of the implications that this might have for increasing sporting and related activity. I demonstrate that there are international commitments Saudi Arabia has already made which should entail that Saudi women should have equal sporting-participation opportunities with men.

I conclude in Section 2.9, where I discuss the potential implications of the strength of evidence for the health benefits of sport and related activities. In particular, I suggest that the opportunity to pursue a 'health argument' in support of increasing participation rates in sport for females in Saudi Arabia is opened up by the strength of the empirical data demonstrating a causal connection between physical activity and sport combined with clear, pre-existing, high-level Saudi policy commitments to 'model' international health guidelines that strongly emphasise increasing rates of physical activity.

2.2 Literature search process

The 'Participation, Health, and Physical activity' literature review was primarily carried out using the Medline/PubMed database. Three searches of that database were conducted in total. For the first two searches, dates were restricted to cover the last 20 years only (with some exceptions for especially influential studies which were more than 20 years old and were prominently referred to in literature which fell within the date range). This date-range was selected in order to focus on the more recent literature which is more likely to give both more gender-relevant data and data which is more contemporary. The option 'studies with humans' and 'articles in English' were selected. The following combinations of keywords in the 'title/abstract' field were employed to detect relevant articles in the first search: '(sport OR exercise OR activity OR fitness OR sedentary behaviour) AND (health OR epidemiological)

AND (meta-analysis OR review)'. This search returned over 19,000 articles. The first search was further refined by reducing the date range to 15 years and also selecting the 'review' option. The second search returned over 15,000 articles.

To select relevant articles following the second search, I examined the title and abstract of the first 2000 of the returned articles, which were organised with the most recent first. Articles which appeared both to be highly relevant to my topic, general, and authoritative, were saved for closer examination.[3] I assessed relevance by comparing the title and abstract with the question that I was seeking answers for: what evidence is there for a causal relationship between physical activity and sport? I selected those articles which gave an overview of as much of the recent literature as possible.

In addition, I did a third search with the following combinations of keywords in the 'title/abstract' field: '(sport OR exercise OR activity OR fitness OR sedentary behaviour) AND (participation OR involvement OR rate)'. I selected the 'studies with humans' and 'articles in English' options. This search returned several thousand articles, the first 1000 of which I examined, and only a handful of those appeared directly relevant to answering the question I was interested in: what are the global participation rates for sport or physical activity? I concluded from this search that the data for this question was difficult to obtain. I then directly consulted the World Health Organisation's website and other resources which some of the literature appeared to refer to, but typically did not give a full analysis of. Following those breadcrumbs in addition to the studies that I found in the third search led me to obtain the data on global participation rates that I discuss in more detail below.

2.3 Literature search process: limits

Regarding limitations, an immediate concern is with the lack of data on global participation rates in sport. As I discuss further below, in order to approach some estimate of global rates

---

[3] I assessed authoritativeness in terms of how rigorous the review or meta-analysis was in assessing the studies to be included; for example, whether such measures as the *Newcastle-Ottawa Quality Assessment Scale* or *Effective Public Health Practice Project Quality Assessment Tool* were applied.

inferences need to be drawn from limited data involving disparate studies. This is a sub-optimal state of affairs and entails that caution should be used regarding any conclusions drawn.

A further limitation is that although the review was relatively wide-ranging, it was not exhaustive and there may be significant studies which were not included. Of the studies that I did include, I tried to mitigate for this by examining the citations of the reviews and meta-analyses to check my own search against the major citations of the authoritative studies that I used.

2.4 Conceptualising gender, sport, health and related terms

The terms 'gender', 'sex', 'woman', 'man' and the relevant cognates are somewhat contested terms which can be used in conflicting senses. For example, Zipp and Nauright say the following about gender:

> We conceptualise gender as a social construct, developed through social practice and governed by a power dynamic that privileges men and subjugates women… Gender is fluid, relational and non-binary… It is not determined by biological sex nor does it function as a fixed reality, but rather a social process experienced, performed and interpreted (2018: 33).

This expansive definition requires unpacking. One way to do this is to note how the definition overlaps but also contrasts with other definitions. Instructive examples can be found in the variety of definitions of 'gender identity' that can be found in the literature, definitions which are derivative of definitions of gender and amount to an application of the latter. Indeed, debates about what a gender identity is can help to illuminate how challenging it can be to apply a particular definition of gender: what can appear at first glance to be plausible in the abstract can often have potential deficiencies revealed when 'put to work'. Consider the following examples.

First, the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) defines 'gender identity' as follows:

A person's intrinsic sense of being male (a boy or a man), female (a girl or woman), or an alternative gender (e.g., boygirl, girlboy, transgender, genderqueer, eunuch) (WPATH 2002: 96).

At first glance, it is not clear that the examples of genders given provide non-circular information about the sense in which 'gender' is being employed in the definition. If one already understands what 'genderqueer' means, then one will already understand what 'gender' means, hence genderqueer as not an informative example to illuminate the concept of gender. This issue is exacerbated by the fact that the WPATH definition seems to slide between defining gender by appeal to the sense of one's sex ('being male') and the sense of one's gender ('being genderqueer'). Thus, confusion is added to the apparent circularity.

In addition, standard definitions of 'eunuch' are 'castrated male' (e.g. Martin and McFerran OED Nursing 2017). If this is what is intended in the WPATH definition's use of 'eunuch', then it seems like a biological state, being male, and a specific alteration of the sex organs, castration, can determine a gender: being a eunuch. If so, then the WPATH definition of gender seems directly at odds with Zipp and Nauright's definition which includes the explicit condition that gender is never 'determined by biological sex'.

And this is just the beginnings of the conceptual thicket. Compare the WPATH definition to Hines' definition of gender identity, given in her recent book *Is Gender Fluid?* Hines' definition is somewhat similar to the WPATH definition: 'a person's internal sense of being male, female, a combination of the two, or neither' (Hines 2018: Introduction). Here, questions can be asked about the differences between Hines' definition, which employs only sex terms (a sense of being male, female, a combination, or neither), and the WPATH definition, which uses sex and gender terms. Can one analyse the WPATH definition such that apparently circular reference to gender in the definition is removed– perhaps by defining 'genderqueer' (say) in Hines' terms (e.g. as a combination of or neither male or female)? If one can, then this needs to be demonstrated, and it is not immediately clear how to do that. If one can't, then the Hines and WPATH definitions are inconsistent. Either way, the waters remain muddy.

This lack of clarity is compounded when other definitions are considered. Compare Hines' definition to the American Psychological Association's definition, according to which gender identity is 'a person's basic sense of being male, female, or of indeterminate sex' (APA 2009: 28). The APA's definition is taken from an influential book by Robert Stoller, *Sex and Gender* (1968)–indeed the WPATH also cite Stoller when defining gender (although the WPATH definition diverges from Stoller's). In Stoller's view, 'gender identity is the sense of knowing to which sex one belongs, that is, the awareness "I am male" or "I am female"' (1964: 221).

Again, if we compare the APA/Stoller's understanding of gender to Zipp and Nauright's there appear to some significant differences. Zipp and Nauright foreground the social or cultural over the biological, whereas the APA and Stoller root gender, ultimately, in sex. Or gender identity at least, although interestingly, the APA's definition of 'gender' simpliciter is: 'the psychological, behavioural, or cultural characteristics associated with maleness and femaleness' (APA 2009: 28). This appears consistent with the APA/Stoller's rooting of gender identity in awareness of sex, but also appears inconsistent with the Zipp and Nauright definition, which does not root gender in sex.

Standing back and considering the conceptual terrain as a whole invites some difficult questions. To see why, first grant (a) the key elements of Zipp and Nauright's definition of gender as a 'social construct' which is 'fluid… not determined by sex', and is not 'a fixed reality'. Second, grant (b) that sex is biologically determined. Third, grant (c) that one's gender identity is the awareness of one's sex. It would then seem to follow that: either *sex* is fluid, not a fixed reality, and socially constructed, or that either (a), (b), or (c) is false. This follows because if sex is fixed, and one's gender identity is awareness of one's sex, then one's gender identity is fixed (assuming error-free awareness). So either sex is not fixed, or (a), (b), or (c) is false. But it is not immediately obvious that sex is either fluid, not a fixed reality, or socially constructed, nor is it obvious whether (a), (b), or (c) is false. This deep into the thicket, therefore, it is not immediately clear which way one should turn.

I will return to this issue in Chapter 4, where I discuss in detail how I propose to avoid the difficulties with defining gender and its cognates by adopting a pragmatic approach. For

present purposes, therefore, I will employ terms like 'sex' and 'gender' without offering an explicit definition as, until Chapter 4, nothing that I claim will hang on any of the major differences in how the terms are typically defined.

Matters are relatively more tractable when considering the terms 'sport', 'physical activity', 'exercise', 'physical fitness' and cognates, although these terms have meanings which imperfectly overlap. The latter three terms are more straightforward to define as they have meanings which are widely employed and defined according to relatively robust empirical measures. For example, the term 'physical activity' (henceforth: PA) will be taken to refer to any bodily movement caused by skeletal muscle contraction such that energy expenditure exceeds the basal level (WHO 2018). Along similar lines, the term 'exercise' will be taken to refer to PA which is planned and structured to achieve improvement in physical fitness (WHO 2018). And 'physical fitness' will be taken to refer to a set of attributes (such as muscular endurance, agility, and maximal oxygen uptake) that people can possess which enable them to perform PA (WHO 2018).

Definitions of the term 'sport', however, tend to be more controversial. For example, as Morgan states:

> Some [e.g. McAloon 1991] have argued that attempts at precise definitions gloss over the messy but subtle historical shifts that mark our cultural conceptions of sport and that signal important changes in their meanings… [such that] philosophical definitions of sport are virtually useless. Whereas others [including Morgan himself] argue that while it is true that definitional enquiry does aim to cut through the messiness and imprecision of our historical conceptions of sport, the point of doing so is to explicate and sharpen those historical meanings not to bypass or to distort them. After all, much of what is said about sport in our cultural conversations… is confused and politically charged in ways that often conceal more than they reveal (2000: 207).

The stance that I take in this thesis is in broad agreement with the position of Morgan. In my view it is a significant mistake to contend, as those such as McAloon (1991) do, that attempts to define sport are misguided. Either the argument which concludes that *sport cannot be*

defined is an argument about a coherent entity or it is not. If the latter, then the entire sociology *of sport* is open to question as a minimally coherent discipline. I will treat it as an assumption of this thesis that the sociology of sport is a minimally coherent discipline. Thus, any argument which concludes that sport cannot be defined can be rejected on the basis that it must contradict this assumption.

This invites a question, however: how should sport be defined? There are no standard definitions in the literature which gain universal ascent, but there are some indications of how sport tends to be understood. For example, *The European Sport for All Charter* (Council of Europe 1980) analyses sport as a kind of human activity comprised of the following four categories:

1. Competitive games… which are characterised by the acceptance of rules and responses to opposing challenge.

2. Outdoor pursuits in which participants seek to negotiate some particular 'terrain' (signifying in this context an area of open country, forest, mountain, stretch of water or sky); the challenges derive from the manner of negotiation adopted and are modified by the particular terrain selected and the conditions of wind and weather prevailing.

3. Aesthetic movement which includes activities in the performance of which the individual is not so much looking beyond himself and is responding to the sensuous pleasure of patterned bodily movement, for example dance, figure-skating, forms of rhythmic gymnastics and recreational swimming.

4. Conditioning activity, i.e. forms of exercise or movement undertaken less for any immediate sense of kinaesthetic pleasure than from long-term effects the exercise may have in improving or maintaining physical working capacity and rendering subsequently a feeling of general well-being.

However, while this analysis of sport appears to have some descriptive utility it fails to make clear what it is that the four categories have in common in virtue of which they are appropriately referable to as 'categories *of sport*'. In my view the reason for this is that the concept of sport is, by its very nature, a vague concept, and so attempts to analyse or define what a sport is in terms of 'necessary and sufficient conditions' are bound to fail.[4] In other words, I do not believe it is possible to provide an exhaustive, informative analysis of what sport is of the form '*x* is sport if and only if *x* has features A, B, and C.' Nevertheless, vagueness does not by itself make a concept illegitimate. Many, perhaps even most, social concepts are vague: *person*, *society, ethnicity*, and so on. In the sense of interest here, a concept is vague if and only if it is impossible to provide an informative analysis of that concept in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. The impossibility here arises because vague concepts by their very nature have undecidable 'boundary cases' (Sorensen 2018). Try, for example, to determine to informatively specify the necessary and sufficient conditions for what makes something a society as opposed to a mere group of people or a family (assuming the latter two are distinct from the former). Such efforts do not seem to promise success, which is what should be expected when dealing with vague concepts, the boundaries of which are, in virtue of the very nature of the concepts themselves, unclear. And yet, such concepts appear to represent real things: people, societies, ethnicities and so on exist and are amenable to scientific study, the vagueness of the relevant concepts notwithstanding.

Thus, although sport is a vague concept and so cannot be classically defined in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, its typical or 'core' features can still be identified. And it seems clear that some general description of what is taken to be the target of inquiry in this thesis is required. So, while the above *European Sport for All Charter* is of some use (and my own definition is broadly consistent with it), I will go further by trying to give some indication of what I take to be at least typical features that sporting practice, intuitively understood, appears to share.

---

[4] I am here referring to the so-called 'classical account' of definition or analysis, according to which definitions, or analyses, take the following form 'A if and only if B, C, and D', and where B, C, and D are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for A. For example, A is a triangle if and only if A is: B – a plane figure; C – with three straight sides; and D - with three angles. For further details see Brennan 2017.

Hence, in this thesis, the term 'sport' will be taken to refer to PA in which participants are expected to adhere to agreed norms which govern how an expected, defined goal is to be achieved, where that goal is not solely the achievement of physical fitness as such, but rather an arbitrary goal set by the relevant norms. Typically (or perhaps ideally), the attempt to achieve the relevant goal in sport is pursued primarily for pleasure. Sports in this sense are often understood as a subset of games which, as Bernard Suits has stated, involve the 'voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles' (1973: 55). Understood thus, a useful taxonomy of sport would include: 'invasion' games such as football, 'net' games such as tennis, 'wall' games such as squash, 'fielding' games such as cricket, and 'target' games such as golf, among others (see Griffin et al. 1997: 10).

The above is a relatively *narrow* definition of 'sport'. It will sometimes be useful to use 'sport' in a *broad* sense to mean, roughly: 'any PA originally or currently conducted in a leisure context'.[5] The narrow sense of 'sport' would not include all forms of 'working out' or 'physical fitness enhancing' activities (although it may include some), whereas the broader sense of 'sport' would. The reader can assume that when I use 'sport' or cognates I mean it in the narrower sense unless I specify otherwise.

Finally, it will be useful to discuss how the term 'health' and cognates are understood. A widely accepted definition is given in the WHO constitution as: 'A state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (WHO: Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion 1986).

Related conceptualisations of health which have become embedded in the public health literature and major health-focussed international organisations such as the WHO include that health is a means to an end which

---

[5] Here, the 'originally conducted in a leisure context' is intended to include what intuitively seems like sporting activity but which occurs in a professional context. It seems right to say that professional tennis players are still doing sport even though they are doing it professionally. The above broad definition of 'sport' gets that right because tennis was originally conducted in a leisure context. Also, 'currently conducted…' is intended to include those physical activities which were originally conducted in non-leisure contexts, such as archery or horse-riding, but which are now conducted in leisure contexts.

can be expressed in functional terms as a resource which permits people to lead an individually, socially and economically productive life…health is a resource for everyday life, not the object of living. It is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources as well as physical capabilities [and represents] a fundamental human right' (WHO: Health Promotion Glossary, 1998: 1).

One key point to note about such expansive conceptualisations of health is that they have potentially wide-ranging implications for social policy and societal organisation more generally. Achieving health understood as a complete state of physical, social, and mental wellbeing would appear to require that society be peaceful, poverty free, equitable, that the natural environment be sustainably stable, and that individual's lives have sufficient opportunity for the attainment of meaningful goals (such as fulfilling interpersonal relationships, spiritual satisfaction, or professional success).

Recognising all this demonstrates the extent to which health is deeply connected to a broad range of social, economic, and even religious conditions.

2.5 Global participation rates in sport

It is difficult to determine global participation rates in sport and PA for at least two reasons. First, there is no single international study which tracks this information. Second, although there are a number of national and regional studies which do (the results of which can be collated), significant obstacles remain: (i) problems of equivalence of meaning across studies, for example whether the same terms, or supposedly synonymous terms from different languages, have the same meaning; (ii) the quality of data across studies, for example whether the same data sets conform to the same standards; and (iii) although there is some data on global PA rates, which will be discussed below, it can be difficult to discern what proportion of the measured PA involves sporting participation per se. Even the broad definition of 'sport' that I offer above, which includes 'working out' and other specifically fitness-enhancing-focussed activities, does not include, for example, PA achieved by, say, commuting to work, or looking after one's family. Hence, when examining global PA measures, one should be

cautious about drawing inferences, given the goal of determining *sporting* participation rates, in either the narrow or broad sense.

These issues can, in general, frustrate straightforward collation of cross-national studies, and this is recognised in the literature (Blasius and Thiessen 2006; Harkness 2006; Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik and Harkness 2005; Van Tuyckom, Bracke, & Scheerder 2011). Nevertheless, somewhat imperfect data is better than no data at all, and the above problems are not sufficient, in my view, to render pointless the goal of determining global participation rates for sport: so long as the actual and possible problems with the data are fully understood. Hence, the results I will now present, both of regional studies which collate various national studies, and my own attempt to collate the results of national and regional studies to develop a global view, should be understood with the above caveats in mind.

I will begin by outlining the range of studies that will be examined, noting their scope and potential limitations, before presenting the data those studies contain and then collating that data into a more global picture and connecting them to my research. I group the studies as follows: (i) six studies which contain data relating specifically to sport in something like the sense of that term employed in this thesis; (ii) two studies which measure global PA rates; and (iii) one study which measures the proportion of women in sport governing bodies and organisations.

(i)   Sport studies

There are widely cited regional studies in the developed world, particularly in Europe and North America, which provide a key component of the global picture. In Europe, there are a large number of national studies, but no attempt has been made to collate those results. One possible reason for this is cross-study heterogeneity. The main study which covers most of the region is the European Commission's 2014 *Special Eurobarometer 412 Sport and Physical Activity* (SESPA), a cross-sectional survey carried out in the 28 Member States of the European Union between 23 November and 2 December 2013 (n=27,919), and which followed on from comparable surveys in 2009 and 2002. Participants were interviewed face-to-face in their

native language regarding a range of issues, including the extent to which they 'exercise or play sport', where 'exercise or sport' was defined as 'any form of PA which you do in a sport context or sport-related setting, such as swimming, training in a fitness centre or sport club, running in the park, etc.' (SESPA 2014: 6n4). To that extent, the SESPA definition at least appears to be reasonably close to the definition of sport employed in this thesis and on that basis may be considered to provide data for the region which is relevant.

In North America, the USA and Canada are also relatively well-served by large national studies. In the USA, the cross-sectional *American Time Use Survey* (ATUS) has collected annual data on participation rates in 'sport and recreation', interviewing 180,000 US citizens in total since 2003. In the ATUS 'sport and recreation' is defined as follows.

> Participating in—as well as attending or watching—sports, exercise, and recreational activities, whether team or individual and competitive or noncompetitive, falls into this category. Recreational activities include yard games like croquet or horseshoes, as well as activities like billiards and dancing (ATUS User Guide 2017: 52).

In addition, the USA's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention's annual, cross-sectional *National Health Interview Survey* (NHIS) conducts face-to-face interviews in approximately 35,000 households containing around 87,500 individuals. In the NHIS, participants are asked to summarize their 'usual leisure-time PA… in terms of frequency and duration' (NHIS Survey Description 2016: 63). This data is then used to produce data for the percentage of participants who meet the guidelines for aerobic activity and muscle strengthening:

> at least 150 minutes… a week of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes… a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic PA, or an equivalent combination. [And] muscle-strengthening activities of moderate or high intensity involving all major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week (NHIS Table A-14a 2016: 4n1).

In Canada, the government's *General Social Survey* (GSS) collects cross-sectional, annual data on 'active leisure time', surveying 25,000 citizens annually since 1999. (Where 'active leisure time' is defined as 'Time spent doing sports, exercise, walking and jogging, cycling and outdoor expeditions. Time spent walking, jogging and cycling to perform another activity, such

as shopping, or to get to work, are excluded' Hurst 2009: 31). The most recent freely available survey data is from 2005.[6]

In many other parts of the world, data specifically relating to sport is scarcer and typically less comprehensive. But one major source of data is the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), which covers 45 countries and conducts annual surveys on a range of topics. In 2007, the ISSP conducted the cross-sectional *Leisure Time and Sports Survey* (LTSS), covering 34 of the ISSP's members, with representative sample sizes ranging from circa 1000–3000 in each country.[7] Depending on the country, the survey was completed either as a face-to-face interview or was self-administered (Scholz and Heller 2007).

Another source of significant data is the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee's *Gender, Participation and Leadership in Sport in Southern Africa: A baseline study* (GPLSA), which determined female versus male rates of registration in organised sport by conducting structured interviews with National Olympic Committees (NOCs), National Paralympic Committees (NPCs), National Sports Councils (NSCs), school sport organisations, government departments, and national sports associations in Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. These five countries were treated as a sample of the 10 countries in the African Union Sport Council's 'Region 5', which also includes Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, and Swaziland. In total, 48 organisations were interviewed across the 5 countries (totalling 104 individuals who were interviewed). This is an important study as it covers a region for which there is inadequate data, but it has significant limitations. Two main issues stand out. First, the study includes information only for registration rates not participation rates and does not independently verify those registration rates. Second, the inference from the sample group of countries to the whole region was justified on the basis that both the average 'gender gap' and GDP of the five countries from the sample group was close to the whole Region 5 average (see GPLSA: 13). The strength of this inference, therefore, appears to be sub-

---

[6] Data after that year can only be accessed by paying a large fee.
[7] The countries and territories the survey covered were: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, France, Finland, Flanders, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Ireland, Japan, Latvia, Mexico, Norway, New Zealand, The Philippines, Poland, Russia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Uruguay.

optimal as similarity of GDP and sociologically defined 'gender gaps' seem likely to track sporting participation rates imperfectly, at best.

(ii)   Physical activity studies

Although there are a number of national studies, the most detailed and robust of which cover the developed world (for a summary see Hallal *et al.* 2012; Knuth and Hallal 2009), the most comprehensive, accessible global data is based on the WHO's 2010 *Global Physical Activity Survey* (GPAS), which has been administered in 148 out of 194 of WHO member states (covering 91% of the world's population), and the results from which are published in the WHO's Global Health Observatory Data Repository. The term 'PA' is defined in standard WHO terms as employed above: 'any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure' and thus covers much more than sporting activity to include expenditures of physical energy in any context (e.g. at work, or transport). There is a component of this data which measures 'leisure-time PA', but this component of the data is not accessible.[8] Thus, in terms of how applicable the findings of this study are to the concerns of this thesis, by itself, the results of this study have imperfect applicability in my view.

Nevertheless, considered alongside other more relevant evidence, especially if there is consistency, the data may not be without utility and certainly has by far the greatest global reach of any of the studies considered here. It would seem best, therefore, not to ignore such a trove of relatively 'conceptually unified' data on PA rates, especially when it includes comparative data on gender.

There is an issue with this 'global reach', however: the data that is available is only presented on a country-by-country basis, which means that there are no 'official' GPAQ figures for international PA rates. Hence, in the data I present below the results I give are based on

---

[8] By 'not accessible' I mean that it is not available in any published WHO document, website, or non-WHO source that I have been able to obtain. I directly requested the data from the WHO but did not receive any response.

weighted (by population) averages of the GPAQ country-by-country data that I calculated myself.[9]

Another source of significant global data relating to PA is the *Global School-based Student Health Survey* (GSHS), a joint WHO and Centre for Disease Control and Prevention project, which surveyed representative samples of schoolchildren between the ages of 13-17 across 102 countries. There are some limitations of the GSHS, however. Not every country's survey collected data on PA (although most did), and many collected data for the 13-15 age range only. And of those that did collect such data it is difficult to discern what proportion of the 'PA' is sport-related, although at least one question does concern physical education participation in school, which would seem to be a reasonable proxy for sports-oriented PA during supervised school time.

And while it is granted that this thesis is not focussed on school-age participation in sport, this thesis is concerned with the rate of change and prospects for policy-based change in gender-inclusiveness. Data concerning school-age children may therefore be of relevance.

Also, like the GPAQ data, it should be noted that the GSHS data is only available on a country-by-country basis. Below, the results I give are also based on weighted averages of the GSHS country-by-country data that I calculated myself.

Finally, another useful measure of gender balance in sport concerns the proportion of women in sport governing bodies and organisations. The 2016 Women on Boards *Gender Balance in Global Sport Report* (GBGSR) examined 129 of the 206 National Olympic Committees, 27 Paralympic Committees, 28 International Sports Federations, 14 Paralympic International Sports Federations, and 59 and 57 major sporting bodies in the UK and Australia (respectively).

---

[9] The justification for inferring weighted averages from the country-by-country GPAQ data is as follows. First, the global reach and conceptual consistency of the GPAQ data is without parallel. It should be included if possible, therefore. Second, simply discussing the country-by-country data individually would be laborious and fail to directly address the question at hand concerning global participation rates. Third, it is relatively straightforward to calculate weighted averages from the available GPAQ country-by-country data.

And while it is also granted that this thesis is not focussed on the gender balance of governing bodies in international sport, this thesis is concerned with the rate of and prospects for policy-based change in gender-inclusiveness. Data concerning the gender balance of governing bodies in international sport may therefore be of relevance.

I will now present the relevant data contained in these studies, before examining what may be inferred. The data will be presented in three tables: (1) Europe and North America; (2) Other world regions; (3) Global.[10] Please also note that the acronyms 'p/d', 'p/w', and 'p/m' in the tables stand for 'per day', 'per week', and 'per month', respectively. All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

---

[10] Note: these distinctions are drawn simply to fit the data into the relevant tables. Given the relative wealth of data for Europe and North America, that provides enough for one complete table, similarly for the rest of the world. There is also a useful distinction between region specific and more globally oriented studies which conveniently maps on to the relevant volumes of data, hence the final category.

Survey	Region(s)	Countries and population	Questions/ instructions	Participation rates: *women/girls*	Participation rates: *men/boys*	Age range
SESPA 2014	Europe	28 countries 508m pop.	How often do you exercise or play sport?	≥ 5 times p/w: **7%** 1-4 times p/w: **30%** ≤ 3 times p/m: **16%** Never: **47%**	≥ 5 times p/w: **9%** 1-4 times p/w: **36%** ≤ 3 times p/m: **18%** Never: **37%**	15-55+
ATUS 2017	USA	1 country 326m pop.	*Participants were asked to complete a diary of their daily activities via structured interview, including how many hours they engage in 'sport and recreation'*	Average hrs p/d: **4.77**	Average hrs p/d: **5.13**	15+
NHIS 2016	USA	1 country 326m pop.	*Participants asked questions to determine what percentage were 'insufficiently active':* *<150 minutes p/w moderate-intensity or 75 minutes p/w vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, or an equivalent, or <2 days p/w muscle-strengthening moderate or high intensity*	**48%**	**40%**	18+
GSS 2005	Canada	1 country 36m pop.	*Participants recorded 'active leisure' in a diary over one day (different participants completed diaries throughout year), this data was used to produce average of those participating in active leisure on a given day*	≥ an hour of active leisure on a given day **25%**	≥ an hour of active leisure on a given day **24%**	15+

Table 2.1: Gender participations rates in Europe and North America

Overall, in Europe and North America there seem to be relatively small differences in gender participation rates. The SESPA survey's most notable difference concerns those who reported 'never' taking part in sport (where this was defined as anything less than once per month), with 47% of women in this category compared to 37% of men.

It is difficult to compare directly the SESPA survey with the ATUS due to their differing measurement approaches, but the ATUS did also seem to find relatively small gender

differences in participation rates. Note, the ATUS survey was broad, including participation in sport and exercise alongside other kinds of recreational activities and the watching of sport. Nevertheless, this does suggest a general picture of how significant gender differences might be across all these categories. According to the ATUS data, men participate in sport and recreation for twenty minutes per day more than women, where this twenty-minute difference amounts to a 7.5% difference between the genders' overall participation rate.

It *might* be tempting to conclude that the NHIS data suggests that this relatively small gender difference in the ATUS data may be masking a larger difference in sport and recreational PA between men and women in the USA. According to the NHIS, 48% of women are insufficiently active compared to 40% of men–a difference of 20%. However, given the different measurement approaches of the two surveys, this conclusion would not be justified (which is not to say that it is false).

In Canada, the GSS contains data which seems to correspond closely to sporting participation ('active leisure time'), according to which there is a negligible gender difference in sporting activity (one percentage point). Although note that the main measure used is relatively coarse-grained: ≥ *an hour of active leisure on a given day*.

Hence the overall picture in Europe and North America: at most some relatively small discernible gender differences in sporting participation and related activities.

Now consider Table 2.2, which covers other world regions:

Survey	Region(s)	Countries and population	Questions/ instructions	Participation rates: women/girls	Participation rates: men/boys	Age range
LTSS 2007	Europe, North America, Central America, South America, Caribbean, Middle East, Asia, Oceania	34 countries 1356m pop.	How often do you do each of the following activities in your free time? *[One response option was:] Take part in physical activities such as sports, going to the gym, going for a walk*	Daily: **15%** Several times a week: **24%** Several times a month: **17%** Several times a year or less: **42%**	Daily: **15%** Several times a week: **26%** Several times a month: **20%** Several times a year or less: **38%**	16+ (Some countries had slightly narrower age ranges e.g. 18-79)
GPLSA 2014	Southern Africa	5 countries (taken to be representative of 10 countries) 113m pop (taken to be representative of 180m pop.)	*NOCs, NPCs, NSCs, school sport organisations, government departments, and national sports associations were asked to report the percentages of male and female athletes that were registered with them*	Total registered participants: **46%** School sports organisations: **50%** Sports associations: **33%** National teams: **25%**	Total registered participants: **54%** School sports organisations: **50%** Sports associations: **67%** National teams: **75%**	7+

Table 2.2: Gender participation rates in other world regions

Overall, in these other world regions a more mixed picture emerges, with both smaller and larger gender differences apparent. The ISSP data found a consistent pattern of relatively small gender differences across the measures the survey employed, the largest differences being that 38% of men participate several times a year or less, compared to 42% of women (a differential of 11%).

The GPLSA data is mixed. On the one hand, among school sports organisations there appears to be gender parity in gender participation rates. But on the other, among sports associations and national teams there are large differences, with women only making up a third and a quarter (respectively) of athletes.

Thus the mixed picture: by some measures gender differences are small or non-existent, but by some others there remain significant disparities.

Now consider Table 2.3, which covers global studies:

Survey	Region(s)	Countries and population	Questions/ instructions	Participation rates: *women/girls*	Participation rates: *men/boys*	Age range
WHO GPAQ 2010	Africa, Americas, South East Asia (S. E. Asia), Eastern Mediterranean (E. Med.), Western Pacific (W. Pac.)	194 countries (data for 148) (Data for:) 6,361m	*Participants asked questions to determine what percentage were 'insufficiently active': <150 minutes p/w moderate-intensity or 75 minutes p/w vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, or an equivalent, or <2 days p/w muscle-strengthening moderate or high intensity*	**Africa 25%** **Americas 37%** **S. E. Asia 19%** **Europe 26%** **E. Med. 39%** **W. Pac. 27%**	**Africa 18%** **Americas 26%** **S. E. Asia 13%** **Europe 20%** **E. Med. 27%** **W. Pac. 23%**	18+
WHO GSHS 2003-2017	Africa, Americas, South East Asia (S. E. Asia), Eastern Mediterranean (E. Med.), Western Pacific (W. Pac.)	102 countries (data for 98, for the *≥ three P.E. classes per week* question there were data from only 74 countries.) (Data for:) 4691m	1. During the past 7 days, on how many days were you physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day? 2. During this school year, on how many days did you go to physical education (PE) class each week? 3. How much time do you spend during a typical or usual day sitting and watching television, playing computer games, talking with friends, or doing other sitting activities, such as [country specific examples]?	≥ 60 mins PA p/d for 7 days: **Africa 13%** **Americas 15%** **S. E. Asia 26%** **E. Med. 12%** **W. Pac. 12%** ≥ 3 P.E. classes p/w: **Africa 26%** **Americas 30%** **S. E. Asia 22%** **E. Med. 17%** **W. Pac. 16%** ≥ 3 hrs p/d sitting **Africa 30%** **Americas 43%** **S. E. Asia 22%** **E. Med. 19%** **W. Pac. 24%**	≥ 60 mins PA p/d for 7 days: **Africa 19%** **Americas 24%** **S. E. Asia 28%** **E. Med. 18%** **W. Pac. 19%** ≥ 3 P.E. classes p/w **Africa 32%** **Americas 32%** **S. E. Asia 27%** **E. Med. 24%** **W. Pac. 15%** ≥ 3 hrs p/d sitting **Africa 30%** **Americas 40%** **S. E. Asia 25%** **E. Med. 22%** **W. Pac. 23%**	13-15
GBGSR 2016	Africa, America, Asia, Europe, Oceania	206 countries Population size n/a	*National and international Olympic Committees, Paralympic Committees, and international Sports Federations were asked to report the percentage of women comprising their governing members*	National Olympic & Paralympic Committees **23%** International Olympic & Paralympic Committees **24%** International Sport Federations **18%**	National Olympic & Paralympic Committees **77%** International Olympic & Paralympic Committees **76%** International Sport Federations **82%**	18+

Table 2.3: Gender participation rates globally

Overall, the global PA data suggests that there are some significant gender imbalances, but that these are greater in the 18+ age range than in the 13-15 age range.

The GPAQ data reveals that across all regions at least moderate and often large gender differences in participation between males and females persist. The smallest differences were in the Western Pacific[11] and South East Asia[12] regions: 13% more women than men were insufficiently active in both regions. The largest differences were in the Americas[13] and Eastern Mediterranean,[14] where (respectively) 42% and 44% more women than men were insufficiently active.[15]

The GSHS data suggests that there may be some generational differences in global PA rates, although results between regions differed. For ≥ *3 hrs p/d sitting* measure, there were at most relatively small gender differences (with no consistent pattern–e.g. girls sitting more than boys across all regions–observable). For the ≥ *60 mins PA p/d* measure the Americas is the region with the largest gender difference, with 60% more boys than girls meeting the standard; the smallest difference was in South East Asia, with only 8% more boys than girls meeting the standard. In the Eastern Mediterranean region (which is of particular interest in this thesis as it includes Saudi Arabia and similar countries), 50% more boys than girls met the standard.

It should be noted, though, that the GSHS' ≥ *60 mins PA p/d* measure is quite narrow and does not give a complete picture of what PA rates are. When compared with the ≥ *3 hrs p/d sitting* measure, for example (where much lower gender disparities are recorded), it appears that some forms of PA are not being detected by the GSHS. This is suggested by the data for the ≥ *3 P.E. classes p/w* measure. Although in the Eastern Mediterranean 41% more boys than girls met the

---

[11] This region includes the data: Australia, Cambodia, China, Cook Islands, Fiji, Japan, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Viet Nam.

[12] This region includes that data from: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

[13] I combined the data for the north American, Latin American, and Caribbean regions as the data for those were sufficiently similar. Hence, this region includes the data from: Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Grenada, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America, and Uruguay.

[14] This region includes the data from: Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and United Arab Emirates.

standard, in other regions the difference was smaller (e.g. in the Americas 7% more boys than girls met the standard) or reversed (in the Western Pacific 4% more girls than boys met the standard).

Finally, the GBGSR data suggests that there remain very significant gender imbalances in major bodies which govern global sport. For example, there are 356% more men than women serving on the boards of international sports federations. This may have practical policy implications: the less women in leadership positions in sport worldwide, the harder it may be to achieve gender parity in sporting participation. And this issue may well be exacerbated in the regions where gender disparities in governing bodies are particularly high.

2.6 Health benefits of physical activity

It is widely accepted that PA has causal relevance for physical health.[16] Here, physical health is to be understood as a state of well-being distinct from mental or social health in the sense outlined above in Section 2.4. The physical state of well-being is perhaps best understood as being constituted by the proper functioning of the human body, where 'proper functioning' is fixed to a large extent by the principles of evolutionary biology. A particularly significant connection between PA and health is that the absence of appropriate levels of PA can negatively affect the physical health of individuals and that the presence of appropriate levels of PA can positively affect the physical health of individuals (Berlin et al. 1990; Eaton 1992; Marcus et al., 2000; Sturm 2005; Reilly 2005; Strong et al. 2005; Daniels 2006; Hinkley et al. 2008; Nocon et al. 2008; Warburton et al. 2006; Tremblay et al. 2011; Kelly et al. 2014; Smith et al. 2014; Aune et al. 2015; Biswas et al. 2015; Lin et al. 2015; Oliviera and Guedes 2016; Moore et al. 2017). Indeed, as Warburton et al. state,

---

[16] Throughout this section, the expression '*x* has causal relevance for *y*' will be used to mean: *x* is a cause of *y*, or *x* is a modifiable risk factor for *y*, or *x* is associated with *y* in a manner probably best explained by some underlying causal relationship. A general term covering all of these possible meanings will be useful in order to be able to group together a wide range of literature which often differs in the terminology used to make claims about how sport, physical fitness, or physical activity are related to health.

There is incontrovertible evidence that regular PA contributes to the primary and secondary prevention of several chronic diseases and is associated with a reduced risk of premature death. [And, there] appears to be a graded linear relation between the volume of PA and health status, such that the most physically active people are at the lowest risk (2006: 807).

Further, there is strong evidence for causal relevance between PA and primary and secondary prevention of specific ailments, including: *cardiovascular disease* (Berlin et al. 1990; Eaton 1992; Kohl 2001; Katzmarzyk 2004; Oguma et al. 2004; Nocon et al. 2007); *diabetes mellitus* (Helmrich et al. 1991; Knowler et al. 2002; Williamson et al. 2004; Aune et al. 2015); *cancer* (Shephard et al. 1997; Thune and Furberg 2001; Lee 2003; Holmes et al. 2005; Moore et al. 2017); *musculo-skeletal disorders such as osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis* (Warburton et al. 2001; Liu-Ambrose 2004; Nocon et al. 2008; Juhl et al. 2014; Pedersen and Saltin 2015); *adiposity and associated conditions such as dyslipidemia, sleep apnea and gastrointestinal problems* (Marcus et al. 2000; Warburton 2001; Reilly 2005; Strum 2005; Daniels 2006); and *all-cause mortality* (Macera et al. 2003; Myers et al. 2004; Hu et al. 2004; Nocon et al. 2008; Kelly et al. 2014).

I will now discuss some of these studies in more detail to illustrate the strength of this evidence. As we will see, there are also further inferences that can be drawn about how the health benefits of PA may link up with sporting participation rates. Ultimately, I will suggest that the overwhelming evidence for the significant mental and physical health benefits of PA can be appealed to as the key pillar of a 'health argument' in favour of increasing gender-inclusivity in Saudi sport. An argument which is strengthened by the fact of the Kingdom's significant pre-existing national and international commitments to improving the health of its citizens.

I will also discuss, some of the potential risks associated with PA, including injury, harassment, and stress.

2.6.1 Physical activity and cardiovascular disease

First consider some of the evidence relating to cardiovascular disease which is particularly strong. As Kohl notes,

> nearly a half-century of research has led to the immutable conclusion that physical inactivity is a prominent part of the causality constellation that increases the risk of cardiovascular disease (2001: 472).

This is especially significant given that cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the number one cause of disability and death globally, killing 17.1m people in 2017 (WHO 2018). In 2016, there were 413,152,563 disability-adjusted life years (DALY) lost to CVD across the world, 184,789,196 lost for females specifically (WHO GHE 2016). In Saudi Arabia, CVD accounted for 45.7% of all deaths in 2015 (WHO SAHP 2016: 14), and per 100,000 of population there were 1131 DALY lost to CVD in 2016, 414 lost for females specifically (WHO GHEc: 2016).[17]

2.6.2 Physical activity and cancer

Cancer is second only to cardiovascular disease in terms of its mortality rate, killing 8.8m people in 2016, with over 250,761,911 DALY lost across the world in the same year, 110,022,527 lost for females specifically (WHO GHE 2016). In Saudi Arabia, the condition accounted for 10.8% of all deaths in 2016 (WHO GHE 2016: 14), and per 100,000 of population there were 415 DALY lost, 192 for females specifically (WHO GHE 2016).

Perhaps the most authoritative and recent review of the literature on the relationship between PA and cancer is Moore et al.'s review of the epidemiological evidence (2017), which builds on a body of earlier, similar review work (e.g. Shephard et al. 1997; Thune and Furberg 2001; Lee 2003; Holmes et al. 2005; Lee et al. 2006). Moore et al. measured the strength of evidence for causal relevance between PA and cancer as follows: (i) 'convincing' if and only if there

---

[17] The WHO SAHP source does not give a gender breakdown for the 45.7% figure, but one can infer from the DALY data that females account for around 37% of the 45.7 figure (see WHO GHEc 2016).

were more than 10,000 cases in prospective studies containing evidence of a dose-response relationship that was biologically plausible and where there was no evidence of confounding'; (ii) 'probable' if and only if there were more than 5,000 cases in prospective studies containing evidence of a dose-response relationship that was biologically plausible and where there was some possibility of confounding; (iii) 'limited-suggestive' if and only if there were more than 500 cases in prospective studies containing evidence of a dose-response relationship that was biologically plausible and where there was some possibility of confounding; (iv) 'uncertain-may be confounded' if and only if there was evidence for a relationship but results appear probably to be confounded and sensitivity analyses do not rule out confounding; (iv) 'inconsistent' if and only if the results vary by study type or over time and the reasons for variability are unclear ; (v) 'substantial effect unlikely' if and only if there were more than 2000 cases in prospective studies with an aggregate relative risk of 0.95 to 1.05 (Moore et al. 2017: 380).

Overall, regarding primary prevention, Moore et al. found there to be:

i. convincing evidence that PA has causal relevance for the reduction of cancer of the colon and female breast; probable evidence for the reduction of kidney and endometrial cancers;

ii. limited-suggestive evidence for reduction of cancers of the bladder, liver, gallbladder, gastric, cardia, head, neck, oesophagus, and myeloma, myeloid leukaemia, and non-Hodgkin lymphoma;

iii. uncertain-may be confounded evidence for reduction of lung cancer and malignant melanoma; inconsistent evidence for reduction in cancers of the pancreas, prostate, rectum, brain, and thyroid;

iv. and evidence that a substantial effect was unlikely for leukaemia, ovary, and lymphocytic cancer (Moore et al. 2017: 380).

v. For other cancers there was insufficient evidence to draw any conclusions (Moore et al. 2017: 389).

Unless otherwise specified, these results held for both women and men.

Overall, regarding secondary prevention, Moore et al. found that there is an 'emerging body of evidence [that] suggests significant mortality benefits from PA for cancer survivors' for both women and men (2017: 390). As I will suggest in Chapter 6, this alongside the other evidence could be significant for any health-based argument for increasing gender-inclusivity in sport.

One potential limitation of the cancer evidence is that it can be difficult always to discern female-specific effects from the data, particularly in large review or meta-analytic studies such as Moore et al, which collate many individual studies. Although some potentially female-specific effects have been identified above, there is other evidence that there are sex-based differences relevant to the relationship between some cancers and PA. For example, in 1985-86 Hankinson et al. (2010) began a longitudinal study, with 20 years of follow-up, of 3554 men and women aged 18-30. Hankinson et al. concluded that there was an approximately 60% difference in the weight gain for high-activity women versus high-activity men. High-activity women gained 6.1kg less than low-activity women, whereas high-activity men gained 2.6kg less than low-activity men. Given the connection, highlighted above, between BMI and cancer, this result is potentially significant for those advocating for greater gender-inclusivity in sport and PA.

As Hankinson et al. state:

> maintaining higher levels of moderate and vigorous activity throughout young adulthood is associated with smaller gains in BMI and waist circumference during the transition from young adulthood to early middle age, particularly in women. Our results reinforce the role of PA in minimizing weight gain and highlight the value of incorporating and maintaining at least 30 minutes of activity into daily life throughout young adulthood (2010: 2609).

2.6.3 Physical activity and diabetes mellitus

Diabetes mellitus is the eighth ranked cause of disability and death globally (WHO GHE 2016), and currently effects over 311m people worldwide and is projected to effect 552m by 2030 (WHO GHE 2016; Whiting et al. 2011). In 2016, there were 65,666 DALY lost to diabetes across the world, 32,907,017 lost for females specifically (WHO GHE 2016). In Saudi Arabia in 2016, the condition accounted for 4.8% of all deaths (WHO SAHP 2016) and per 100,000 of population there were 218 DALY lost, 84.4 for females specifically (WHO GHE 2016).

The two most recent and authoritative reviews of the diabetes literature are Jeon et al. 2007 and Aune et al. 2015, with the latter largely superseding the former both in terms of scope and detail. Aune et al. alone analyse the effect of individual types of PA such as walking versus resistance training. Overall, Aune et al. found significant causal relevance between PA and primary and secondary prevention, a finding which confirms what Pedersen and Saltin describe as the 'international consensus that physical exercise is one of the three cornerstones in the treatment of diabetes, along with diet and medication' (2015: 19).

Aune et al. analysed 87 publications,[18] and examined the evidence for the health benefits derived from: total PA; leisure-time PA; occupational PA; changes in PA; low versus moderate or high PA; walking; resistance exercise; and cardiorespiratory exercise (2015).

In sum, as Aune et al. state:

> high versus low total PA, leisure-time activity, low, moderate and vigorous intensity activity, resistance exercise, occupational activity and walking, cardiorespiratory fitness were each associated with a statistically significant reduction in the risk of type 2 diabetes. Most of these activities were associated with a 25–40% reduction in the relative risk of type 2 diabetes while walking, occupational activity and cardiorespiratory fitness [were] associated with a 15, 15 and 55% decrease in the relative risk of type 2 diabetes, respectively (2015: 537).

---

[18] For a complete list of these, which are too numerous to detail here, see Aune et al. 2015: 539-542n2-88).

Although it is difficult to argue with the scope and thoroughness of Aune et al.'s review, there remain unanswered questions about what the relevant mechanisms are. If lower rates of PA are 'associated with' higher rates of type 2 diabetes, and vice versa, why is this the case? Aune et al. discuss several possible *biological* mechanisms, such as reduced adiposity, insulin sensitivity, and improved glucose homeostasis (2015: 538). While such biological mechanisms should certainly not be ignored, of course, and are likely to be the *proximate* mechanisms, sociological or psychological mechanisms should also not be ignored. Thus, a potential limitation of Aune et al.'s study is that it focussed entirely on the biology to the neglect of other possible causal factors. To what extent might beliefs about religion, gender, and other psychological and sociological matters be associated with or be causally relevant for initiating the biological mechanisms which lead to diabetes? It is these kinds of question which are simply left unaddressed by solely biology-focused studies and reviews.

Moreover, given the potential connection between adiposity or BMI and diabetes, questions arise again here about female-specific effects–a question which is often difficult to answer when examining the review and meta-analytic literature, which by its nature has a very broad scope. In Aune et al.'s study, for example, there is only one explicit mention of women (2015: 536). However, given the evidence discussed above in Hankinson et al. (2010) and elsewhere (see especially Section 2.5.5 below) it may be the case that women could particularly benefit more than men from PA programs aimed at tackling diabetes.

2.6.4 Physical activity and musculo-skeletal disorders

Musculo-skeletal disorders are a class of conditions that affect the joints, bones, muscles, tendons, ligaments, connective tissues, and major bodily musculo-skeletal components such as the spine. Examples of musculo-skeletal disorders include osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, chronic back pain, and rheumatoid arthritis. It is thought that between 20-30% of people worldwide live with a painful musculoskeletal condition (GBD 2016: 1234), totalling 102,838,050 DALY lost to the condition across the world, with 601,48,829 DALY lost for females specifically

(WHO GHE 2016). In Saudi Arabia, per 100,000 of population there were 453 DALY lost to musculo-skeletal disorders in 2016, 208 lost for females specifically (WHO GHE 2016).

The most common joint disease is osteoarthritis with almost all people over the age of 60 showing signs of the disease in at least one joint (Pederson 2015: 37). There have been four recent meta-analyses which have examined the relationship between secondary prevention and osteoarthritis: Hernandez-Molina et al. 2008; Lange et al. 2008; Zhang et al. 2010; Fransen et al. 2015. Overall, the studies conclude that there is reasonable evidence that PA has causal relevance for secondary prevention of major forms of osteoarthritis.

Focussing on gender, women are more likely than men to develop the condition and to do so more severely (Zhang et al. 2010: 3). Knee osteoarthritis is the most common form of the condition and affects women more than men: 13% of the former over 60 years old are affected compared to 10% of the latter (Zhang et al. 2010: 1).

Regarding osteoporosis, it is thought that around 1 in 5 men and 1 in 3 women will experience osteoporotic fractures over the age of 50 (IOF 2018). In general, women account for 61% of osteoporotic fractures (IOF 2018). Moreover, the rate of osteoporotic fractures is increasing significantly, particularly in ageing populations (IOF 2018). For example, in Europe over the last 20-30 years the rate of vertebral fractures has increased by a factor of between 3 and 4 for women, and by over four for men (Ballane et al. 2017). In Saudi Arabia, recent evidence suggests that of those aged between 50-79, 34% of women and 30.7% of men are osteoporotic (Sadat-Ali et al. 2012: 637). Indeed, in their meta-analysis of the relevant literature, Sadat-Ali et al. found that: '[the] prevalence of osteoporosis in Saudi women is twice that of US white women' (2012: 638).

This suggests that especially from a Saudi perspective there is an urgent need to identify what role PA might play in primary and secondary prevention of osteoporosis. And of particular interest is the evidence which suggests that weight-bearing exercise during childhood and adolescence has causal relevance for reducing the risk of osteoporosis in later years (McKay et al. 2000; Kemper et al. 2000; Nikander et al. 2010), and that weight-bearing exercise appears to have a direct impact on bone mineral density (Wallace and Cumming 2000; Westby et al.

2000; de Jong et al. 2003; Howe et al. 2011), and can help to prevent fractures by increasing balance and overall (especially muscular) strength (Farmer et al. 1989; Wickham et al. 1989; Paganini-Hill et al. 1991; Cummings et al. 1995; Hoidrup, 1997; Gillespie et al. 2001; Daly et al. 2002).

Indeed, the increase in osteoporosis (and related fractures) might best be explained by the decrease in PA in the increasingly developed world (Pederson 2015: 10). And it is widely accepted by many authorities in osteoporosis research that maximising bone mineral density when young and then minimising bone mineral density when ageing is a key way to avoid osteoporosis and related problems (Wallace and Cumming 2000: 10). With the above evidence in hand of the causal relevance of PA for maximising mineral bone density and reducing age-related decline, it can be concluded that PA plays an important role in the prevention of osteoporosis.

One limitation of the literature on PA and musculo-skeletal disorders is the relative lack of consideration of social and psychological factors in treatment. While the evidence for secondary prevention via physical interventions is well-developed, there is not the same degree of evidence for the role that interventions such as counselling or other forms of social support might play, or the role that wider cultural norms might play in enabling the kind of physical interventions that are taken to be effective. This is especially pertinent for women given such evidence as discussed above (Section 2.5.1) that women's fitness can benefit from counselling services in a way that men's does not (see Oguma and Shinoda-Tagawa 2004).

2.7.5 Physical activity and adiposity

Adiposity and associated conditions such as dyslipidemia, sleep apnea and gastrointestinal problems are associated with a wide-range of negative health outcomes, killing 15m people in 2016, with over 389,761,654 DALY lost across the world in the same year, 200,022,333 lost for females specifically (WHO GHE 2016). In Saudi Arabia, the condition accounted for 14% of all deaths in 2016 (WHO GHE 2016: 14), and per 100,000 of population there were 605 DALY lost, 250 for females specifically (WHO GHE 2016).

As frequently noted in the literature (see: Tremblay et al. 1990; Marcus et al. 2000; Warburton 2001; Reilly 2005; Strum 2005; Daniels 2006), one of the key benefits of PA for adiposity is the impact on associated conditions. The evidence discussed above for diabetes and cardiovascular disease, for example, has direct relevance for concerns about the health effects of adiposity.

One limitation of the adiposity research which is focussed on the physical effects is relative lack of research on the role of possible harassment and stress on women who are considering or undertaking an adiposity related program of PA. Particularly in a Saudi context in which, as I discuss below, there are very widespread concerns over sex segregation in PA contexts especially. In Chapters 5 and 6 I discuss these concerns and propose ways in which the feminist movement address them.

The further key issue for adiposity is the relationship between adiposity and mortality. Hence, I will now consider the evidence on all-cause mortality.

2.9.6 Physical activity and mental health

In 2016, the total DALYs lost to non-communicable diseases worldwide was 1,595,534,582, of which mental health and substance misuse disorders accounted for 171,501,326, and neurological conditions for 98,995,010 (WHO GHE 2016). In Saudi Arabia, per 100,000 of population 743 DALYs were lost to mental health and substance misuse disorders and 387 DALYs were lost to neurological conditions (WHO GHE 2016). For women, 314 DALYs were lost to mental health and substance misuse disorders and 193 DALYs lost to neurological conditions (WHO GHE 2016). Nueropsychiatric disorders overall are thought to contribute 14% to the total disease burden in Saudi Arabia (WHO GHE 2016: 16).

Many studies have investigated the relationship between PA and mental or neurological health. As substance misuse disorders are a problem for such a small proportion of the population in Saudi Arabia I will not discuss them (the official prevalence rate for substance misuse for persons aged 15+ is zero, and for those under 15 at most 1%; see WHO GHE 2016: 16).

Regarding mental health, there are a variety of components of both positive and negative mental health. The former includes: emotional aspects of well-being such as affect balance, happiness, and life satisfaction; cognitive aspects of well-being such as the ability to cope, and feeling optimistic or hopeful; a sense of self-esteem, self-worth, and self-efficacy; a sense of coherence; feeling (and being) resilient; feeling in control of oneself; and feeling that one has a good quality of life. For the latter, there are a variety of disorders and problems which are defined by identifying symptoms which are long-lasting, reduce the individual's capacity to function, cannot be controlled by the individual, and are out of proportion to the possible non-psychological 'external' causes (see Korkeila 2000: 15-19; King et al. 1989; Coalter 2005).

A key recent meta-analysis and review was conducted by Rosenbaum et al. (2014), which examined 20 intervention studies with a total sample size of n=1,298, a mean age ranging from 25-66 years, and a variety of mental health conditions. As Rosenbaum et al. state, the

> antidepressive benefits of structured exercise for both the general population and those affected by depressive illness have been established in previous systematic reviews (2014: 964).

Rosenbaum et al.'s analysis both builds on this previous work and extends it by examining a broader range of PA interventions and mental health conditions than had previously by covered by the earlier review work (see Rosenbaum et al. 2014: 964). The key finding of Rosenbaum et al. was that cardio-vascular physical exercise reduced depressive symptoms associated with mental health conditions (2014: 971). The effect was determined to be 'large' by Rosenbaum et al. (2014: 970). In addition, Rosenbaum et al. found that PA has a significant effect on reducing the symptoms of schizophrenia (2014: 971). Indeed, as Rosenbaum et al. conclude: 'PA offers substantial promise for improving outcomes for people living with mental illness, and inclusion of PA and exercise programs within treatment facilities is warranted' (2014: 972).

Further, Rosenbaum et al.'s analysis included five studies of patients with post-natal depression: Armstrong and Edwards 2003, 2004; Daley et al. 2008; Dritsa et al. 2009. Rosenbaum et al.'s analysis suggested that for depressive symptoms that any 'difference

between the subgroups was not statistically significant' (2014: 971). Hence cardio-vascular exercise reduced depressive symptoms associated with post-natal depression specifically, according to Rosenbaum et al.

Further, interesting evidence about the role of gender in mental health is presented in Seedat et al. (2009) which examined how traditional gender roles might influence mental health. Specifically, Seedat et al. analysed face-to-face household surveys (n=72,933) across 15 countries conducted as part of the WHO World Mental Health Survey Initiative (2009: 2). Five of the countries were classed by the World Bank as developing–Colombia, Lebanon, Mexico, South Africa, Ukraine–and 10 as developed–Belgium, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, and USA (Seedat et al. 2009: 3). Seedat et al. compared cohorts within the countries 'diachronically', which involved comparing cohorts from different age groups (18–34, 35–49, 50–64, and 65+), and cohorts between countries synchronically to assess whether 'gender role traditionality' (GRT) was associated with mental health outcomes. GRT was defined by Seedat et al. in terms of aggregate patterns of female education, employment, marital timing, and use of birth control: the lower the aggregates, the higher the degree of GRT.

Seedat et al. found first that (consistent with a number of other previous studies) for major depression, intermittent explosive disorder, and some substance disorders (e.g. alcohol dependency), there had been a significant, consistent 'narrowing' of the gender differences in prevalence of these conditions (2009: 9). And second, that this was linked to changes in GRT–with decreases in GRT linked to decreases in the narrowing of gender differences in prevalence of the conditions. As Seedat et al. state, it is possible to interpret these findings as:

> meaning that increases in female opportunities in the domains of employment, birth control, and other indicators of increasing gender role equality promote improvements in female mental health by reducing exposure to stressors that can led to depression and by increasing access to effective stress-buffering resources (2009: 9).

While this may be plausible, and highly significant, it should also be noted that for other mental health outcomes Seedat et al.'s findings differed, particularly for the frequently

observed gender differences that are well-established for anxiety, mood, externalizing, and some substance disorders. Seedat et al. found that despite major differences in GRT across both the intra-country different age-range cohorts, and across the inter-country same age-range cohorts there was not a significant link between the relevant mental health outcomes and GRT (2009: 9).

Overall, therefore, these findings suggest that there may be a link between GRT and mental health outcomes, but that this might not be the case for every mental health outcome and that there may simply be too many possible confounders to draw strong conclusions. Changes in GRT are associated with many other kinds of societal change involving information technology, the natural and built environment, and many other socially significant factors. It may be difficult to control for all of these other factors, and Seedat et al.'s remarks about a possible causal link between GRT (or associated stress factors) and mental health should be understood with this in mind.

Indeed, one of the goals of my thesis is to test out a framework for analysing the possible causal factors of a specific gender outcome: the low degree of gender-inclusivity in Saudi sport. In my view, using measures like the GRT which is based on relatively easily quantifiable population-level measures is likely to present an incomplete picture at best and thus constitutes a limitation. Instead, what is required is a richer analysis of the power structures and socio-psychological conditions that enable gender outcomes like the low degree of gender-inclusivity in Saudi sport. My thesis is intended to constitute an exploration of one such richer analysis, as I lay out in the remaining chapters.

2.7 Health benefits of sport

In comparison to the wealth of evidence regarding the causal relevance of PA for health, there is relatively limited data on the connection between sport more narrowly defined and health, and even less on specific sports. But the most recent and wide-ranging meta-analysis is Oja et al.'s (2015) examination of nearly 70 studies to try and determine whether specific sports disciplines differ with regards to their health benefits. Oja et al. considered 69 studies (47

cross-sectional, nine cohort, 13 intervention), comparing 26 different sports disciplines in total but focussing primarily on running, football, gymnastics, cycling, and swimming (for details of the studies see Oja et al. 2015: 9-11).

A key point made by Oja et al. is that much of the literature falls short of providing evidence of causal relevance for sport participation and health (2015: 3). To try and address this issue, Oja et al. surveyed the literature to assess whether there was strong, moderate, limited, inconclusive, or no evidence for the effects of specific sport participation on health. The effects for men and women were examined and the results reported below are not gender specific–Oja et al. found no statistically significant difference between the results for men and women (see Oja et al. 2015: 8-10). Hence, the results below can be understood as applying to women specifically, or more generally.

The evidence for an effect of participation on health was stronger in some sports than in others. The strongest evidence was for football, for which there was moderate evidence showing significant improvements in aerobic fitness (11% increase), cardiovascular function (10% decrease in resting heart rate), and adiposity (13% decrease in fat mass), following 12-16 weeks of two one-hour sessions per week at 80% of maximum heart-rate intensity. There was also limited evidence showing improvements in metabolic fitness, cardiac adaptation, and muscular performance, as well as inconclusive evidence for improvements in bone density and postural balance.

Further, there is evidence which shows that there is a very low risk of death from cardiovascular disease for those who can exercise at a higher-intensity rate (Fine et al. 2013), and evidence that there is a lower risk of cardiovascular disease and all-cause mortality for those who have a low resting heart-rate (Saxena et al. 2013). Hence, the moderate evidence in support of football's efficacy in reducing resting heart-rate and increasing aerobic capacity would also seem to support the claim that participation in football can lower the risk of cardiovascular disease and all-cause mortality–for men and women.

In addition to the Oja et al. review, a special issue of the Scandinavian Journal of Medicine in Science recently published (Bangsbo et al. 2014a) 16 separate studies showing that recreational

football can improve a range of health indicators, including: heart function, blood pressure, blood lipids, and body fat (see Bangsbo et al. 2014b). This further supports the conclusions of Oja et al., although it should be noted that the evidence for other sports was less strong (see: Oja et al. 2015: 12-13).

One overriding consideration to bear in mind when reflecting on Oja et al.'s review is the strong evidence that we have seen above which shows that increasing PA in general has a wide range of significant positive effects on health. This suggests that the following inference is reliable: sport x increases PA to degree x, thus sport x increases the likelihood of positive health outcomes (or decreases the likelihood of negative health outcomes) to degree y. This leaves open the question of whether specific sports are better than others at increasing PA. If the conclusions of Oja et al.'s review are generalisable at all, therefore, then perhaps (here I am suggesting a hypothesis that would be interesting to test) competitive team sports such as football are more likely to encourage the level of PA intensity required for more significant effects on health. This could be due to the motivational effects of the competition and the expectations and encouragement of team-mates. If this is so, then this would have potentially significant consequences for any debate about women's participation in sport in which health considerations had persuasive force.

Thus, if competitive team sports are especially effective at spurring individuals into high-intensity PA, and there is practically incontrovertible evidence for the many significant health benefits from high-intensity PA, then this suggests a potentially powerful argument in favour of gender equality in access to competitive team sports, and, by extension, sport in general. Consider: if a drug were produced which had effects similar to the PA competitive team sport can inspire, with a similar lack of side effects, then on what rational basis could any society which is officially committed to improving the health of all its members make the drug freely available to men but heavily restrict it for women? Given the evident force of this point, the outline of a 'health argument' in support of improving gender-inclusivity in sport becomes clear. This is a point I will return to below.

A significant drawback of the already limited literature on the relationship between health and sport or PA is the absence of analyses of the psychological and social aspects from the perspective of women, particularly ethnic minority or non-western women. Indeed, one of the goals of this thesis is to go a small way towards correcting this.

2.8 Policy approaches to increasing physical activity

Given the wealth of evidence that PA, including sport-based PA, has significant health benefits across demographic groups, it will be worthwhile to examine the literature on which policy actions of government and other institutions might best achieve and enhance these benefits.

A key document in this regard is the WHO's Global Action Plan on PA (WHO 2018a). This Global Action Plan was drawn up by the WHO Executive Board, and representatives from 83 of the WHO's member states, international sports associations, health and sport medicine organisations, public health and civil society institutes, and academics (see WHO 2018a: 13). The primary target for the action plan is a 15% reduction (from 2016 levels) in physical inactivity for adolescents and adults by 2030 (see WHO 2018a: 21). The action plan proposes four 'strategic objectives' which frame a 'universally applicable framework' for 20 'multidimensional policy actions', each of which is claimed to be an 'important and effective' part of a public health approach to increasing PA (WHO 2018a: 25).

The four strategic objectives are (1) 'Create active societies'; (2) 'Create active environments'; (3) 'Create active people'; and (4) 'Create active systems'. Each strategic objective comes with proposals for 'actions' about how best to achieve the objective (see: WHO 2018a: 28-41).

The actions for creating active societies are focussed upon community and national awareness-raising campaigns alongside implementing free, mass-participation initiatives in public spaces and training programs for relevant professionals, such as sports coaches, PE teachers, health practitioners, and so on.

The actions for creating active environments include implementing improved physical-activity-promoting policies for planning, transport, and infrastructure, such as improved cycle routes, pedestrian prioritization around public buildings, and more high-quality green spaces.

The actions for creating active people involve strengthening the inclusive provision of physical education and sport for those in education. A key part of the aim of this action is to promote lifelong health and physical literacy. And relatedly, implementation and strengthening the systems of patient assessment and counselling relevant to increasing PA. Finally, a raft of measures to enhance the provision of PA programmes for all ages across the whole range of community settings, including natural environments, private and public workplaces, faith-based centres, and recreation and sports facilities.

The actions for creating active systems include strengthening policy and governance systems in ways likely to better facilitate the creation of active societies, environments, and people. Alongside this, it is suggested that data systems should be enhanced to support regular monitoring of PA levels and the wider sociocultural and other determinants of PA. Such data systems can be used to better inform policy and governance systems as well as research and wider innovation into increasing PA. Further actions include 'escalating advocacy efforts' to increase awareness and knowledge of PA's benefits particularly among key audiences such as high-level leaders and policy-makers. Finally, 'strengthening finance mechanisms' to support the above is also recommended.

A key feature of these action plans that it may be worthwhile to note is that access to opportunities for sport and other forms of PA is seen to be of central importance, regardless of gender. Hence, it would appear that removing gender discrimination from access to the sort of PA involved in sport is a key feature of 'model' international policy recommendations for improving major public health outcomes. As will be touched on below and discussed more fully in Chapter 6, this suggests that there is a 'lever' which can be 'pulled' in order to further the goal of increasing gender-inclusiveness in sport in Saudi Arabia: namely the pre-existing international commitments of Saudi Arabia towards increasing PA. Further, given the apparent

persuasive force of the 'health argument' outlined at the end of Section 2.6, the effectiveness of pulling this lever could be particularly significant.

Prior to that, though, it may be worthwhile to pause and reflect on an important question that should be addressed when considering policy documents from major international organisations such as the WHO. Namely: how much is the document framed solely in terms of 'negative' versus 'positive' liberties? As Carter states, the distinction between positive and negative liberty can be understood as follows:

> Negative liberty is the absence of obstacles, barriers or constraints. One has negative liberty to the extent that actions are available to one in this negative sense. Positive liberty is the possibility of acting — or the fact of acting — in such a way as to take control of one's life and realize one's fundamental purposes. While negative liberty is usually attributed to individual agents, positive liberty is sometimes attributed to collectivities, or to individuals considered primarily as members of given collectivities (2019).

Thus, when considering such statements in the WHO's Global Action Plan on PA as:

> Women… often have less access to safe, accessible, affordable and appropriate spaces and places in which to be physically active. Addressing these disparities in participation is a policy priority and underlying principle of this global action plan (WHO 2018a: 15).

Then one can ask: are these disparities to be addressed in the sense of improving women's negative or positive liberty to participate in sport? And this question can be asked of the details of each of the action plan's four strategic objectives.

For example, the first strategic objective, creating active societies, suggests, among other things, 'implementing free, mass-participation initiatives in public spaces'. With the distinction between positive and negative liberty in hand, we can see two major ways in which this might be interpreted. First, one can envisage, particularly in a country such as Saudi Arabia, the removing of specific barriers which would prevent women from participating: for example repealing the relevant laws. Second, one can envisage actively constructing mass-participation

systems that are designed with girls and women as central figures. In terms of mass-participation initiatives this could include initiatives led by women with the concerns and interests of women playing a central role in how the initiatives are designed and organised. The first approach, although important, seems very much about enhancing women's negative liberty to practice sport. The second approach is about enhancing women's positive liberty to practice to sport. And, one important fact to bear in mind when considering documents such as the WHO's action plan is that, although prima facie worthy in many respects, such documents are often light on the details of how positive liberty is to be achieved–being framed largely in terms of negative liberty.

An additional key document relevant to the question of policy and women's sport is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda was agreed by 150 world leaders at the United Nations Summit on the post-2015 development agenda and was passed as a resolution by the 193 countries of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 (UN 2015: 1), including Saudi Arabia. Of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the two most obviously relevant to this research are: Goal 3 'Good Health and Well-Being', which is to 'Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages' and Goal 5 'Gender Equality', which is to 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls' (UN 2015: 14).

Each goal has specific targets attached to it. The most relevant Goal-3 targets for the purposes of this research are to achieve the following by 2030 (see UN 2015: 16-17):

1. Reduction of maternal mortality to less than 70,000 per 100,000 live births.

2. Reduction of neonatal mortality to no more than 12 per 100,000 live births and under-5 mortality to no more than 25 per 1,000 live births.

3. Reduction of premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by one third (through prevention, treatment and promotion of health and wellbeing).

4. Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.

The most relevant Goal-5 targets for the purposes of this research are to achieve the following by 2030 (see UN 2015: 18):

1. Ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls.

2. Ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

3. Adopting and strengthening sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

This invites an important question from the perspective of this research project: what role might sport specifically play in these development goals, particularly in Saudi Arabia? Perhaps most obviously, sport as part of an overall strategy to increase levels of PA, physical fitness, and positive mental health. The following Goal 3 target, in particular, seems highly relevant here: 'reduction of premature mortality from non-communicable disease by one third'. Sport is a major promoter and facilitator of PA and so should be a significant part of attempts to meet this target. A similar argument would seem to hold for the other relevant Goal targets which were outlined above: sport is likely to be of significant utility in achieving them.

The Goal-5 targets of relevance relate specifically to questions of discrimination, equal opportunities, and gender equality. Here, again, sport can have a major role to play: so long as in the sporting world women and girls face issues of discrimination, lack of equal opportunities, and gender inequality (or inequity), then these Goal-5 targets will not be met.

Consequently, these sustainable development goals, which Saudi Arabia has committed to, would seem to be of significance in any policy and institutional contexts in the Kingdom that are related to the participation of women in sport.

This is not to say that the sustainable development framework is without limitations. Questions have been raised about, for example, the clarity and consistency of the goals. As Randers et al. state:

There are concerns that if the 14 socioeconomic SDGs are achieved, then the human ecological footprint (resource use, emissions and habitat destruction) will exceed the sustainable carrying capacity of planet Earth, and frustrate the ambition to achieve the environmental [sustainable development goals] (2018: 3).

Moreover, as Zipp and Nauright (2018) have argued, the SDG framework, realised through the sport for development and peace (SDP) program, is formulated from a western, broadly neoliberal perspective. Consequently, when applied in the context of sport, SDP programs and other SDG initiatives may pre-suppose and even embed a range of problematic gender-expectations and practices. As Zipp and Nauright state, questions can be asked about whether 'SDP [can] work effectively to challenge restrictive gender role attitudes within such a rigidly gendered context… [in particular because] development efforts [are] focused on integrating girls and women into existing male-dominated structures' (2018: 33). Zipp and Nauright give a range of examples of ways in which SDP programs can do this, including how the programmes' aim:

> of challenging [gender] norms seem to reinforce restrictive gender role attitudes amongst some… boys. [This is because, Zipp and Nauright suggest,] transformational social change is unlikely or limited because of the integrative approach… of these programmes. [Further, the] integrative approach leaves girls marginalised, whether they adopt masculine attributes (playing "tough," being "bossy") or play in a more feminine way ("too soft")… The integrative approach tends to reinforce the belief that girls are inferior to boys in the sporting context, as it dismisses the profound influence of cultural norms and accessibility to sport that may limit the opportunity for girls to develop skills to stay on par with their boy counterparts (2018: 39-40, 42).

If we accept Zipp and Nauright's analysis, then their conclusion may have some force:

> Challenging gender norms in SDP must not rely solely on expanding femininity in a way that includes sport. Just as importantly, SDP organisers must consider how they can challenge hyper-masculinity in sport. For example, we found that hope lies in the experience of the NSDC coaching trainees. As these young men discussed their

experiences coaching, they emphasised how important it was for them to encourage girls and boys to respect each other as teammates and learn from each other. Engaging with and supporting men to coach as allies to promote positive gender role attitudes can help transform the hegemonic framework of sport for development (2018: 42).

Nevertheless, despite such difficulties, it remains plausible that the sustainable development goal framework could be a powerful tool in setting institutionalised goals, particularly at the national level, and that this may provide another method by which the issue of women's participation in sport may be addressed in Saudi Arabia.

A key question that may arise when such institutionalised goals are set is how such goals are best to be implemented. Here, again, one faces issues of best policy. Arguably the most authoritative document in this regard is the WHOs recent guide to recommended interventions for tackling non-communicable diseases (Armstrong et al. 2007).

The guide describes a number of key 'background conditions' that are likely to be required for policy approaches. This includes: high-level political commitment; integration of national policy approaches with each other; clearly specified national goals; appropriate funding levels; support for the interventions from stakeholders (e.g. citizens, civil society groups, health professionals); cultural sensitivity–in particular ensuring that interventions are not resisted due to their being perceived as culturally inappropriate in relevant contexts; appointment of a dedicated co-ordinating team to oversee the various policies and processes; and monitoring and evaluation of policy progress (see Armstrong 2007: 3-9).

With these background conditions in place, the guide contends, a variety of policy interventions may be appropriate (Armstrong 2007: 9-11), the most relevant of which are:

1. Develop and implement national guidelines for health-enhancing PA.

2. Develop or integrate into national policy the promotion of PA.

3. Review existing policies to ensure that they are consistent with best practice in population-wide approaches to increasing PA.

4. Review urban planning and environmental policies to ensure that walking, cycling, and other forms of PA are accessible and safe.

7. Encourage sports, recreation, and leisure facilities to take up the concept of sports and other forms of PA for all.

8. Ensure school policies support the provision of opportunities and programmes for PA (for staff as well as children).

When examining these policy implementation guidelines with women's participation in sport in mind, some appear especially relevant. For example, number 7: 'Encourage sports, recreation, and leisure facilities to take up the concept of sports and other forms of PA for all.' If one takes these guidelines as authoritative for WHO member countries wishing to reduce non-communicable diseases, then this may be a guideline that could be directly appealed to in arguing for women's opportunities for participation in sport in Saudi Arabia to be increased.

It should be noted, also, that the Kingdom is already a signatory to other international treaties which encapsulate a commitment to ending gender discrimination. As Human Rights Watch point out:

> The rights of women and girls to physical education and to participate in sport is internationally recognized in treaties Saudi Arabia has signed, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. These treaties prohibit discrimination against women and girls (HRW 2012: 4).

Thus, there are a wide range of international policy commitments which, officially, in principle, commit Saudi Arabia to ending gender-discrimination in sport. But perhaps the health-based commitments may have more political force than the others. Why? The short answer is that the strength of evidence for the causal relevance of levels of PA for health, combined with the fact that sport appears a key part of increasing PA levels, means that any gender equitable approach to improving health outcomes which can be affected by PA must include a gender equitable approach to sporting opportunities. And, in my view, the argument

that there should be a gender equitable approach to improving health outcomes was won long ago in Saudi Arabia (if it ever needed winning). Thus, it constitutes firm ground to argue from.

I will return to this issue again, particularly in Chapter 6, as it will form a central part of the argument I present: that sporting participation for women is required on many important grounds, including the especially significant grounds of improving women's mental and physical health, as well as their overall life-expectancy.

2.9 Conclusion

As we have seen, determining global participation rates for sport is challenging because of the lack of a single global study which directly measures 'sport' in any narrow sense, although there are some regional studies which try to directly measure this. In addition, there are some regional or global studies which measure 'sport' in a broader sense: namely PA of a wide range of varying types that occur in, generally speaking, leisure contexts (or originally did so). Nevertheless, this patchwork of evidence requires a good deal of interpretation in order to determine what global rates might be. What the interpretation appears to reveal is the following broad picture: there remains at most limited amounts of gender inequality in gross sporting participation rates in much of the developed world, particularly in Europe and North America. But matters are more mixed in other parts of the world. For example, in the Eastern Mediterranean, which includes Saudi Arabia (and in economic terms, at least, Saudi Arabia is highly developed), the GPAQ data suggests that 44% more women than men were 'insufficiently active'. Along similar lines, the GSHS data suggested that 50% more boys than girls met the standard of engaging in 60 minutes or more of PA per day (GSHS Data Table).

As we have also seen, there is overwhelming evidence for the benefit of PA for a wide-range of mental and physical health outcomes, with PA often having direct causal relevance for women's specific health concerns. Consider the following three examples.

First, for breast cancer there is convincing evidence from a wide range of studies that women who are highly active are 10% less likely to develop breast cancer than women who engage

only in low levels of activity (Moore et al. 2017: 383). Further there was also convincing evidence for a dose-response relationship: each 10 MET-hours per week was correlated with a 3% lower risk of breast cancer (Moore et al. 2017: 383). And these results are at the more conservative end of the evidence: other studies, such as Friedenrich et al. (2011) found that high-activity women were 25% less likely to develop breast cancer than those who had low levels of activity.

Second, women are more likely to develop osteoarthritis, and to develop it more severely, than men (Zhang et al. 2010: 1). According to the Osteoarthritis Foundation International, women account for 61% of osteoporotic fractures worldwide (IOF 2018). In addition, as populations around the globe increasingly age, rates of osteoporosis, along with other age-related conditions, are increasing (IOF 2018). And in Saudi Arabia, the situation is especially acute, with low bone mass in general above the global average, and the prevalence of osteoporosis in women being twice that of other parts of the world such as the USA (Sadat-Ali et al. 2012: 638). Thus, of particular importance is the role that weight-bearing exercise has in increasing bone mineral density and preventing fractures by increasing balance and muscular strength (e.g. Farmer et al. 1989; Wickham et al. 1989; Paganini-Hill et al. 1991; Cummings et al. 1995; Hoidrup, 1997; Gillespie et al. 2001; Daly et al. 2002), as well as significantly improving osteoarthritic joint function (e.g. Fransen et al. 2015). This suggests that, especially from a Saudi perspective, there is an urgent need to recognise the role that PA can play in primary and secondary prevention of osteoporosis.

Third, with regards to mental health, there are well-established gender differences at the epidemiological level. In particular, along the 'internalising spectrum' women have significantly higher rates of depression, anxiety, eating, and somatoform disorders (Kuehner 2017: 146). This is important given the strong evidence that PA such as cardio-vascular exercise significantly reduces depressive symptoms and symptoms associated with other mental health conditions such as schizophrenia (Rosenbaum et al. 2014: 971)

Thus, reflecting on the above review of the literature, the following general point crystallises. Namely, that as Saudi Arabia is bound by both treaty obligations and scientific evidence to

promote women's participation in sport, understood in both a broader and narrower sense, and to improve the public health response to women's specific needs, the opportunity seems ripe to press the following 'health argument'. First, there is overwhelming evidence for the benefits of PA on the physical and mental health of women. Second, given the role that sport can play in providing opportunities for, and motivation to engage in, PA, such as via high-intensity-activity team sport. Then this suggest that pursuing the goal of improving women's physical and mental health will entail ensuring that women are free to participate in sport.

What counts as being 'free' to participate in sport, exactly?' Recalling the discussion about negative versus positive liberty above, the answer is: in both a negative and a positive sense. This requires both removing obstacles and actively supporting women, with the latter involving, for example, initiatives led by women with the concerns and interests of women playing a central role in how the initiatives are designed and organised. In particular, as has been discussed above, the conclusions of those such as Zipp and Nauright, which highlights the complexities of the influence of gender-norms on the challenges in the way of enhancing women's positive liberty, should be taken into account when formulating policy.

Moreover, if this overall process is to have public health concerns as a key focus, then more generally the kind of positive and negative liberties that will be required are those which ensure gender equality in access to opportunities for PA. This would appear to require, among the basic elements, equality of access to physical education in formal education, opportunities for recreational PA in all its forms, and especially those forms which best promote health benefits– with high-intensity-activity inducing sports likely to be among those forms. This provides the foundation for the 'health argument' in support of greater gender-inclusivity in sport that has been introduced above, and which will be developed further below, especially in Chapter 6.

Chapter 3: Education, Gender, and Religion

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores relevant parts of the literature on the social mechanisms that play a role in women's sporting participation; the link between education-level and liberal attitudes; the relationship between religion and sport; and the relationship between feminism and Islam.

In Section 3.2 I describe the literature search process relevant to this chapter on education, gender, and religion.

In Section 3.3, I discuss the limits of my literature search process.

In Section 3.4 I turn to important portions of the literature on the relationship between education and sporting participation in the Middle-Eastern Islamic world. This will include a brief history of women's education in Saudi Arabia and an examination of strong evidence that there is a causal link between education-level and liberal attitudes.

In Section 3.5 I examine contributions to the issue of Islam's relationship with sport, surveying the history of that relationship and pointing to scriptural evidence that there is no essential Islamic prohibition to women's participation in sport. In fact, I suggest, there is scriptural evidence pointing to a positive view of women's participation in sport.

In Section 3.6 I discuss literature which examines the connection between feminism and Islam. The focus will be on 'Islamic feminism', with the movement's main features discussed from a postcolonial perspective. I highlight some of the troubled colonial history the western powers have had in the Islamic world and discuss the impact that has on the prospects for ideological interaction between Islamic and non-Islamic pursuers of greater emancipation for women in places like Saudi Arabia.

I conclude in Section 3.7, where I suggest that in Saudi Arabia there remain significant cultural, religious, and political barriers in the way of improving women's participation in sport. This is despite the strong evidence that education can have a major liberalising effect, and the evidence that Saudi Arabia is becoming increasingly well-educated and has achieved a

degree of gender equality in access to education that is comparable in many respects with, say, Northern Europe and North America. I also suggest that the remaining barriers will most likely best be surmounted by an indigenous Islamic feminist movement of the sort discussed in Section 3.6.

3.2 Literature search process

The 'Education, Gender, and Religion' literature review was primarily carried out using the LSE Library, JSTOR, and Google Scholar databases. Three searches of those databases were conducted in total. For all searches, dates were restricted to cover the last 20 years only (with some exceptions for especially influential works which were referred to in the literature that fell within the date-range). This date-range was selected in order to focus on the more recent literature which is more likely to give both more gender-relevant data, and data which is more contemporary. Only works in English were searched for.

For search one, the following combinations of keywords in the 'title/abstract' field were employed to detect relevant works: '(education OR school OR university) AND (attitude OR outlook OR view OR liberal OR conservative)'. This search returned over 500,000 works. I examined the title and abstract of the first 1000 of the returned articles, which were organised with the most recent first. Articles which appeared both to be highly relevant to my topic, general, and authoritative, were saved for closer examination. I assessed relevance by comparing the title and abstract with the question that I was seeking answers for: what evidence is there for a causal relationship between level of education and liberalising of attitudes?

For search two, the following combinations of keywords in the 'title/abstract' field were employed: '(Islam OR Muslim) AND (gender OR woman OR women) AND sport'. This search returned over 45,000 works. I examined the title and abstract of the first 1000 of the returned articles, which were organised with the most recent first. Articles which appeared both to be highly relevant to my topic, general, and authoritative, were saved for closer examination.

I assessed relevance by comparing the title and abstract with the question that I was seeking answers for: how does, or can, Islam view women's participation in sport?

For search three, the following combinations of keywords in the 'title/abstract' field were employed: '(Islam OR Muslim) AND (feminism OR feminist)'. This search returned over 145,000 works. I examined the title and abstract of the first 1000 of the returned articles, which were organised with the most recent first. Articles which appeared both to be highly relevant to my topic, general, and authoritative, were saved for closer examination. I assessed relevance by comparing the title and abstract with the question that I was seeking answers for regarding the role that Islamic feminism might play in the issue of women's sport and women's emancipation more generally.

3.3 Literature search process: limits

Regarding limitations, similar concerns arise here as arose for the literature search process in Chapter 2. First, although the review was relatively broad, it could not hope to include all possible sources and the it cannot be completely ruled out that significant studies were not included. Of the studies that I did include, I tried to mitigate for this, as I did in Chapter 2, by examining the citations of the authoritative studies I included to check my own search against the major citations of those studies.

A complication here is that the literature on Islamic feminism and women's sport is limited, so the material closest to that subject area that I included in my review was either of a general nature not related to sport or specifically directed at orthogonal issues, such as the postcolonial character of the movement or its historical development. On the other hand, this thesis is intended to go some way towards redressing this limitation in the literature, which, partly given the scarcity of work in this area, is fertile ground for research.

3.4 Education and liberal attitudes

In this section, literature examining the relationship between education and participation in sport in the Islamic world, particularly in the Middle East, will be examined. First, the recent history of women's education in Saudi Arabia will be described, before literature which examines the role of increasing levels of education has on the liberalising of attitudes.

There was no formal education for women in Saudi Arabia until 1956, and when it was introduced there was a distinct gender segregation in both infrastructure and curricula (Sabbagh, 1996). In particular, the Saudi curriculum for women was intended to promote the role of nurturing mother and housewife. This situation began to change as the 1950s drew to a close when a new group of middle-class, educated men petitioned the government to establish a system of formal women's education. The explicit reasoning at the time was that educated women would better be able to perform their duties as wives and mothers (Alsuwaida 2016: 112). This argument ultimately proved successful, and the first schools for girls opened their doors in 1960. Although for much of the remaining decades, there was a sharp distinction between the curricula offered in women versus men's formal education, with the former following the traditional model of being, largely, a system for preparing women to be 'wives and mothers' (Alsuwaida 2016: 112).

Nevertheless, the initial significant differences between men's and women's curricula in formal Saudi education have largely, although not entirely, disappeared, as have the initial differences in the numbers of women being educated versus the numbers of men (Aquil 2011; Alsuwaida 2016). For example, in 1970 about 30% of primary school pupils, 20% of secondary school pupils, and 8% of students in higher education were women. And even by 1990, the illiteracy rate among Saudi women was at 51% (Jawad 1998). However, as can be seen in Table 3.1 the levels of women's education have continued to rise and now are at near parity with men's, or indicate a majority of women, across all levels (General Authority for Statistics, KSA, 2016).

Level	Percentage of women in education	Percentage of men in education
Primary	48.8	51.2
Intermediate	48.2	51.8
Secondary	48.3	51.7
Primary, intermediate, and secondary overall	48.4	51.6
Diploma	59.5	40.5
Undergraduate	57.1	42.9
Graduate	57.6	42.4
Higher education overall	57.2	42.8

Table 3.1: Percentage of women at different levels of education in Saudi Arabia, 2016

Nevertheless, despite these overall figures, significant inequalities continue to exist below the surface. For example, even though there are more women than men graduating in biology, physics, and mathematics, there are significantly more men than women graduating in engineering and architecture (Rachidi 2017). It should be noted, however, that gender inequalities also exist in many western, non-Muslim countries, with the UK being one such example (see Else 2013), although the degree to which this pertains may not be strictly comparable.

One key question that arises out of the above statistics showing how women's education in Saudi Arabia has made relative progress is: what effect might this be having on attitudes in the country? One possible answer is that the closer the Saudi education system gets to achieving gender parity, the more liberal attitudes about gender in general will become, including attitudes about women's participation in sport.

As I will discuss in Chapter 5, my research suggests that there might be a relationship between increase in the level of education an individual has, and how liberal their attitudes are about women's participation in sport. And there is a body of evidence in the sociology literature regarding the nature and extent of any possible causal connection between a person's level of education and how liberal their attitudes are (for an overview see Hastie 2007). As Weil states:

> The positive relationship between higher levels of educational attainment and social and political liberalism (especially tolerance) has been one of the most stable and consistent findings in empirical social research of contemporary American society (1985: 458)

Examples of such research includes Newcomb's classic cross-sectional, longitudinal study at Bennington University in the USA from 1935 –1939, which seemed to show an influence of university education on individuals' political outlook (Newcomb 1943/1957). This appeared to be supported by follow-up studies which produced similar results (Newcomb, Koenig, Flacks, & Warwick 1967; Alwin, Cohen, and Newcomb 1991). Further, reviews of the literature also seem to show that similar results have been found across a wide range of studies (see Feldman and Newcomb 1969; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991).

However, a number of issues arose out of this research. One such issue was a question about what measure of 'liberal' versus 'conservative' was to be used. Much of the research used either basic 'liberal-conservative' policy scales modelled on US politics, or other measures which employed variables labelled as 'tolerance', 'authoritarian' and so on. Another was the extent to which the samples were self-selected. One suggestion to come out of the research was that, at least to some extent, the apparent liberalising effect of higher education on students may be due to wider changes in society as much as local factors in the relevant higher education community–perhaps the students were already 'on the way' to becoming more liberal when they entered higher education (see Hastie 2007).

However, beyond the self-selection effect it has also been hypothesised that processes of socialisation may be in play, whereby students' attitudes are changed by one of two key mechanisms: either people's attitudes changing to correspond to their peers', or as the result of specific ideas communicated through the subjects they come into contact with. Research which

seems to support both of these hypotheses is that differences in level of liberalisation seem to positively correlate with what academic discipline individuals' study, the idea being that students' peer groups and the subject ideas they become most familiar with will both positively correlate with their choice of subject (Baer and Lambert 1982, 1990; Guimond and Palmer 1990, 1996).

One aim of my research is to begin, in a small way, to extend this research to Saudi Arabia, and apply it in the context of women's sport. For example, I examine the role that education might play in attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia. And in my sample, I identify relationships between the participant's level of education (alongside other variables such as religious belief and gender) and their attitude towards women's sport. As I discuss in Chapters 5 and 6, my results lend further support the hypothesis that level of education is associated with more liberal attitudes by showing that in at least two Saudi locales the association holds.

3.5 Islam, gender, and sport

In this section, I will first give a brief overview of Islam as a religion before explaining how Islamic doctrine can be interpreted as being hospitable to sporting practice in general, and women's participation in particular.

Islam is generally considered by religious scholars to be one of the Abrahamic, monotheistic faiths, a category which includes Christianity and Judaism, among others (Taliaferro 2014). As a term, 'Islam' has an Arabic root meaning 'submission' or 'peace'. In general, Muslims self-identify as surrendering to God's will to achieve a state of peace with God. It is also generally part of Muslim self-identity that adhering to Islam involves becoming part of a worldwide community (Esposito 2003).

Along with the other Abrahamic monotheistic faiths, Islam (in its most typical versions) contains doctrinal commitments to monotheism and the power of revelation to give insight into

God's will, with this power most often concentrated in the hands of prophets.[19] Islam's first prophet was the Prophet Muhammad, PBUH, to whom, Muslim's believe, the Qur'an–Islam's most sacred text–was revealed by God verbatim. There is a related commitment to strict notions of ethical responsibility in line with whatever revelation has been indicated to be God's will. Alongside this is the tenet that there will be a Day of Judgement–a time in humanity's future when there will be a final moral accounting of the actions of every individual who has ever lived, with relevant eternal futures in the after-life for those individuals then determined. Muslims view Islam as the first monotheistic faith, with other members of the broader Abrahamic monotheistic family of faiths tolerated largely as derivatives (Esposito 2003).[20]

3.5.1 Islamic teaching and gender equity

An important, foundational point to note about Islam is that although there are many verses of the Holy Qur'an addressed directly to women and men that explain their rights and duties in ways that might be open to interpretation (for an overview, see Jawaad 1998), Islam explicitly maintains that human beings of all genders should be given equal rights (Alessa, 2010). Islamic countries therefore adopt this. Saudi Arabia, for example, officially proclaims that men and women are equal and this is enshrined in law. However, there remains disagreement about how to interpret this commitment to equality, and how it should be applied. This is in significant part due to the challenge of defining what 'equality' should be taken to mean in the first place. As Ronald Dworkin states, equality is a 'contested concept' because people 'who praise it or disparage it disagree about what they are praising or disparaging' (2000: 2).

---

[19] The Abrahamic faiths are considered Abrahamic in virtue of their adherents being considered to be spiritual children of Abraham, with different Abrahamic faiths tracing their roots to different branches of the same family. For example, Christians and Jews trace their spiritual lineage to Abraham's second son, Isaac, whereas Muslims trace their lineage back to Abraham's first son Ishmael.

[20] Islam is the second most widespread of all the religious traditions in the world, with over 1 billion adherents. There are forty-eight countries in the world where Muslims form a majority, and many others where they form a significant minority. Although the Arab world is most often regarded as the heartland of Islam in the popular imagination, most Muslims in fact live in Asia and Africa. Indeed, the largest populations of Muslims are in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, parts of Central Asia, and Nigeria. In the West, Islam has increased in numbers of adherents in both absolute and relative terms. Indeed, Islam is now the second largest religion in much of Europe, and in the USA it is the third largest (Esposito 2003).

One way to begin to understand disagreements about what the Islamic commitment to gender equality amounts to is as a debate about *equity*, rather *equality* per se. Defining these terms will help make the distinction clear.

Equality can be defined as the state of being equal, where 'equal' refers to a relation persons or groups of persons can stand in to one another when those relata have the same properties (see Gosepath 2011: §1).[21] To use a neutral example just to illustrate the definition, Scottish people and Irish people stand in the relation of legal equality to each other when both groups have the same explicitly stated legal rights (i.e. share that property), and the same opportunities to exercise those rights (i.e. share that property too).

Further, an *equality distribution* can be defined as the total range of equality-relevant properties that two groups share (or don't share). Again, to use a neutral example just to illustrate the notion, to describe the equality distribution between Scottish and Irish people, one would have to describe all the equality-relevant properties had by each group, and state the nature and degree of any differences.[22]

With this in mind, equity can be defined as follows: a state of affairs such that the equality distribution between two groups is just (or equitable). And, importantly, there can be disagreements about whether equality in the sense defined above is always equitable. One example of a lack of equality which few would deem unequitable is that in the UK females have access to maternity services in all sorts of ways that males do not. That is an inequality, in the sense defined, but it would not appear to be an inequity. Thus, for any equality distribution which is unequal it does not follow that the distribution is unequitable (for discussion of this point see Gosepath 2011).[23]

---

[21] Note, by 'relata' I mean 'the things a relation relates'. For example, if A is next to B, then A and B are the relata, *is next to* is the relation. In the paragraph, the relata are the persons or groups of persons, the relation is *being equal to* I take this from Gosepath 2011.

[22] What are the 'equality relevant' properties of any group? That is a difficult question to answer fully, hence why this definition deliberately glosses over it. But a first pass at answering it would presumably involve reference to whatever properties are relevant to individuals' social and political status in society, life outcomes, and such like.

[23] I discuss the issue of how the equality/equity distinction can be applied again in Chapter 6 where I detail how it fits into my overall account of the Islamic feminist movement and my recommendation that the relevant progress should occur via that movement.

So, for Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia which embrace the Holy Qur'an's commitment to equal rights but retain and defend equality distributions between the genders which are unequal, their position can be understood as follows. It is a position which entails a commitment to equity between the genders, not a literal commitment to an equality distribution which is equal. And, once the position is understood in this way, then sense can be made of the disagreements about what equity between the genders should amount to.

This equity/equality distinction can be applied in the context of women's participation in sport. The general idea would be that although no competent observer could plausibly deny that women have unequal opportunities for participation in sport in Muslim Middle-Eastern countries, what is controversial in the region is whether such inequality is a case of inequity.

Hence the justification which exists for some of the limited opportunities for women's participation in sport in the region. For example, that women can become involved in sport only if they conform to relatively strict Islamic behavioural codes.

One common kind of behavioural restriction concerns the availability of sports. Muslim women are often only able to partake in sports which are considered 'suitable' for their gender. For instance, the Saudi authorities limited women's participation in the 2016 Olympics to 'acceptable' sports only, including archery, equestrianism, and fencing (Dorsey, 2014). Moreover, in 2015, Prince Fahad bin Jalawi al-Saud suggested that Saudi Arabia could host a 'men only' version of the Olympics with Bahrain simultaneously hosting a 'women only' version. However, this suggestion was quickly rejected by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which insisted that a commitment to non-discrimination was mandatory for all Olympic bids (see Cohen 2015). As will be discussed in Chapter 5, I asked a question about interviewees' views on Prince Fahad al-Saud's proposal, and a further probing question about why interviewees' thought the IOC would say the proposal was 'discriminatory'.

Another common kind of behaviour restriction concerns gender dress and segregation. For example, women are often required to wear the *Hijab* which covers the head, and often other forms of 'modest' Islamic clothing which cover other parts of the body. However, this is often only required if men might be observing–if all of those partaking in the sporting activity, or

observing it are women, often the dress codes are relaxed significantly (see Eyadat 2013). Nevertheless, the impact that such restrictions have on participation seem clear: the harder it is to do x, then, all else being equal, the less likely people will do x. Restrictive clothing that makes it harder to take part in sport makes it less likely those wearing, or forced to wear the restrictive clothing in a range of circumstances will take part in that sport. Similarly, practices which restrict sporting opportunities, such as sex segregation, make it harder to pursue those opportunities and thus reduces the likelihood that they will be so pursued.

Moreover, restrictions can also go significantly beyond dress codes and such like. Internally, Saudi Arabia has traditionally prohibited women from participating in sport in both public and private spheres, and the official bodies do not have a history of funding any form of women's sport. Hence, sport is an activity that is almost entirely restricted to men only. And until recently it was prohibited for women to enter stadiums and watch sports (Harkness 2012; Dorsey 2013; Sajeed 2015), with restrictions still in place at many venues. Indeed, also until recently, it was impossible for Saudi girls to receive any form of physical education in schools (Sajeed 2015; HRW 2017).

Thus, despite the Saudi government officially committing itself to equity between men and women, it appears to still be working towards full implementation of that commitment. The examples above support this contention, but further support can be found in the significant class inequities which appear to exist. For example, the most available form of sports is for young girls in private schools, which are often very expensive to attend and available only for a small elite, although with recent commitment to expand physical education across the state education system in Saudi Arabia, this inequity may lessen.

Indeed, the Saudi government appears to recognise some of these inequities and is taking at least some steps to address them. As was mentioned above, in 2012, the first Saudi women participated in the Olympic Games (Sajeed 2015). In 2013, the first sports centre for women was opened (Sajeed 2015). This was also the year in which the Saudi authorities permitted private schools in the Kingdom to provide physical education for girls for the first time, opening the way for this also to occur in public schools, which then began to occur in the

Autumn of 2017 (see Sajeed 2015; HRW 2017). Furthermore, the Saudi authorities have committed to allowing the licensing of private women's football clubs (Dorsey 2013). Finally, the Kingdom has recently announced that women will be allowed to drive for the first time (commencing in the summer of 2018), which should have a general benefit for the accessibility of sporting infrastructure and opportunities for at least some women.

And in terms of government concerns about population health, the prospects for further liberalisation are not unreasonable. One major example of this is the Quality of Life Program (QoL) 2020, which is part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 development goals. The program is intended to improve the basic living standards of citizens and the extent to which citizens are able to live 'pleasant and comfortable' lives (QoL Program Document 2017: 10). I will discuss this program at much greater length in Chapter 6, but one key part of the program is worth noting here, namely a recognition that the: 'participation of citizens and residents in diverse sports activities has a direct impact on health and wellness' (QoL Program 2017: 11). Thus, this provides some evidence that at the highest levels of policy formation the importance of PA, and the role sport can play in that, is beginning to be recognised in the Kingdom.

3.5.2 Islamic scripture, sport and gender

But despite this progress, as we have seen the Saudi authorities continue to very significantly restrict Saudi women from accessing and participating in sport in the Kingdom. This is very often motivated by appeals to a conservative interpretation of Islam. However, as I will now outline, there are grounds for adopting an alternative interpretation based on specific scriptural evidence.

For example, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported to have said, 'Entertain [yourselves] and play, for indeed I dislike harshness to be seen in your religion' (Suyuti, al-Jami). As a pronouncement in favour of entertainment and play, sporting activity, a kind of entertainment and play, may also seem to be favoured. Supporting this contention are other reported statements by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which appear to support the pursuit of health and fitness. For example: 'A [physically] strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah

than the [physically] weak believer' (Sahih Muslim). It is also reported that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) participated in a range of sporting activities, including: running, wrestling, swimming, archery, and horse and camel racing (Jawad 1998). Crucially, it is said that the Prophet (PBUH) often partook in these activities alongside his wives (Jawad 1998).

Further, the act of prayer–an undeniably religiously acceptable practice–can be viewed as a kind of PA with health benefits, thereby opening-up the line of argument that if prayer is good in part for the benefits of PA it offers, then sport could enjoy the same warrant. Alternatively, it might also be argued that if prayer is physically taxing, then other activities which promote physical health and fitness so that the act of prayer may be engaged in as frequently and with maximally appropriate comportment as possible could be justified. This argument might work most successfully in the case of the elderly who may not have the same access to 'incidental' PA as working-age adults.

Khan outlines the physicalities of prayer as follows:

> The obligatory prayers consist of [seventeen] cycles of body activities. During prayers Muslims have to stand still, bow, kneel and prostrate. These activities are proven to control and synchronise body muscles, release pressure and facilitate relaxation, helping to release pressure on the brain, stimulate all the joints including the spine, and activate heart and blood circulation (1997: 15).

In the drawing of this analogy between 'healthy' religious practice and physical health, one perhaps finds an echo of what occurred in parts of the Western world during the early modern period, when Christian values of self-discipline, ethical behaviour, and so on, began to be seen to align with sporting ideals and practices. (As I will discuss further below in Chapter 6, there are perhaps lessons to be learned from this example for understanding the processes and levers which might prompt the kinds of change in theological doctrines women's full participation in sport may require. Indeed, as I will also discuss, this is a process which the Islamic feminist movement is well placed to figure in prominently.)

It is also argued in the literature that women had more equality in the early days of Islam (that is, in the post-Mohammedan years) than in the present day. According to Jawad, Islam was 'a

liberator not an oppressor of women' (1998: 8). And this is reflected in ancient Islamic texts. For example, according to Sahih Bukhari–considered by many Muslims to be the most authentic Islamic text after the Holy Qur'an (see Brown 2007)–Aisha, a wife of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), was often involved in sporting activity (Sahih Bukhari, Book: 62, Hadith: 92). To be sure, ancient scripture does not explicitly state that women regularly participated *with* men, but there is certainly textual evidence that women were culturally and legally allowed to partake in physical sporting activity in the Prophet Muhammad's time, circa post-610 CE, such as running and archery. Nevertheless, in more recent centuries they have been excluded from organised sports such as camel racing and archery in Muslim societies (Alessa 2010).

These positions are contrary to some Western assumptions on Islamic women's participation in sport. In such contexts, there is sometimes the uncritical assumption that Islam is socially repressive and functions to uphold the patriarchal order (Pfister 2009; Jawad 2008). This often results in a misunderstanding of Islamic teachings. As noted in the introduction, one of the objectives of this chapter is to offer the perspective of a practising Muslim on original key sources to underline that the teachings of the prophet Muhammad demonstrate that Islam encourages its followers to be active and take part in sporting activity. The key sources drawn upon here are The Holy Qur'an, as well as using a selection of the Hadiths. These Hadiths are a collection of traditions that highlight key statements from the Prophet Muhammad and help to give details about his daily activity, thus informing Muslim social practices, both in the public and the private sphere.

There are numerous references to the participation of Muslims in sport throughout the Holy Qur'an. In the Qur'an Surah Yusuf, verse 17, it states: 'the brothers of the Prophet Yusuf saying to their father, Prophet Y'aqub, "O father, we went racing with one another..."' In the original, the Arabic term *nastabiq* refers to a type of competitive foot-race. In the same Surah, verse 12 states: 'Send him [Yusuf] with us tomorrow so that he may revel and play with us', again indicating approval of recreational activity in general.

In the Hadiths, texts which record all of the Prophet Mohammad's teachings (PBUH), it is stated that Muhammad himself participated in playful, competitive exercise with one of his wives, Aisha:

> I had a race with him (the Prophet) and I outstripped him on my feet. When I became flesh, (again) I had a race with him (the Prophet) and he outstripped me. He said: This is for that outstripping (Al Bukhari 1996).

Moreover, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is also reported to have said: 'Every game a person plays is futile except for archery, training one's horse and playing with one's wife' (Al Bukhari 1996).

Of course, this was not organised sport as it is understood in the twenty-first century, but in the 6th century CE, sport tended to be more informal and spontaneous, or to appear in such guises as running, archery, and camel racing, which have clear practical applications which are non-sporting.

Further, there is evidence which suggests that the Prophet Muhammad and Islam as a religion supported participation in exercise and sport as a way of maintaining physical strength and good health for men and women. Sayyiduna Zayd ibn Arqam (RA), who was a companion of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), reports that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) used to say, in prayer: 'I seek your protection from powerlessness (ajz), laziness (kasl), cowardice (jubn), miserliness (bukhl), and weakness (harem).'

And, with reference to the protection and promotion of the health the Prophet (PBUH) has further said: 'Our bodies have rights upon us, our eyes have rights upon us, so give everyone his due right' (Al Bukhari 1996: Hadith No. 186, 188, 193); And: 'Taking proper care of one's health is the right of the body' (Al Bukhari 1996). Moreover, other reports suggest that the Holy Prophet took his health and fitness seriously, as two of his companions, Tabrani and Tirmidhi, report 'His (PBUH) stomach and chest were in line' (Al Bukhari 1996).

Hence, it would appear that the vitality of health is encouraged in Islamic scripture. And for the upkeep and maintenance of health sport is clearly a particularly useful tool (as was discussed in Chapter 2).

Indeed, there is some recognition in the literature that women's participation in sport can be justified on the grounds that Islam is a 'religion of "balance and equilibrium" which embodies a reverence and concern for the healthy female body' (Hargreaves 2013). Several scholars say that Islamic teaching advocates and encourages sports activities for physical development of both genders (for on overview see Mahfoud 2011). The exact nature of the balance or equilibrium can be difficult to specify. In particular, disagreements about whether a particular equality distribution is equitable are likely to be central to a full specification of what kind of balance and equilibrium is Islamic.

Hence, it is the most conservative and fundamentalist interpretations of the Qur'an which have led to women being prohibited from participating in sport. These interpretations are 'fundamentalist' in significant part on account of their recourse and adherence to some supposedly essential principles of the faith which centre on the norms of female chastity and family honour (which in turn rests in significant part on female family members' perceived chastity). In the societies of the Muslim world in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, male dominated elites have used such fundamentalist interpretations to discourage female participation and portray it as inappropriate, immodest and even immoral behaviour (Jawaad 1998; Al-Rasheed 2013; Eyadat 2013; Walseth and Fasting 2003; Dorsey 2014). This is particularly the case in Saudi Arabia, where a strict interpretation of the Qur'an is effectively the law of the land in what is largely a theocratic state. Furthermore, religious institutions 'are in control of many of the affairs concerning the Kingdom, including the exclusively male judiciary and the policing of public morality' (Rajkhan 2014: 8).

Interesting questions can be asked about the relationship between the more restrictive interpretations of Islamic doctrine and other cultural beliefs about the sexes. For example, De Knop identifies a connection between beliefs about women being more vulnerable than men, in

virtue of biological differences, thus requiring protections and support (1996: 150). Walseth and Fasting make a similar point:

> According to Islam, women have a strong sexuality. Compared to men, women are more often viewed as less moral, because they are believed to have less control over their sexuality… She is therefore seen as a seducing being, at the same time she is easy to tempt. Due to this idea women can easily create fitna (chaos or temptation) in the society. Participating in sport with men would be an example (2003: 57).

This kind of 'paternalistic sexism' can take many forms, both secular and religious, and it is not always obvious which comes first: the cultural belief or the religious doctrine. Do the religious restrictions grow out of deeper non-religious cultural beliefs about sex differences, or vice versa? Such questions are particularly challenging to answer, and I will not offer one here–although I will return to this issue in Chapter 6 will I discuss one possible response.

It also seems plausible that another factor which helps to underwrite religious restrictions on women's participating in sport and interpretations of doctrine which supposedly justify those restrictions is the relative absence of women visibly participation in sport. This kind of 'fact on the ground' creates habitualised behaviours and expectations which are then much easier to justify.

Hence, the status quo inevitably has a degree of inertia, which can be challenging to overcome. Indeed, competing conservative and liberal interpretations of Islam are part of a general tension in many parts of the Islamic world between more 'progressive' pressures to allow women to participate in sport and more 'regressive' pressures to adhere to a particular interpretation of Islam. This can play out in a number of ways. For example, consider the establishment of the Women's Islamic Games in 1993. On the one hand, this might indicate that women's participation in sport is promoted by Arabic and Muslim countries. On the other hand, the Games also embody a wide-range of restrictions on women's sporting participation. This includes: gender segregation, and detailed and potentially restricting dress requirements in order that women will conform with (a certain interpretation of) Islamic teachings when participating.

Thus, although this in a sense increases the opportunities for women to participate in sport their freedom is still subject to rules as established upon certain, relatively rigid and traditional, Islamic precepts. This has drawn criticism in the literature. For example, Houlihan and Green observe that

> the Women's Islamic Games has increased Muslim women's participation in sports, but this comes only within the context of sports events closed to males and the media (2010: 119).

Nevertheless, as much as the Games might be criticised as being just another expression of conservative Islamic shibboleths, there are Muslim countries which do not participate. Saudi Arabia is one such example. The official Saudi view on women's participation in sport follows, as I have discussed above, a very conservative interpretation of Islam that differs from many Muslim countries.

Indeed, the literature reveals a diversity of views among Muslims regarding sport and Islam. For example, Walseth and Fasting (2004) has found that many Muslims believe that sport in general, and women's participation in particular, is compatible with the teachings of the Qur'an, even in countries where there are official restrictions. And even in countries where there are official restrictions, such as Egypt, women can often circumvent them with only limited social costs. For example, Egyptian women have participated in the Olympic Games, and in doing so undermined the popularity of government restrictions barring women from sports (Alesea 2010; Pfister 2010).

In general, with regards to the extent of restriction of women's participating in sport, Middle-Eastern Muslim countries exist on a spectrum (see Hargreaves and Vertinksy 2007). At one end of the spectrum is Qatar, the leading sports nation in the Middle East. Even though the official state religion of Qatar is Islam, its interpretation of the faith is more liberal than that of other countries such as Saudi Arabia. The motivation for Qatar in this respect appears twofold: first the domestic population generally supports the approach; second Qatar views a more liberal approach as improving its relationship with the international community (Harkness 2012).

By way of contrast, Saudi Arabia currently sits at the opposite end of the spectrum where women's participation in sports is almost entirely forbidden in public. Within the context of women's sport participation, it is rare and almost non-existent, though there are, as I have discussed, slow movements towards progress. Sitting between these two ends of the spectrum are other Islamic countries such as Iran and Malaysia where widespread relatively liberal attitudes regarding women's sport confirm it is erroneous to think of the Muslim world as a perfectly homogenous community.

3.6 Feminism and Islam

In this section, literature examining the relationship between feminism and Islam will be discussed. In particular, the relatively new area of Islamic feminism will be explored with the nature and extent of the movement outlined from a postcolonial perspective.

Islamic feminism is a movement which aims at the emancipation of women from an Islamic perspective (Pfister 2010; Eyadat 2013; Ahmad 2015). It is difficult to determine when the movement began, and it is diffuse with many moving parts–much like feminism more generally. But key waypoints in the development of Islamic feminism include the theological-political work of the irrepressible 19th century Iranian poet Fatimah Baraghani, known more widely as Táhirih. Regarded as the first modern woman to engage in systematic theological interpretation of the Qur'an, Táhirih was a radical figure whose name still evokes admiration today. For example, the playwright Sarah Bernhardt described Táhirih as the:

> Persian Joan of Arc, the leader of emancipation for women of the Orient… who bore resemblance both to the medieval Heloise and the neo-Platonic Hypatia (quoted in Ṣābir 2004: 19).

Into the 20th and 21st centuries, influential figures include the Egyptian Professor of literature, Aisha Abd al-Rahman, her compatriots Leila Ahmed, the scholar, and Nawal El Saadawi, the activist and psychiatrist, as well as the Moroccan sociologist Fatema Mernissi. Indeed, the latter's two classic works *Beyond the Veil* (1987) and *The Veil and the Male Elite* (1991) are

exemplars of the Islamic feminist approach. In those works, Mernissi argues that gender inequity in the Muslim world has developed as the result of the misinterpretation of the Qur'an largely by a male elite with their own agenda. Mernissi's approach is twofold: first to defend the feminist credentials of Islam by providing a feminist analysis of Islamic texts and history. This includes, for example, questioning the authenticity of misogynistic hadiths and highlighting the relatively more gender-egalitarian periods of Islamic history. Second, to analyse the role of sex segregation (symbolized by the 'veil' referred to in her titles) in Muslim society, teasing apart its religious and non-religious underpinnings.

There are also a wide range of national and international organisations associated with the Islamic feminist movement. For example, in 1977 the radical political activist Meena Keshwar Kamal founded the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, now based in Pakistan (see: rawa.org). In 1982, El Saadawi, who has been described as the 'Simone de Beauvior of the Arab world' helped to found the Arab Women's Solidarity Association (see Etheridge 2019). In 2015, an international, though largely western, coalition of Muslim writers, activists and politicians launched what they called a 'Muslim Reform Movement' by attaching their 'Declaration of Reform' to the front door of the Islamic Centre of Washington. The declaration included the proclamation that:

> We support equal rights for women, including equal rights to inheritance, witness, work, mobility, personal law, education, and employment. Men and women have equal rights in mosques, boards, leadership and all spheres of society. We reject sexism and misogyny (see National Secular Society 2015).

As the above examples begin to demonstrate, Islamic feminism is a broad mosque. It includes those who are secular and those who aren't. It includes those who are heavily critical of what they see as inherent misogyny in the Islamic tradition, and those who deny that there is such. – Compare, for instance, El Saadawi's *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1982) with al-Rahman's *The Veil and the Male Elite* (1993). It includes those who face daily struggles in some of the most war-torn areas on the planet, and those who live as members of the well-to-do intelligentsia in the western world.

Thus, two key questions arise when considering Islamic feminism. What distinguishes Islamic feminism from non-Islamic feminism? Why might a specifically *Islamic* feminism (as opposed to feminism simpliciter) be required? In addressing these questions, one comes face-to-face with difficult issues regarding the possibility of postcolonial liberation, and the role of western feminism in the contemporary geopolitical hegemony of the USA and its many allies and client states.

And, contemporary advocates for a specifically Islamic feminism typically understand the movement as an appropriate response to the dual concerns of the emancipation of women and the threat of Western global hegemony. As Majid states:

> While one must expose Islamist ideologies to rigorous criticism and categorically reject all coercive and intolerant practices espoused in the name of religion, the recovery of a long-obfuscated egalitarian Islam together with an effort to reconceptualise a progressive Islam for the future are necessary undertakings if one is to go beyond a negative critique of homogenized Islamic cultures and rethink a possible indigenous path to women's emancipation (1998: 322).

Hence, one cannot understand Islamic feminism, and the perceived need for it, without first coming to appreciate relevant parts of the history of purely intellectual, and not so purely intellectual, invasions of the Islamic world by colonial and quasi-colonial forces–invasions which so often occurred via a Trojan horse named 'civilization'.

In recent decades, since the rise of feminism in the West, there has been a growth in 'Westernized Muslim' critiques of the Islamic world which often have a western-feminist component. Perhaps the most famous example is the furore over Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*–the award-winning (in the West) novel based partly on the Prophet Muhammad's life (PBUH) which was banned in many parts of the Muslim world, and prompted book-burnings and a *fatwā* (a religious ruling) from the Ayotalla Khomeini in Iran calling for Rushdie's death (see Osborne 2016).[24] More recently, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a former devout Muslim who is now an

---

[24] It should be noted that Rushdie himself lamented how the episode fed the western stereotype of 'the backward, cruel, rigid Muslim, burning books and threatening to kill the blasphemer' (Marzorati 1989).

atheist and political activist campaigning for women's rights, has led a high-profile campaign criticising Islam in, and from, the West. Ali is originally from Somalia, but now resides in the USA, has held political office in the Netherlands, and currently holds a number of high-ranking positions in the Academy including being a Fellow of both Stanford and Harvard University as well as a member of the Council on Foreign Relations (see Hoover Institution 2017).

Both Rushdie and Ali, among a number of other similar largely western-based 'Islamic dissidents' have often endured death threats, and required armed protection, as a result of the kinds of critical speech they have engaged in. This is a symptom of what is perceived as a wider 'culture war' between, on the one hand, contemporary Western societies which celebrate Enlightenment tenets (e.g. free speech, unfettered rational enquiry, separation of church and state) alongside liberal ideals more generally, and on the other, the supposed 'reform resistant' and 'backward' Islamic world. A culture war that, as Majid outlines, has come to be viewed in some quarters as yet another kind of Western 'crusade' against the Islamic world:

> The West's crusade against Islam has been joined by Westernized Muslim writers such as Taharben Jelloun, Driss Chraibi, and the Indian-born Salman Rushdie, who have all attempted to depict Islam as a reactionary force that has set back or destroyed the freedoms of women and writers and eclipsed the traditions of non-Arab peoples. Such claims have proven to be controversial, lucrative, and reflective of the writers' entrapment in mainstream Western perceptions of Islam (1998: 325).

Importantly, such soft-power conflicts have also tended to play a significant role in hard-power conflicts too, in which the 'cultural crusades' of the West have been pursued not with novels or speeches, but rather with tanks and bombs. And, western feminism has been criticised as playing a role, either as ideological conscript or volunteer, in such contemporary Western colonial adventures.

For example, in the run-up to both the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, and the second Iraq war which began in 2003, one of the main justifications given for the wars, particularly by liberal pro-war voices in the West, was that it would allow liberal, western, feminist values to be exported to the countries as part of the process of 'regime change' (see Al-Ali and Pratt

2010). One prominent instance of this was in 2001, when the then First Lady, Laura Bush, presented feminist arguments in support of an invasion of Afghanistan in a presentation on the White House's weekly radio show. As Bush stated:

> the brutal oppression of women is the central goal of the terrorists… civilised people [are obliged] to speak out [and to decry to the] world what the terrorists would like to impose on the rest of us… [and that] the fight against terrorism is about the fight for the rights and dignity of women (2001).

In the UK, Cherie Booth, a prominent human rights lawyer and wife of the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, expressed somewhat similar sentiments shortly after the war in Afghanistan began, calling for Afghan women to be freed (by a means she did not explicitly specify) from the restrictions they had been suffering under the Taliban (see Ward 2013).

Similarly, as the second Iraq war approached, feminist arguments were used as part of the campaign to win public support for military action. This was expressed in many different ways. Al-Ali and Pratt discuss one such case:

> At a press conference two weeks before the US-led invasion of Iraq, Paula Dobriansky, then undersecretary of state for global affairs, declared: 'We are at a critical point in dealing with Saddam Hussein. However this turns out, it is clear that the women of Iraq have a critical role to play in the future revival of their society'. Standing next to her were four 'Women for a Free Iraq'. Women for a Free Iraq were a group of Iraqi women living in exile, formed in January 2003 to raise awareness of women's experiences of persecution under Saddam Hussein. The campaign received funding from the Washington-based Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. Though the foundation is nominally non-partisan, its president, Clifford May, is a former Republican Party operative and its board is stacked with prominent neo-conservatives.

And these kinds of rhetorical appeals to feminist sensibilities as a justification for war continues (as these conflicts do). In 2010, Time Magazine ran a cover story with a graphic picture of Bibi Aisha, an Afghan child who had suffered facial mutilation at the hands of her husband whom she had tried to escape (sources disagreed over any role that the Taliban might

have played). The cover story's headline was: *What happens if we leave Afghanistan* (Time 2010).

This involvement of western-feminist tropes in the manufacturing of consent for military 'interventions' in the Islamic world by the USA and its allies has led to the coining of a new term: 'embedded feminism' (see Hunt 2006: 51-71). The term is a play on 'embedded journalism' which refers to the controversial practice of journalists reporting on wars from within military units they live with while reporting on the relevant conflict. The practice of embedding journalists is controversial as it is thought to compromise the independence of the journalists' reporting, who can, it is thought, become like PR conscripts for the military (see Pilger 2011). Embedded feminism, analogously, refers to the conscripting of feminists, and feminist principles, in the PR campaign for war.

The upshot of all this is to problematise Western feminism in the eyes of many non-Westerners, and to dramatically complicate the process of exporting the ideology of western feminism into contexts in which feminist theories and rhetoric have been employed as tools of colonial and post-colonial geo-political control.

Hence, the above question can now be answered: what distinguishes Islamic feminism from non-Islamic feminism? Why might a specifically Islamic feminism (as opposed to feminism simpliciter) be required? The answers are, respectively: first, *Islamic* feminism is an indigenous feminist movement in the Islamic world freer from the history of colonialism and implications of ongoing Western global hegemony (of either the hard or soft power kind). Second, Islamic feminism is required because without it gender justice in the Islamic world will be much further out of reach. Consider: $5.6 trillion (spent by the USA alone), 1.17 million deaths, 10.1 million displaced people, and countless hours of human endeavour could not enforce Western values (or even properly functioning democracies) on the Islamic regions of Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and the borderlands of Pakistan (for figures see Crawford 2016, 2017). This might suggest that the prospects for a straightforward importation of Western-feminist ideology into the Islamic world are open to question, particularly given the perceived relationship between such ideology and wider Western hegemony. Hence the need for a distinctively *Islamic*

feminism to have any realistic hope of achieving, in anything but the remote future, feminist goals in the Islamic world.

What, then, can Islamic feminism achieve that non-Islamic feminism cannot? There are four key areas of progress that Islamic feminists have been pursuing to date (for a summary see Ahmad 2015).

First, to reinterpret holy texts to demonstrate that the problems faced by women in the Islamic world are not due to any essential features of Islam, but rather are due to misguided interpretations of Islam. My thesis can be understood as playing a small role in that process by showing that in relation to sporting participation it is possible to interpret Islam such that women's participation in sport is not un-Islamic.

Second, to establish the rights that women have under Islam and ensure that they are properly understood by both men and women, as well as enforced. For example, it has been argued by Islamic feminists that the cultural norms of honour and shame have obscured, in the minds of many Muslims, undisputable rights that women have (according to Islam) to negotiate the conditions of marriage before consenting to it. This includes such matters as the conditions of polygamy and the custody of children in the event of divorce (see Ahmad 2015). By pointing out such rights, and arguing for their more proactive and widespread upholding, real, immediate, and significant improvements can be made in the lives of Islamic women. And, sport has a part to play in this process of 'recovering' women's rights in Islam: if women's' rights to take the necessary steps to maintain their health and engage in PA more generally can be defended from an Islamic perspective, then this could have very significant benefits.

Third, the process of re-assessing the cultural canon in the Islamic world to re-discover the lost history of women's contributions to that canon. This can challenge the currently dominant male-centric narratives which have rendered women's contributions largely invisible. Islamic feminists often point out (see Ahmad 2015) that this contemporary situation contrasts quite sharply with the more active and prominent role that women played in the community during the Prophet's time (PBUH).

Fourth, the creation of specifically Islamic women's spaces to counterbalance the dominance of male-only (or dominated) spaces in many Islamic contexts. One example of this (driven by explicitly Islamic feminist thinking) was the creation of a women-only Mosque in Pudukkottai in India (Ahmad 2015).

In addition, it is worth nothing that more broadly Islamic feminism can provide effective analyses of fundamentalist versions of Islam. In virtue of Islamic feminism's credentials, it is, on the one hand, distanced from the conflicts of interest that seem to play a central role in fundamentalist ideology, and on the other, is not negatively branded with any Western imprimatur.

It is also perhaps worth recognising that many of the practical steps being taken by Islamic feminists were taken, in one form or another, by secular Western feminists in the early days of the feminist movement, such as the pursuit of women's interests in the domain of family law, or the creation of women's only spaces (see Freedman 2007).

Penultimately, it will also be worthwhile to connect this discussion of Islamic feminism to the overall methodology of my thesis. As I will discuss in Chapter 4, the theoretical framework of this study is a pragmatist one which is agnostic with regards to the essentialism versus anti-essentialism and realism versus anti-realism debates about gender. Further, broadly pragmatic support for the agnostic stance about gender can be found in the potentially colonial implications of developing either a realist or anti-realist, Westernised, secular-feminist view of gender and endeavouring to export that into the non-Western world. One aim of my thesis is to work within an alternative model more hospitable to the development of an indigenous, non-Western, Islamic feminism.

Finally, it will be useful to consider some limitations and risks here. One of the perhaps most salient issues with the Islamic feminist approach, one that is frequently discussed in the literature, is the apparent potential tension between being Islamic and being feminist. Explaining that apparent tension, and some of the main options for resolving it, leads to deep questions about the ultimate nature of the feminist project as a whole. As Djelloul states:

'understanding Islamic feminism from a de-colonial viewpoint means considering how it is possible for it to exist at all' (2018).

One fact that is emblematic of this issue is that a very significant proportion of women who constitute the prominent voices among Islamic feminists have been educated in the West and, consequently, developed their theoretical approaches with significant influence from the cultural paradigms that dominate in that part of the world. This creates difficulties, both intellectually and practically, for those voices when they position themselves as belonging to an indigenous Islamic feminist movement which is post or de-colonial. In particular, in terms of broader political dynamics, it opens up both an 'internal' and 'external' source of potential criticism. On the one hand, other Islamic elites, such as religious or political authorities, who are sceptical of the feminist project may portray these voices as 'wolves' of colonial oppression in the clothing of liberating 'sheep'. As Margot Badran states:

> A common counterattack on women's assumption of agency as feminists-on behalf of gender and nation-has been to discredit feminists, and feminism, by branding them Western agents of colonialism (1995: 24).

On the other hand, other non-Islamic elites, such as non-Islamic feminists, who are sceptical of the non-secular nature of Islamic feminism, may portray these voices as falling short of feminist ideals.

And, in trying to navigate a path between these political challenges there is a risk that Islamic feminists could end up with a 'worst of both worlds' outcome: a neutered feminism with a merely superficial, yet still in some contexts costly, Islamic image.

Ultimately, whether Islamic feminism can avoid this outcome, or whether individual Islamic feminists (as mentioned above, the movement is a broad mosque) can achieve the best of both worlds rather than the worst will be a delicate matter, and need to be judged on a case by case basis. But the potential risk seems clear.

Indeed, it is my view that the tensions in Islamic feminism will require significant effort to resolve. Instances of these tensions can be found in the activities and attitudes of many who

self-identify as Islamic feminists and those, such as Asma Barlas, who are so labelled but at best uncomfortably so. Indeed, describes her own struggles with identifying with the label 'feminist' despite being widely considered one of the leading contemporary Islamic feminists. As Barlas states,

> calling myself a feminist was never a choice I was given. And, as I said, perhaps it was the combination of a perverse post-colonial sensibility and personal stubbornness that kept me from giving away my right to even name myself. Particularly at a time when a self-defned West has unleashed such bloodshed against Muslims everywhere there is some comfort in such seemingly small acts of individual resistance. Of course, as Ashis Nandy says, the West is now "everywhere, in structures and in minds," and there is simply no escaping it, but I still seek to protect my sense of self from parts of the West by refusing to speak some common languages (2008: 17).

Hence, the tensions in Islamic feminism run so deep that even prominent members of the movement can struggle, within their own identity, to see the being a Muslim and being a feminist as fully compatible.

Thus, the movement, in virtue of the competing concerns of gender and religious nationalism, can find itself forced into difficult trade-offs. These trade-offs can take many forms, but one example is discussed by Lama Abu-Odeht, who has highlighted how Egyptian feminists have found themselves trying to balance and respond to competing political forces. As she states:

> Islam, the West and the patriarchy represent the defining ends of the triangle within which mainstream liberal Egyptian feminism currently finds itself trapped. Egyptian feminism has developed a response towards each of these issues. In relation to Islam, it is modernizing, (when its interlocutor is a religious adversary)… In relation to the West, it is an apologist, (when its interlocutor is Western)… Finally, in relation to the patriarchy, it is liberal (2004: 178-179).

In my view, this issue of competing internal and external political forces plays out across the Muslim world, but particularly in the Middle East (including Saudi Arabia), in one form or another. Responding ideally to those competing forces is often challenging and may require

difficult compromises. The path towards political reform is rarely smooth. I will discuss this issue further in Chapter 6, where I develop my argument that the feminist project more generally, and in regards to sport in particular, is best pursued by an indigenous Islamic feminist movement.

3.7 Conclusion

Reflecting on the above, it seems clear that a number of cultural, religious, and political barriers remain in the way of improving women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia and similar countries. This is despite recent changes which suggest that the ground is continuing to shift towards a general liberalising of attitudes. This raises a key question: how best might those remaining barriers be surmounted?

As we have just seen, there has been a growing, indigenous feminist movement in the Islamic world which is beginning to re-frame the interpretative religious and cultural paradigms which have for so long resisted the full emancipation of women, with Saudi Arabia often seen to be at the forefront of that resistance. In professionalised academic form, at least, this movement is of recent genesis. As Margherita Picchi notes (citing Badran 2018):

> The very first time this expression was heard in an academic context was in February 1994, when the Iranian feminist scholar Afsaneh Najmabadi gave a lecture at SOAS, University of London, and used the term to describe the reform project launched in Iran by the new women's magazines Zanan and Farzaneh. Najmabadi spoke about the project in enthusiastic terms, underlining how this new approach could open up a dialogue between religious and secular feminists (Unpublished Manuscript: 289).

As I have discussed above, the challenges involved in pursing this dialogue is one of the major challenges Islamic feminist movement faces.

Nevertheless, there is some hope that, particularly with the recent inception and growth of this indigenous feminist movement, in sporting practice as in elsewhere, continued change will lead

to continued improvement in women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia, the broader Middle East, and other parts of the Islamic world.

I will return to this theme in Chapter 6, where I discuss in more detail the role that Islamic feminism might play in increasing gender-inclusiveness in places like Saudi Arabia, and how that Islamic feminist movement might sit within the broader, global project of feminism as a whole.

A brief preview of certain parts of that argument may be useful here, in particular the role that health issues will play. As was discussed in Chapter 2, there is overwhelming evidence for the benefit of PA for a wide range of mental and physical health outcomes. Moreover, there are health concerns for women that PA and sport has significant implications for. This includes such major health conditions as breast cancer, osteoarthritis (which affects women disproportionately), and mental health (there are well-established gender differences at the epidemiological level, e.g. along the 'internalising spectrum' women have higher rates of disorders).

Thus, reflecting on the above review of the literature, the following general point crystallises. Namely, that as Saudi Arabia is bound by both treaty obligations and scientific evidence to promote women's participation in sport, understood in both a broader and narrower sense, and to improve the public health response to women's specific needs, the opportunity seems ripe to press the following 'health argument'. First, there is overwhelming evidence for the benefits of PA on the physical and mental health of women. Second, given the role that sport can play in providing opportunities for, and motivation to engage in, PA, such as via high-intensity-activity team sport. Then this suggest that pursuing the goal of improving women's physical and mental health will entail ensuring that women are free to participate in sport.

What counts as being 'free' to participate in sport, exactly?' Recalling the discussion about negative versus positive liberty above, the answer is: in both a negative and a positive sense. This requires both removing obstacles and actively supporting women, with the latter involving, for example, initiatives led by women with the concerns and interests of women playing a central role in how the initiatives are designed and organised. In particular, as has

been discussed above, the conclusions of those such as Zipp and Nauright, which highlights the complexities of the influence of gender-norms on the challenges in the way of enhancing women's positive liberty, should be taken into account when formulating policy.

Moreover, if this overall process is to have public health concerns as a key focus, then more generally the kind of positive and negative liberties that will be required are those which ensure gender equality in access to opportunities for PA. This would appear to require, among the basic elements, equality of access to physical education in formal education, opportunities for recreational PA in all its forms, and especially those forms which best promote health benefits– with high-intensity-activity inducing sports likely to be among those forms. This provides the foundation for the 'health argument' in support of greater gender-inclusivity in sport that has been introduced above, and which will be developed further below, especially in Chapter 6.

Given this, a question then arises about which political movement is best placed to pursue this health argument. The answer that I will propose is that Islamic feminism is that movement. Based on the kinds of interpretation of the Qur'an that I have discussed above, in which gender equity, including, crucially, gender inclusivity in sport, can be given scriptural support, and based on wider considerations of women's role in Saudi culture, this opens up an way for Islamic feminists to pursue a fruitful persuasive enterprise in terms likely to be widely acceptable. Or so I will argue.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Methods

4.1 Introduction

I will begin by outlining the connection between my research aims and methods. The aim of this thesis is to explore four key issues to gain a better understanding of the inclusivity-relevant relationships between sport, gender, education, region, and religion. In addition, I aim to make recommendations on how best to improve gender-inclusivity in sport in Saudi Arabia, and how those recommendations may be optimally pursued by an indigenous Islamic feminist movement. As I will also detail, my empirical methods in pursuit of these aims are mixed, employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches to produce exploratory, largely descriptive statistics.

In order to illuminate the theoretical foundations of this study, I will next briefly outline the relevant philosophical assumptions and how they inform my wider methodology and the applied theoretical framework of this study. In particular, the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the project will be discussed, with a pragmatist, critical realist position preferred, and used to justify the mixed methods used in this study. I will then link this to a discussion of certain key aspects of feminist thought, relevant to this study, and a Foucauldian and Butlerian analysis of power relations.

There are a number of different terms used to describe, and ways of understanding the relevant epistemological and ontological categories. The terms and categories used in this study are based on Spratt, Walker and Robinson (2012), and Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004). Much, but not all, of Scotland 2012 overlaps with the Spratt and Johnson approach, and so will also be employed below.

In Section 4.2, I introduce the research aims and design.

In Section 4.3, I outline this study's paradigm: pragmatist feminism, detailing its ontological, epistemological, and methodological underpinnings.

In Section 4.4, I discuss the research design in more detail, outlining the data collection instruments, discussing reliability, validity, and pretesting, and giving an overview of the

research process and thematic coding development of aspects of the data. In Section 4.5 I discuss some possible methodological and ethical issues, as well as potential limitations of the research.

4.2 Research aims and design

My main aim is to investigate the inclusivity-relevant relationships between sport, gender, education, region, and religion. Additionally, to make the recommendation that improvements in gender-inclusivity are likely to be best pursued by an indigenous Islamic feminist movement. My investigation focuses on the following four questions. First, what are the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Second, what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Third, how do different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia? Fourth, how are the ideas about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia changing?

The overall design of the research that I conducted to answer these questions was structured by the logic of being a case study of two samples of Saudi citizens, employing mixed methods to investigate those samples, combined with a theoretical analysis of the feminist and broader power-dynamic issues raised by questions of gender-inclusivity in sport. I give more detail below in Section 4.4, but I will briefly justify the overall form of my research design here.

My choice of a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods was motivated by the fact that I was examining real-world contexts from a variety of perspectives, with a key focus on religious and non-religious cultural influences. In my view, this examination would best be conducted 'holistically' by triangulating from more than one methodological approach. By using qualitative methods, I aimed to add meaning to the quantitative data that I would also collect, which in turn would add scope and precision to my data. In terms of the possible interactions between the quantitative and qualitative data, I surmised that either there would be consistency between them, resulting in mutual reinforcement (which would be useful), or that there would be inconsistency, resulting in interesting questions to be answered about why that was the case.

The particular mixed methods that I used were as follows. A questionnaire was distributed to 890 individuals (444 responded, 196 women and 248 men) in two locales: the relatively urban locale of Dammam and the relatively rural locale of Al Jouf. The questionnaire had structured questions that required the participants simply to select either one or more of the options provided. There were five sections in the questionnaire and each one was designed to provide data relevant to aspects of the research questions. The questionnaire data was used to provide descriptive statistics of the sample, to better understand the participants and frame the study. These descriptive statistics helped identify relationships across variables. They also provide key information on the demographics of participants, who are reflective (not representative) of Saudi society. Further, 24 interviews were conducted, 13 in Dammam, and 11 in Al Jouf, in order to provide 'richer' qualitative data that could be thematically analysed. In addition, I examined thousands of 'tweets' from the micro-blogging site Twitter, with a representative sample of 96 selected for thematic analysis and discussion.

In terms of the limitations and risks involved in my research design, a possible conflict between my qualitative and quantitative results could, despite potentially being interesting as mentioned above, undermine the possibility of drawing clear conclusions. I endeavoured to mitigate this risk by embracing it–if a significant conflict had transpired then I committed to viewing this as an interesting result in itself worthy of further reflection and inquiry. As matters transpired, the quantitative and qualitative components of my research were largely in agreement, although there were some noteworthy examples of disagreement which I discuss in Chapters 5 and 6.

Relatedly, another possible drawback from adopting a mixed-methods approach, as has been discussed in the literature, in particular inheriting the vices of both approaches rather than the virtues (for a summary see Denscombe 2008). However, as every approach has potential shortcomings, this is perhaps not surprising. This does suggest that one should be careful and take a rigorous approach when applying each method, however.

In addition, there were significant challenges in the way of connecting the broader theoretical framework for this study–pragmatist feminism inspired by the work of Butler and Foucault (I

outline this below)–to the empirical data. This presented a number of interpretive difficulties–the theoretical framework was used in significant part to make sense of the data and this creates the possibility for bias. Starting with theoretical assumptions, although a basic starting point, can inadvertently lead to misconstruing the data in line with those theoretical assumptions. Dealing with this risk involves the whole gamut of intellectual virtues and whether I have succeeded will best be determined by the reader assessing how strong my arguments are.

4.3 Pragmatist-feminism: the paradigm of this study

In order to explain pragmatist feminism, I will begin by outlining my understanding of what a paradigm is, illuminating the ontological, epistemological, and methodological elements paradigms contain. I then explain pragmatist ontology and contrast it with the objectivist and constructivist ontology, highlighting problems with the latter two. In doing so I justify this study's adoption of the pragmatist ontology. I then contrast the critical realist epistemology with positivist and interpretivist epistemologies, outlining my preference for the critical realist approach. Next, I discuss methodology, outlining how mixed methods are supported by a critical realist epistemology. Penultimately, I outline my pragmatist-feminist approach, which is built on the work of Judith Butler, the American gender theorist best known for challenging conventional views of gender. Butler drew upon the work of Michel Foucault, and this Foucauldian aspect of Butler's work also plays a major role in approach towards analysing the nature of gender power relations.

4.3.1 Paradigms

A paradigm is a general theoretical framework which includes an ontology, epistemology, methodology, and set of methods (Scotland 2012). The following table summarises the main paradigms that I will discuss.

	Objectivist/positivist paradigm	**Constructivist/interpretivist paradigm**	**My paradigm**
Ontology	Objectivism Reality is mind-*in*dependent	Constructivism Reality is mind-*de*pendent	Pragmatism Neither objectivist or constructivist–view reality pragmatically
Epistemology	Positivism Science should gain knowledge of mind-independent reality	Intrepretivism Science should gain knowledge of how reality is constructed	Critical realism Neither positivist or interpretivist, per se–science should gain knowledge however possible
Methodology	Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed methodology
Methods	Control, replication, falsifying or confirming hypotheses	Case studies, phenomenology hermeneutics, ethnography	Mixed methods

Table 4.1: Summary of main paradigms

4.3.2 Explaining the pragmatist approach

I will begin by explaining the pragmatist ontology in very general terms, contrasting it with the objectivist and constructivist approach, in order to do two things. First, to clarify its basic form. Second, when discussing Butler's critique of gender realism and Foucault's analysis of power relations in Section 3.2.5 below, it will be useful to situate that with regards to my broader pragmatist ontology, and related critical realist epistemology and mixed-methods approach. In other words, the general justification I give in this section for a pragmatist approach to ontology will later be shown to fit with an interpretation of Butler's critique of attempts to show that gender is either socially constructed or based on some more basic 'natural science' property (e.g. biological property), and to fit with key aspects of Foucault's account of power relations.

A pragmatist ontology can be understood as a 'third way' between an objectivist and constructivist ontology. The objectivist approach understands reality as entirely mind-independent. For example, sub-atomic particles, or the objects they constitute, would, on the

objectivist view, exist and have the properties we normally believe them to have whether any minds exist or not. Applied to *social* reality, this view has obvious shortcomings: it is far from obvious that without minds there can even be a social reality. For example, take monetary value: the price of a house, a car, and so on. What gives objects monetary value? It seems plausible that what gives objects monetary value are the psychological states of individual persons, or groups of persons. In short, objects take on a monetary value when people *believe* those objects to have that value. If so, then monetary value would appear to be mind-*de*pendent. A similar state of affairs seems to hold for many aspects of social reality. Hence, an entirely objectivist ontology seems at first glance implausible (see Gorton, 2017; Cat 2017).

Nevertheless, it also seems implausible to adopt an entirely constructivist ontology, as it does not appear that everything which exists only exists mind-dependently. Thus, both the objectivist and constructivist approaches appear, at first glance, to have weaknesses. This suggests that a third way may be preferable. Pragmatism offers this.

According to pragmatism, it may be the case that some aspects of reality are mind-dependent, others mind-independent–with social reality not excluded from this–and that it is questionable whether the objectivist-constructivist debate can be settled fully. Instead, according to the pragmatist approach, we should put issues of how reality 'really is' to one side, and instead adopt whatever seems to produce the best outcomes given one's main goals. In the case of scientific research, this entails approaching reality as possibly either socially constructed, or not, and simply pursuing knowledge of it however that seems most attainable at the time. For this study, given the goals of securing knowledge about women's sport in Saudi Arabia, pragmatism is, therefore, preferred.

Pragmatism is understandable as a way of approaching reality–as a way of treating it from a scholarly perspective. In this way, pragmatism naturally suggests a certain epistemic attitude, as I will now discuss.

4.3.3 Explaining the critical realist approach

Once an ontology has been adopted, an epistemology may be chosen which best suits enquiry into that ontology. For example, with objectivism the following picture of scientific inquiry becomes appealing. If reality is mind-independent, then the scientific task is to gain knowledge of that reality. If the scientific task is to gain knowledge of mind-independent reality, then this suggests certain methods and approaches. In particular: control, replication, and hypothesis testing–either through confirmation or falsification. This is the epistemological model, known as positivism, often assumed in the natural sciences (Jones 2014).

In contrast, with social constructivism the following picture of scientific inquiry becomes appealing. If reality is *not* mind-independent, but rather mind-*de*pendent, then the scientific task is not to gain knowledge of something mind-independent, rather it is to come to know the ways in which the mind-dependent construction of reality occurs. This requires investigating the subjective viewpoint of people because it is in that subjective viewpoint in which the construction of reality takes place. This kind of investigation often involves the use of case studies (detailed examinations over significant periods), phenomenology (detailed examination of subjective experience), hermeneutics (examining hidden meaning coded in language), and ethnography (examining cultural groups over significant periods). This is the epistemological model known as interpretivism (Scotland 2012).

Finally, there is critical realism. This is the epistemological approach which most naturally fits with a pragmatist ontology (see Spratt, Walker and Robinson 2012). According to critical realism, both the positivist and interpretivist approaches may bear fruit, hence both can be employed. As Johnson and Onwuegbuzie state, 'the bottom line is that research approaches should be mixed in ways that offer the best opportunities for answering important research questions.' Given that here I am adopting a pragmatist ontology, I am also adopting the critical realist epistemology. In other words, a critical realist epistemology makes sense in light of a pragmatist ontology: if we are to decline to settle the objectivist-constructivist debate, then the rational approach is to understand reality in whatever way appears to bear fruit. And, both the

positivist and interpretivist approaches appear to bear fruit, thus motivating the adoption of a critical realist epistemology.

A key issue with this pragmatist-based critical realist approach is the question of whether it is possible to adopt both an interpretivist and positivist stance–whether, in short, interpretivism and positivism are compatible (see Howe 1988). Hence, I am endorsing the view that incompatibilism is false, a position which has gained significant ground in recent decades (see Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004).

4.3.4 Explaining the methodology

I will now outline how a mixed methods approach is supported by the critical realist epistemology. In order to do this, I will first describe the quantitative versus qualitative approach. I will then provide a rationale for the mixed methods approach based on the ontological and epistemological foundations of this study as well as my research questions.

Quantitative and qualitative approaches to research have traditionally dominated inquiry in the social sciences. The quantitative approach involves the systematic collection and analysis of statistical and numerical data. A key assumption underlying this approach is that there are mathematically measurable quantities in reality that quantitative analysis can reveal. The mathematical sciences, such as physics and chemistry, are the primary exponents of this quantitative approach.

The qualitative approach involves the collection and analysis of information from the subjective perspective. A key assumption underlying this approach is that there are aspects of reality which can only, or best be revealed by examining the subjective perspective. The social sciences, such as sociology and anthropology, are the primary exponents of this qualitative approach (which is not to say that the social sciences use only this approach, of course).

Quantitative versus qualitative approaches can result in different conclusions being drawn, and have sometimes been taken to be competitors to one another (Scotland 2012). However, there has been an increasing movement in many disciplines towards adopting a more mixed-methods

approach whereby both quantitative and qualitative methods are used (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004). I will be adopting a mixed methods approach.

My rationale for adopting a mixed methods approach comes from my pragmatist ontology and critical realist epistemology. According to a pragmatist ontology, the objectivist-constructivist debate is not obviously resolvable, and hence a pragmatic approach to understanding reality is the most rational option. This supports a critical realist epistemology, according to which either positivist or interpretivist approaches are potentially useful. Hence, typically positivist quantitative methods, or typically interpretivist qualitative methods can be employed. This is a key part of my rationale for the mixed methods approach in this study.

In addition, consider again my research questions, which are as follows. First, what are the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Second, what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Third, how do different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia? Fourth, how are the ideas about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia changing? In my view, these questions invite the application of both qualitative and quantitative methods. For example, the first 'dominant attitudes' question seems best suited to being answered by a quantitative survey, whereas the second 'interpretations of Islam' question provides a fruitful basis for more qualitative inquiry, such as the interview method I employed.

In the following chart, I outline my parallel use of quantitative and qualitative methods during my research.
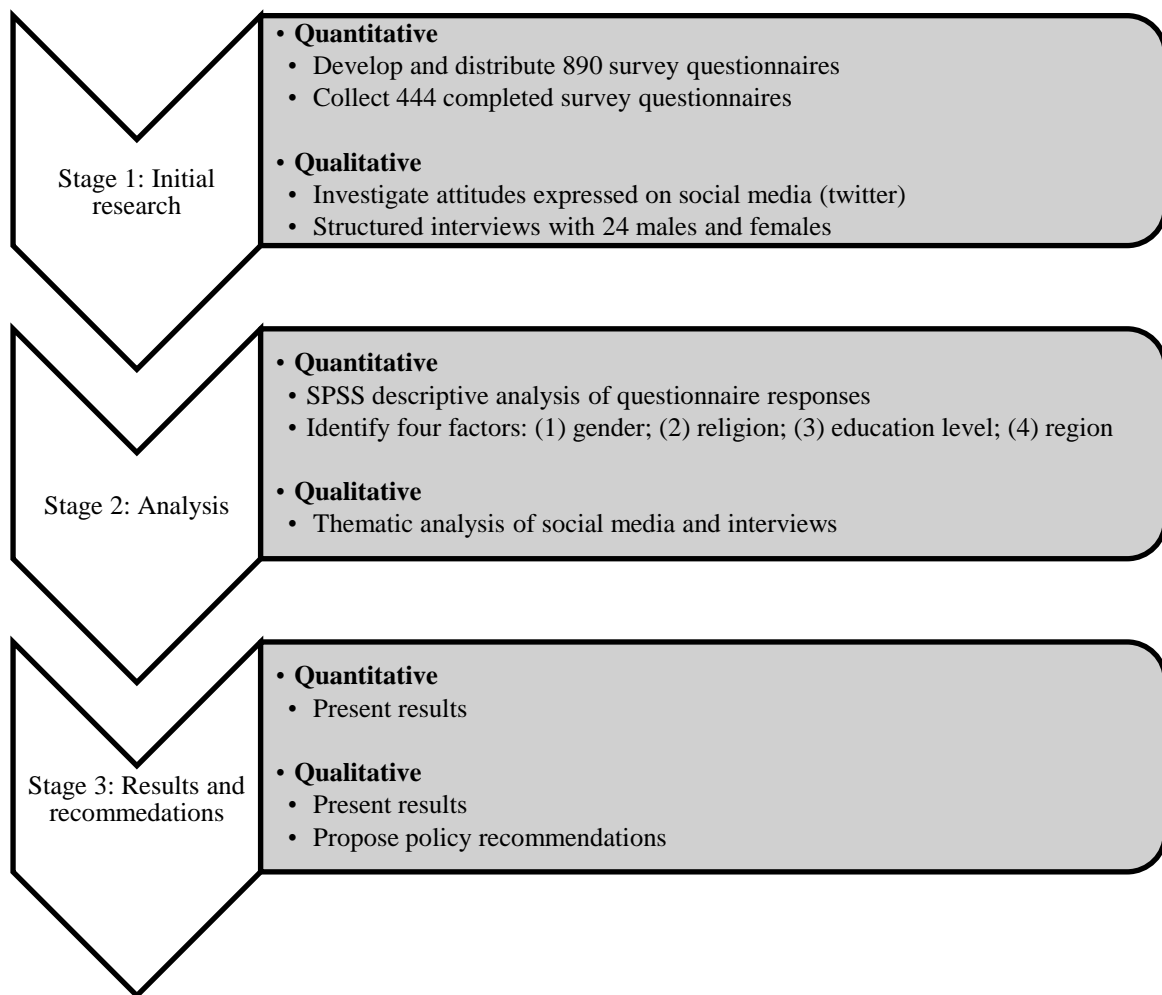
Figure 4.1: Mixed methods overview

4.3.5 Explaining the pragmatist-feminist approach

It will be helpful to explain the relationship between the broad paradigm described above and feminist theory. At the core of this study's feminist approach is a particular understanding of the distinction between sex and gender. I will now explain this distinction in order to better illustrate the understanding of gender employed in this study.

Many theorists of gender accept that there is a distinction between sex and gender (Mikkola 2017). Even among those theorists, there are significant ongoing controversies concerning the

sex/gender distinction. Consider sex first. Sex is understood by some of those theorists as essentially binary, or dimorphic, such that there are two sexes, male and female, which are defined by the reproductive cells that they produce. Or, more precisely, an individual's maleness or femaleness is determined by their proceeding sufficiently down the developmental pathway towards producing such cells: large gametes or small gametes. According to this view, females and males are distinguished by this developmental process of 'ovarian differentiation'. This is a widespread view among human biologists (see Martin and Hine 2008; King, Stansfield, and Mulligan 2007), and is held by a significant proportion of feminist scholars (see Mikkola 2019: Section 3.2), representing a tradition of thought which stretches at least as far back as de Beauvoir, who explicitly endorsed the view–at least with regards to human beings (see de Beauvoir 1956: 33-35). Proponents of this view typically allow for the possibility of individuals who can be female, male, or both (hermaphrodites). Proponents of the sexual dimorphism view also tend to claim that the latter category is almost entirely absent in the case of human beings, perhaps constituting no more than 0.018% of the human population (see Sax 2010: 117; Hull 2003).

In contrast, sex is understood by other gender theorists as non-binary, but rather a continuum. Such theorists hold this position largely due to purported examples of members of the human population which don't obviously fit neatly into the classifications of the sexual dimorphism view (Mikkola 2019: Section 3.2). For instance, Fausto-Sterling has argued that around 1.7% of human beings possess various combinations of 'sex characteristics', including atypical combinations of such features as chromosomal profiles such as XXY or X (rather than XX or XY), genitalia, and other physiological differences (1993; 2000a; 2000b). In some of her work, Fausto-Sterling identifies several further categories to add to the more traditionally conceived 'male' and 'female'. In that work, Fausto-Sterling reserves 'female' and 'male' for when a range of typical sex characteristics are instantiated, such as XX chromosomes combined with ovaries, fallopian tubes, womb, and typically-related genitalia (see especially her 'The Five Sexes' 1993: 20-24).

In my view, the debate about whether sex is dimorphic is difficult to resolve. On the one hand, the existence of some unclear cases (from the perspective of the dimorphism view) in the

human population–everyone in the debate seems to accept that there are at least some such cases–suggests that deeming sex to be straightforwardly binary without qualification would be incautious. Moreover, the definition of sex in terms of whether an individual has 'proceeded sufficiently down the developmental pathway towards producing the relevant gametes' is somewhat vague. Indeed, it is partly the vagueness of the definition which invites reflection on some of the unclear cases.

But on the other hand, biological definitions often have vague boundaries, consider, for instance, the many competing definitions of 'species' (for a discussion see: Griffiths 2018: Section 4). Thus, vagueness alone is not obviously sufficient for disqualifying a classification scheme from respectable scientific discourse. Moreover, given the disputes about the proportion and nature of the relevant unclear cases it may well be incautious to immediately conclude that those cases clearly demonstrate that the dimorphism view is straightforwardly false. Consequently, I remain agnostic about the debate about the dimorphism of sex. And, fortunately, nothing that I say below will hang on taking a position in that debate. In what follows, I will use the terms 'male' and 'female' at relevant points, but this should not be taken to imply that I accept the sexual dimorphism view. Turning to gender, and matters are no less controversial. Gender is often understood as the ways in which society views sexual differences–in particular the diverging roles, norms, and conceptualisations applied to the different sexes. The following examples will help to explain this (see Mikkola 2017).

Gender roles: males and females are allotted particular social roles. In many societies, for example, military and political roles are reserved primarily for males, with childrearing roles reserved primarily for females. In sport, the very possibility of participating in sport can be part of the social role, as in Saudi Arabia, and even in more liberal societies certain sports (such as boxing or certain kinds of gymnastics) can be viewed as more suited to one gender rather than another.

Gender norms: males and females are subject to distinct behavioural norms. For example, in many societies males are expected to be athletic and dominant, females are expected to be submissive and physically modest. In general, there are a range of norms associated with

gender roles: to occupy a gender role is to be subject to the related norms. In the case of sport, this means that in a society such as Saudi Arabia, simply being a woman entails being subject to a range of norms which precludes participation in sport (for detailed discussion of how such norms come to be formed, see: Chawansky 2012; Zipp and Nauright 2018; Reid 2018).

Gendered traits: psychological traits are categorised as either *masculine* or *feminine* to the extent to which they dispose the person who instantiates those traits to conform to the relevant gender norms. Consequently, traits seen as masculine are deemed deviant when instantiated by females, but non-deviant or even virtues when instantiated by males; and traits seen as feminine are deemed deviant when instantiated by males, but non-deviant or virtues when instantiated by females.

Gendered performance: behaviours are categorised as either masculine or feminine to the extent to which they exemplify gendered traits and fit with gender roles and norms. Theories of gender performance often emphasise the relatively flexible, context-based nature of gender performance. Sport provides examples of this: very expressive displays of emotion are often seen as feminine, but in at least some sporting contexts the norms governing men's behaviour regarding this can be relaxed. Alternatively, persons who might perform according to a gender role in one context, such as in a public space surrounded by members of a different gender, might not perform according to that gender role when alone. This suggests that the performance of gender is not fixed but is rather variant and heavily dependent on context.

Thus, the explanatory utility of the distinction between sex and gender seems prima facie plausible: it would appear to account for a wide range of social phenomena. However, it should be noted that there are a number of potential issues with the distinction. A key one is that most accounts of it seem to pre-suppose 'gender realism', the view that:

> women as a group are assumed to share some characteristic feature, experience, common condition or criterion that defines their gender and the possession of which makes some individuals women (as opposed to, say, men). *All* women are thought to differ from *all* men in this respect (or respects) (Mikkola 2017, Section 3).

However, gender realism can be criticised in at least two significant ways. First, that gender realism fails to take into account differences between women of an ethnic, cultural, or class nature. Second, that gender realism assumes, wrongly, that there is a normative ideal of womanhood. I will now explain these two criticisms and make clear how they inform this study's pragmatist-feminist approach.

Spelman (1988) has argued that gender cannot be understood independently of ethnic, cultural, or class differences, and that some feminist theorists have problematically assumed that their experience of being a woman is definitive. For example, Spelman has suggested that Western, white, heterosexual, middle-class feminists (who dominated the development of feminist theory throughout the 20th century), wrongly assumed that:

> the womanness underneath the Black woman's skin is a white woman's, and deep down inside the Latina woman is an Anglo woman waiting to burst through an obscuring cultural shroud (1988: 13).

This approach, Spelman maintained, privileged some women while marginalising others, and erroneously conflated the 'condition of one group of women with the condition of all' (1988: 3).

This argument has been very influential in feminist thought (Mikkola 2017: Section 3). However, it has been criticised as falling short of establishing its very general conclusion, and, instead, showing simply that some ways of defending gender realism have failed, rather than that all ways of defending gender realism fail, or must fail (for discussion see Haslanger 2000; Mikkola 2006; Stoljar 2011). Nevertheless, at the very least, the influence of Spelman's argument, and the difficulties with defending gender realism that it highlights, suggests that a degree of epistemic caution is justified with regard to the issue of whether gender realism should be accepted.

This need for epistemic caution is emphasised when the second main argument against gender realism is considered. Butler has presented a 'normativity argument' against gender realism (1999). Her argument proceeds as follows. First, similarly to Spelman, Butler contends that unitary gender-realist definitions of womanhood are misguided. As Butler states,

the insistence upon the coherence and unity of the category of women has effectively refused the multiplicity of cultural, social, and political intersections in which the concrete array of 'women' are constructed (1999: 19-20).

Second, Butler contends that the gender realist approach is essentially normative in character. In other words, that those who try to define 'woman' in gender realist terms inadvertently turn that definition into a 'policing force' which makes some practices and experiences of womanhood legitimate, and others not (1999). Butler's suggestion is that the mistake of gender realism is not that any specific definition of 'woman' is incorrect, but rather the error was that there was any attempt to define gender terms at all. On Butler's view, gender terms like 'woman' cannot be defined in a gender realist way without it resulting in 'the exclusion of those who fail to conform to [the associated] unspoken normative requirements' (1999: 9). What those normative requirements would be would depend on what the definition was, but the examples we looked at above to illustrate how the sex-gender distinction is supposed to work can provide examples. For instance, if one were to define gender in terms of a person occupying a certain social role, so that to be woman was to occupy the relevant role, and similarly for a man, then it would seem to follow that for any person not occupying the relevant role they cannot correctly be said to be the relevant gender. Butler's point about the exclusionary nature of these kinds of 'unspoken normative requirements' is that understanding gender in this way is too narrow and will inevitably reflect existing power structures in society. In particular, that ideologically dominant groups will be able to determine what gender boundaries there are, what, in other words, the unspoken normative requirements should be. The lesson to draw from this, suggests Butler, is that we should,

remain self-critical with respect to the totalizing gestures of feminism. The effort to identify the enemy as singular in form is a reverse-discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms (1999: 18-19).

Importantly, Butler's notion of gender performativity comes out of her critique of the gender realist approach. Butler's basic idea is that gender should not be understood as a way people *are* but rather as something that people *do*. So, rather than a person's gender being a matter of

them possessing some 'natural' or 'socially constructed' property, instead a person comes to 'belong' to a certain gender 'through a stylized repetition of acts' (1999: 179). For example, through wearing gendered clothing, or possessing gendered objects; through gendered bodily comportment, or gendered verbal mannerisms. And, Butler suggests, Gender is realised *through* these gendering acts. To be a woman is not to be a person who has some property which disposes her to behave in gendered ways, rather it is simply to be a person who behaves in gendered ways–the behaving in certain gendered ways *makes* someone, say, a woman (1999).

And, on Butler's account, feminists who argue that gender is socially constructed (e.g. Ridgeway and Correll 2004) are just as culpable of a misguided essentialist realism about gender as those who take gender to be reducible to some set of biological features, such as chromosomes, sex organs, or such like (for an overview of adherents of this view, see Mikkola 2017: §1). Thus, for Butler, there are no essential features for gender; instead, gender is a kind of 'foundational illusion' that supports 'masculine hegemony and heterosexist power' (1999: 44), and those feminists who propose social constructivist understandings of gender unwittingly help to support that hegemony.

The appropriate response to this state of affairs, Butler maintains, is that feminists should not endeavour to define 'woman' at all. Instead, feminists should direct their efforts towards analysing the role that power plays in shaping understandings of womanhood, in both society in general, and the feminist movement in particular (see Butler 1999: 9).

As will be discussed below, in Chapter 6, Butler-style anti-realism about gender has potentially important implications for how the project of Islamic feminism might best proceed and, in particular, how those who wish to be allies of that project may best fulfil that function.

A major influence on Butler's thinking, which it will be helpful to outline, is the work of Foucault. In particular, Foucauldian analyses of the power relations that exist in society, and how they relate to governance and gender. Before embarking on that outline, the following points should be noted. First, Foucault's own analyses of power are so expansive and varied that they resist swift summary, and the work prompted by Foucault's own analyses is even

more expansive and varied, and hence even more resistant to swift summary (for an overview of Foucault's original contributions and some of the feminist theorising they prompted, see Allen 2016). Therefore, it should be understood that those aspects of Foucault's thought, and the interpretation given to them by Butler, that will be discussed here are only a limited part of Foucault's work on the subject of power, and an even more limited part of the responses to that work. Second, Butler's own employment of Foucault is not a simple 'application' of Foucault's ideas towards explicitly feminist ends–Butler also criticises Foucault at key points (see Butler 1999, pp. 119-141, 181-190).

Many key components of Foucault's account of power come from his 'middle period' (1977, 1978, 1980), and Butler was significantly influenced by this. In general terms, Foucault understands the modern phenomenon of power as a set of force relations that arise out of social interactions that continually shift. This contrasts with alternative analyses of power which understand it as 'top-down' and concentrated in certain organs of the state such as the offices of government or the judiciary. Instead, Foucault suggests, power is a more distributed, emergent phenomenon. As he states,

> power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere… power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society (1978: 93)

In this way, Foucault endeavours to offer what he calls a 'micro-physics' of power (1977: 26)–in other words an analysis of power that maps how that power flows through the veins and arteries of society. Moreover, Foucault suggests, although power can be repressive, there is a key sense in which power is 'productive' in that it creates political states of affairs as much, if not more, than it negates them. As he states,

> We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth.

The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production (1977: 194).[25]

Key to this Foucauldian analysis is the two-sided notion of 'subject'. On one side, there is the more traditional notion of a 'subject' as a person who is governed by the laws of a state, its institutions, and the conditions of wider society. On the other side, is the notion of a subject as the result of a particular process. Persons, according to Foucault, are subjects in this second sense too. The very institutions of state and conditions of wider society that govern persons as subjects in the first sense, also produce them as subjects in the second sense: make them into the very things that are suitable to be placed under those laws. This two-sided notion of 'subject' has an accompanying two-sided notion of 'subjection' which describes the process of becoming a subject in both senses. And this is a significant part of what Foucault means when he says that power produces–it produces subjects.

And Butler embraces this idea in her own analysis of gender. As she states,

> Foucault points out that juridical systems of power produce the subjects they subsequently come to represent. Juridical notions of power appear to regulate political life in purely negative terms… But the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures (1990: 2).

It is out of this thinking that Butler's critique of gender realism arises. Butler suggests that the very category of 'woman', the very subject of feminism, is itself a production of the structures of power through which emancipation is pursued (1990: 2). This is how, according to Butler, the category *woman* can itself become normatively exclusionary, and thus potentially repressive. To become a subject in the sense in which a person becomes one when categorised as a woman is, on this view, also to become a subject in the sense of being subject to the relevant power relations. Hence, Butler argues, when deemed a woman in gender realist terms,

---

[25] It is worth noting here that although Foucault says that we 'must cease once and for all' to describe power as repressive, elsewhere he acknowledges the repressiveness of power (see his 1978, 12). Foucault's use of 'must cease once and for all' is perhaps best understood as a somewhat overstated rhetorical flourish, therefore.

one is made into a subjected subject; and so, the goal of emancipation is bound up with the goal of resisting this subjection. Consequently, gender realism should be rejected.

Importantly, one way of understanding Butler's Foucauldian critique of gender realism is in broadly pragmatist terms. Just as the pragmatist declines to resolve the dispute between the objectivist and the constructivist by denying that reality *must* be viewed in one way or the other if we are to properly understand it, one might decline to resolve the dispute between the social constructivist and biological essentialist-realists about gender by denying that gender *must* be viewed in one way or the other if we are to properly understand it. If pragmatism can be understood as the 'third way' of ontology, *gender*-pragmatism can be understood as the 'third way' of gender theory. Indeed, this pragmatist approach to gender will be adopted as the preferred framework for this study.

A key question at this stage is how the above ideas of Butler and Foucault's fit with Islamic feminism and my research questions. I address this in detail in Chapter 6, but there are two key points it will be worth summarising briefly here.

First, Butler's admonition that we should 'remain self-critical with respect to the totalizing gestures of feminism' (1999: 18-19), combined with her rejection of gender essentialist realism, suggests that caution should be taken when pursuing feminist goals across significant cultural boundaries. This supports the argument that I develop in Chapter 6 that culturally-indigenous feminist movements are less likely to be totalizing or intellectually (or otherwise) colonial–at least in respect of the wider indigenous community in which such localised movements operate.

Second, Foucault's analysis of power in 'micro-physical' terms also suggests caution when pursuing feminist goals (indeed, political goals more generally) across cultural boundaries. If power is distributed and emergent in the way Foucault suggests then any political movement would be wise to navigate that complex distribution of power in a manner which pays heed to the nature and source of deeply embedded political beliefs within any relevant cultural locus. In the case of a cultural locus such as the Islamic world, then it seems clear that movements which are indigenous to that world will be, all else being equal, best placed to do this.

With regards to my research questions, the above theoretical considerations have implications for how those questions are to be understood. The questions are: first, what are the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Second, what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Third, how do different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia? Fourth, how are the ideas about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia changing?

For the attitudes question, for example, there is a colonial element that may not be apparent at first glance. Given the asymmetries between women's sport in Saudi Arabia and most of the western world, and the fact that western feminism is a source of agitation for reform in Saudi Arabia (with regards to sport inclusivity among other issues) creates the potential for colonial-type stresses on the political interactions. Thus, in answering the dominant attitudes question, the role played by anti-colonial and cultural-nationalist concerns appears to be of interest.

Similarly, for the interpretations of Islam question, there is a clear connection there to the Islamic feminist movement which is leading the theological discussion on how to interpret Islamic texts and doctrine in the light of contemporary moral and political thought. Relatedly, for the changes in the ideas question, here, again, Islamic feminism is relevant. Indeed, any attempt to fully understand how ideas have changed, and will change, would be significantly incomplete without understanding the role of the Islamic feminist movement in the cultural transformations currently taking place across the Islamic world.

4.3.6 Applying the theoretical framework to women's sport in Saudi Arabia

It will be helpful to provide a brief overview of how the theoretical framework outlined in sections 4.2.2 to 4.2.5 will be applied to the particular issue of women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia. There are three main ways in which the application will occur.

First is the how the concept of gender and the terms 'man', 'woman' and related terms will be understood. As outlined above, my preferred understanding of gender is a pragmatic one, and

so tries to chart a third way between either biological or social constructivist accounts of gender by rejecting the immediate possibility of resolving the realist versus anti-realist debate about gender. A key consequence of this is that what counts as being a woman or man need not be considered in fixed, absolute terms: being a woman in Saudi Arabia, for instance, may be realised in a way which overlaps but is not identical to being a woman elsewhere. In Chapter 6, when discussing how the data I present and analyse in this study should be interpreted, I will again discuss this issue of how gender is to be understood. In particular, I will stress the 'productive' subjectifying nature of the limiting of the participating of women in sport in Saudi Arabia, and how this arises out of distributed power relations across society (in broadly Foucauldian terms).

Second, this general theoretical understanding of power and how it works, alongside my broader pragmatist ontology and critical realist epistemology, supports the basic mixed-methods approach I take here towards investigating women's sport in Saudi Arabia. On the one hand, if power is as distributed, complex, and 'messy' as the Butlerian-Foucauldian analysis suggests, then examining it both from the first and the third-person perspective would appear justified, and qualitative methods appear well-suited to gaining knowledge from the former perspective, and quantitative methods the latter. This suggests a mixed methods approach. On the other hand, if a pragmatist critical-realist approach is adopted, this also suggests a mixed method approach for the reasons already outlined above. Hence, the mixed methods approach adopted here is amply supported by the integrated theoretical framework of this study.

Third, once this Butler-inspired analysis of gender, built on Foucault's theories on power relations has been adopted, questions arise about where exactly the main arteries of power are in the distributed network that exists in any society. One way of understanding the goals of this study is to identify some of those arteries, in particular to distinguish the social, cultural, and religious 'flows' of power, and how they might influence the participation of women in sport in Saudi Arabia in the sample I investigated (as this is merely an exploratory, descriptive study, no particular generalisations from the sample to wider Saudi society is claimed).

4.4 Research design: Overview

In this section, I will give more detail about my research methods. I will begin by detailing the data collection instruments, before discussing the issues of reliability and validity, pretesting, and data analysis. I will then discuss the particularities of the quantitative and qualitative methods and give an overview of the thematic coding process.

4.4.1 Procedures

For the questionnaire and interviews, I used a mixture of purposive[26], snowball[27] and volunteer sampling[28]. The participants were all students and staff of the Medicine and English Departments and staff of the security and maintenance offices at Al Jouf and Dammam universities. I began with individuals I already had contact with within the relevant departments and offices who had the characteristics required for the study: Saudi, Muslim, male or female, university educated or not (this was the purposive part of the process). I then asked them to introduce me to other willing participants (this was the snowball part of the process). I also included my contact details on all questionnaires requesting that any person interested in being interviewed or completing a questionnaire to get in touch with me (this was the volunteer part of the process). All the surveys were distributed by hand, either directly by me or by being passed on by participants in the study.

For the interviews, I eliminated excess offers through random selection. Two locations were selected for the site of the research. The locations were selected in significant part because they were representative of the nature of Saudi society. Dammam was selected as it is liberal, influenced by greater interaction with the West through the oil trade. The second location for

---

[26] Purposive sampling is a kind of non-probability sampling (i.e. all the individuals in a population do not have the same chance of being selected) such that which individuals are included in the sample are chosen by the researcher if they satisfy relevant criteria which make them appropriate candidates for the research. In the case of my research, I chose individuals based on their willingness to take part in the research, education level, gender, and location.
[27] Snowball sampling is a form of non-probability sampling such that the researcher employs individuals already involved in a study to identify others who are also willing to participate in the research.
[28] Volunteer sampling involves individuals who agree to take part in the research.

the study was Al Jouf, which is more conservative and traditional with less interaction with the West. Only those who were citizens of the Kingdom were eligible to participate in this study. Once established, the sample was divided on the basis of gender and education. In total 914 people took part in the study; 890 of whom completed the questionnaires and the rest were interviewed. More detailed discussion about the research samples is found in Chapter 5 where the data are analysed.

4.4.2 Data collection instruments: pretesting, validity, reliability

I will now describe the data collection instruments that I used and discuss their pretesting, validity, and reliability. Questionnaires and interviews were employed as the primary methods of data collection (I discuss my collection of Twitter below in Section 4.4.5). As detailed above in figure 2, the quantitative approach was utilised in the questionnaires, and the qualitative approach was utilised in the interviews.

Information gathered from questionnaires has some similarity to information gathered from interviews but typically has less depth (Burns & Grove 1993: 368). Data collected through the questionnaires and interviews was used primarily to reveal that sentiments of the respondents in regard to women's participation in sports. This study adopted questionnaires and interviews for the following reasons.

1. They guarantee a high response rate because they are personally distributed and collected by the researcher.

2. They are not as resource-intensive to administer.

3. They offer anonymity since respondents are not asked for their names.

4. The risk of bias was reduced as the format of the questionnaires and interviews were prepared in advance to avoid common issues such as ambiguity, vagueness, and insufficient categories.

5. Most of the questions were closed in order to make it easier for respondents to answer each question.

As there is a lack of previous research on this topic, I formulated the questions in the questionnaire using the following process which utilised my own cultural understanding and knowledge of my research aims. First, I reflected on the research questions and using my own interpretation drew up some draft questionnaire questions which I took to best address my research questions. This process was also informed by considering other studies of women and Muslims, such as those discussed in Benn et al. 2010. Second, I pretested the questionnaire with a small selection of 10 participants (5 male and 5 female), who were subsequently interviewed and gave feedback about the questionnaire. I particularly sought information from the pre-test participants regarding the clarity of the questions and their perceived relevance, from the perspective of the participants, for my research questions. Third, this was combined with initial reflections, compared to the other studies that I had consulted, to produce a penultimate draft. Fourth, I reviewed each step of this process and revised the questionnaire in light of it. This led to the final questionnaire.

I structured the questionnaire in the following way. The questionnaires were composed of structured questions that required the participants to simply select either one or more of the options provided (depending on the question). There were five sections in the questionnaire and each one was designed to provide data in relation to different aspects of the research questions. These questions were aimed entirely at Saudi Arabian Muslims, and only those self-identifying as Saudi were allowed to participate.

The interview was designed to expand on the data collected in the questionnaire and. enable links to be drawn between both data sets. Indeed, producing a mixed-methods framework of complementary quantitative and qualitative data can be a very productive research strategy (Creswell 2002). These were designed to allow the participants to expand on their views and opinions on women's participation in sport in the geographical context under investigation. The questions in the interviews were not identical to those used in the questionnaire, but like the

questionnaire questions, the questions in the interview were constructed to answer the research questions.

I formulated the questions in the interviews using a similar process as in the questionnaire. First, I reflected on the research questions and using my own interpretation drew up some draft interview questions which I took to best address my research questions. Second, I pretested the interview questions with a small selection of 10 participants (5 male and 5 female), who gave feedback about the interview questions. Again, I particularly sought information from the pre-test participants regarding the clarity of the questions and their perceived relevance, from the perspective of the participants, for my research questions. Third, I reviewed that feedback and revised the interview questions in light of it. This led to the final set of interview questions.

I turn now to discuss the validity and reliability of the instruments. A measurement instrument is valid to the degree that it accurately measures what it is supposed to measure, and reliable to the degree that its measurement results are consistent (Polit and Hungler 1993: 445). The aim is to have a measure which has a high degree of validity and reliability.

A key feature of validity is that how valid a measure is depends in part on what is being measured. In the case of the questionnaire and interviews, this involved measuring explicitly expressed views in response to questions, using measures such as the Likert scale or allowing open questions. How valid this measure is deemed to be, therefore, rests in part on how what is measured is described. Hence, it is plausible that the 'explicitly expressed views' were measured accurately by the questionnaire as 'explicitly expressed view' is a relatively easy standard to meet. Apart from mistakes or confusions on the part of participants, which are likely to play a relatively minor role in the case of non-technical questions couched largely in everyday language, the scope for validity problems here is limited.

However, the expectation is that 'explicitly expressed views' reliably track actual views, and here questions of validity become more difficult to resolve. How can it be ensured that the instruments track actual views? In answering this question, the researcher who administers the questionnaire or interview plays a central role. For example, I was concerned about the possibility of acquiescence bias affecting both the questionnaire and the interview data.

Acquiescence bias occurs when a participant is influenced in respondents by a tendency towards agreeing with what they believe the researcher thinks. A researcher's perceived status as an expert can be a factor in this process.

So, in the case of the interviews, for example, the body language or verbal mannerisms of the interviewer could influence (either consciously or unconsciously) the participant to respond in a particular way through acquiescence bias. In addition, in the framing of the questions in both the questionnaire and interviews, an implication may be given that a particular answer is preferred, and this may bring acquiescence bias into play. Fatigue can also be a factor with very long questionnaires or interviews, some participants may try to speed up the process by giving the answers that they believe are sought. Hence, for at least these reasons explicitly expressed views may not track actual views.

In order to address this, researchers must be careful not to imply one answer or the other is preferred. Having a genuine commitment to letting the data show what it may is important as this will likely be reflected in one's mannerisms and overall behaviour. So, if participants pick up on such behaviour, they will be receiving the 'right signals'. In addition, the framing of the questions should be such that the possibility of acquiescence bias is minimized. Here, pretesting can be important as information about how the questions are being understood by pre-test participants can play a major role in ensuring the framing of the questions is appropriately neutral. Hence, this was another part of my pretesting process, and I sought specific feedback about this from my pre-test participants.

Another potential factor involves content validity of the questions, that is: to what extent is the content of the instrument appropriate? In the case of the questionnaire and interviews that I employed, content validity primarily concerns the framing of the questions. I considered the number of questions given the time allotted and aimed for enough questions to provide sufficient data to address my research questions yet not too many questions such that participant fatigue or confusion could result. I also considered the relative importance of each question in the questionnaire and interviews for my research questions and structure the order of the questions accordingly in order to try and prioritize the key questions and keep certain

questions together in relevant groups. For example, questions on gender. In addition, I tried to keep the language that I used in the framing of the questions non-technical and accessible so that they were understandable from the perspective of the participants, and thus more likely to prompt relevant response from them. I also sought feedback about this during the pre-test process.

Regarding reliability specifically, this is typically ensured by re-testing. As this was an exploratory study, producing largely descriptive statistics about a sample, reliability is difficult to ascertain. Two different kinds of 'retrospective' validity measurement may be available, however. First, I can compare the basic form of the instruments that I used in my study to the instruments used in other studies. If the basic form of the instruments that I have used in my study appear to have been reliable in other studies (such as those discussed in Benn et al. 2010), then this provides some support to the claim that the basic form of my instruments is reliable. Second, as this is an exploratory study and I intend to do a larger version of this study in future that supports inferential statistics about Saudi culture as a whole, reliability of the current study can be further ascertained then.

4.4.3 Questionnaire: outline

The questionnaires were composed of structured questions that required the participants to simply select either one or more of the options provided (depending on the question). There were five sections in the questionnaire and each one was designed to provide data in relation to different aspects of the research questions. These questions were aimed entirely at Saudi Arabian Muslims, and only those self-identifying as Saudi were allowed to participate.

Section A was a demographic information section and was designed to clearly categorise respondents in terms of gender, age, educational level, and place of upbringing and residence.

Section B concerned attitudes towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia, thus addressing the first research question: what are the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? It consisted of two types of questions as follows:

Type 1: general questions that sought to understand the views of the participants on issues such as what sportswomen should be allowed to play and where sporting activity should be allowed. The participants were asked to tick all that apply. This is illustrated by the following example:

Section B - Female Sport in Saudi Arabia

6. Which sports should women be allowed to participate in in Saudi Arabia?
Please tick all that apply.

None	☐	Archery	☐
All	☐	Shooting	☐
Running	☐	Fencing	☐
Swimming	☐	Equestrian	☐
Volleyball	☐	Table Tennis	☐
Basketball	☐	Other - please specify:	
Football	☐		

The sports that were selected for question 6 were chosen according to the following criteria. First, how popular is the sport in Saudi Arabia? I aimed to focus on the more popular sports, which includes football, basketball, table tennis, and equestrianism. Second, are the sports discussed in Islamic teachings? I aimed to include those sports which are referred to in scripture. Third, I wanted a reasonable selection from the taxonomy of sports of the sort that I discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3, such as target games (e.g. archery and shooting), invasion games (e.g. football and basketball), and net games (e.g. table tennis). Fourth, I wanted to include some sports which are traditionally conceived as more 'masculine', such as football, and more 'feminine' such as volleyball, given my interest in the gendered aspects of participants' views. Finally, I did not want to include too many sports (the list could easily have been much longer), in order to ensure that there was not too much choice which could frustrate or fatigue participants (this issue came to light during the questionnaire pre-test for

which I had a longer list). Type 2: questions with multiple choices such that the participant is required to select the one that they agree with. The questions are Likert questions in that they offer the participants a set of options. The option that best represents their beliefs is the one that they are encouraged to select. Consider the following example as an illustration:

10. Please read the hypothetical statements below and tick the box which most closely applies to your response to each one.

a) A private gym for women is opening in your city.

Strongly oppose	Oppose	Neither oppose nor support	Support	Strongly support
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Question 10 was asked because, as discussed in Chapter 1, the issue of gyms for women has been an ongoing point of controversy in the Kingdom for some years. As Human Rights Watch reported, there was a de facto ban of private gyms for women in Kingdom in 2009:

> The ban is part of a Saudi government policy that severely limits the ability of women to practice sport, to the point of prohibiting it in many contexts. The policy reflects the predominant conservative view that opening sports to women and girls will lead to immorality: "steps of the devil," as one prominent religious scholar put it. [The] closing [of] private gyms for women [prompted] a campaign against the ban by a group of women under the slogan "Let her get fat." (HRW 2012: 1).

Although this policy has been more recently reversed and there has been a significant growth in the provision of gyms for women in Saudi Arabia, many controversies remain regarding the basic policy of allowing women's gyms, and the details of its implementation. For example a gym in Riyadh was closed in July 2019 following a video being circulated on social media appearing to show a female user of gym working in lyrca (Agence France-Press 2019).

The next section, C, sought to understand the views of the sample with regard to the relationship between Islam and women in sports, thus addressing the third research question how do different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia? Again, this section consists of two types of question, similar to section B. These are illustrated by the following examples:

Female sport goes against Islam.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

This question was included because of its relevance for Islamic feminist attempts to reinterpret Islamic scripture in more gender-inclusive ways. As discussed in Chapter 3 (Sections 3.4 and 3.5), Islamic feminist aims include reinterpreting holy texts to try and demonstrate that the problems faced by women in the Islamic world are not due to any essential features of Islam, but rather are due to misguided interpretations of Islam. In addition, this process of advancing theological understanding can establish the rights that women have under Islam and ensure that they are properly understood by both men and women, as well as enforced. As discussed in Chapter 2, it has been argued by Islamic feminists that the cultural norms of honour and shame have obscured, in the minds of many Muslims, undisputable rights that women have (according to Islam) to negotiate the conditions of marriage before consenting to it. The scriptural evidence that there is no Islamic prohibition of women practicing sport can play a central role in this process, therefore, which makes a question on participants views on what Islam says about female sport highly relevant.

Similarly, for the below question, this was also inspired by these types Islamic feminist concerns:

12. What should a faithful Muslim consider regarding women's sport in Saudi Arabia?

Please tick all that apply.

Segregation of men and women	☐	Other - please specify:	☐
Ensuring women's modesty and chastity	☐		
Respecting the right of men to forbid women relatives' involvement in sport	☐		
Ensuring women should keep up with their duties as wives and mothers	☐		
None of the above	☐		

Section D sought to collect data on the relationship between women's sport and Saudi women and Saudi society, thus addressing the second research question: what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Consider the following example:

16. If the government does not allow greater women's participation in sport, how should Saudi society respond to women who participate in sport illegally?

Please tick all that apply.

Ignore it	☐	Make the woman's closest male relative sign a declaration promising her future obedience to the law	☐
Imprison the woman's closest male relative	☐	Shame the woman	☐
Imprison the woman	☐	Shame the woman's families	☐
Change the law	☐	Encourage punishment of closest male relative by their families	☐
Encourage punishment of women by their families	☐	Other - please specify:	

Question 16 was included because in pretesting of both the questionnaire and interviews, the issue appeared to be pertinent from the perspective of the participants.

The last section, E, in the questionnaire asked questions about the future of women's sport in Saudi Arabia, thus addressing the fourth research question: how are the ideas about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia changing? The questions in Section E were designed in the same way that the questions in sections B and C were designed. Consider the following example:

22. If physical education classes for women were increased across Saudi Arabian schools and universities, what do you think the impact would be upon the education provided by these institutions?

Please tick all that apply.

No impact	☐	Moral guidance strengthened	☐
Better preparation for adult life	☐	Moral guidance impaired	☐
Worse preparation for adult life	☐	Academic performance weakened	☐
Health guidance strengthened	☐	Academic performance strengthened	☐
Religious education impaired	☐	Other - please specify:	

After collecting the data, it was organized and analysed. For the questions administered via questionnaires, Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. As this was an exploratory study, merely descriptive statistics were produced. Cross tabulations and Frequency tables were then drawn, and the output presented.

4.4.4 Interviews: outline

The interview was designed to expand on the data collected in the questionnaire and therefore enable links to be drawn between both data sets–producing a mixed-methods framework of complementary quantitative and qualitative data (Cresswell 2002). My mixed methods approach is broadly 'sequential' in the sense articulated by Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017: 118), such that there are two quantitative and qualitative strands (the questionnaire and interview data, respectively), with the quantitative research preceding the qualitative. This sequential model enables one strand to be used as a foundation for the other. For example, the questions pretested and employed in the questionnaire were used to develop the questions for

the interviews, so that richer data about the issues the questionnaire questions related to could be obtained. In this way, the interview questions were designed to allow the participants to expand on their views and opinions on women's participation in sport in the geographical context under investigation. The questions in the interviews were not identical to those used in the questionnaire, but like the questionnaire questions the questions in the interview were constructed to answer the research questions.

For illustration, the following questions were part of the interview questions:

What is your opinion regarding Saudi Arabian government policy in relation to female sport?

Probe – Describe any changes you would like to see in government policy on this issue.

Probe – (If desired changes given) – Why do you propose these changes?

(If no desired changes given) – Why do you not propose any changes?

Recently the law changed in Saudi Arabia to allow physical education for girls in some public schools. How do you feel about this?

Probe – Why do you feel this way?

Probe – How would you react to the possibility of your own female relatives taking part in physical education classes?

Probe – Why would you react in this way?

What do you believe Islam teaches about female sport?

Probe – Why do you believe this?

Probe – What would be an example of where this is taught?

How do you think the situation of female sport in Saudi Arabia might change in the future?

Probe – (If changes given) – Why do you think these changes will occur?

(If no changes given) – Why do you think that no changes will occur?

I allowed interviewees to employ their own understandings of terms like 'sport' as I was interested in their 'commonsense' views, but I would probe, if appropriate, whenever it was unclear what an interviewee meant by a term. The probing questions, in particular, I employed

to develop a clearer picture of participants' deeper thinking in relation to the issues, to enrich the data I had obtained from the questionnaire.

4.4.5 Twitter: outline

Social media analysis is an emergent methodology, allowing comparison of online and offline attitudes (Poynter 2010). Social Media platforms such as Twitter offer a window on the kind of publicly expressed attitudes which I was interested in investigating. Twitter is a platform which allows account holders to 'tweet' short messages of up to 140 characters, or images, video, or audio files. Account holders can 'follow' each other, which involves subscribing to the account of the person who is 'followed' so that the followed person's tweets appear in the news feed of the follower. Influence on twitter is largely reflected in the number of followers a person has. Twitter account holders can 'like', 'retweet' (which tweets the original tweet to that account holder's followers), or respond with a sub-tweet to any other tweet that they come across. Tweets commonly contain hashtags such as '#Saudisport' which allows subject matters to be tracked by searches, and for certain topics to 'trend' meaning that they become very popular on the site.

In this way, Twitter encourages the expression of short opinions, and produces many small 'viewpoint units' which make it a good tool with which to examine the general spread of opinion on topics of public concern. Keyword and hashtag searches can quite quickly reveal what the spread of opinion is, unlike other platforms like blog sites or Facebook, which tend to encourage longer, and so less frequent, expressions of opinion, which are harder to systematically search through. In addition, Twitter is the most popular social media platform in Saudi Arabia in which public posts including large volumes of opinion are the norm.

Thus, there are a great many opportunities for the collection of data on the perceptions of women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia, even though women's participation in sport is a sensitive topic in the Kingdom because it challenges the current laws and norms that are dominant in Saudi society.

Moreover, collecting data from Twitter on the issue of women and sport in Saudi Arabia has allowed for the voices of more women to be included in the study and in this way, achieve one of the objectives of the study. The social media platform allows the researcher an opportunity to collect data on women and men's views on the topic in a space where they can freely express their views. This means that the researcher can collect data on women's opinions out with many of the traditional constraints. In addition, social media allows women more opportunity to speak somewhat more freely on an issue which is still considered controversial in the Kingdom.

In addition, my interest in Twitter data had been spurred by incidents such as the furore that was caused by the Olympic Committee's pressing Saudi Arabia (along with Qatar and Brunei) to include some female athletes in the team that it was sending to the London Olympics (as discussed in Chapter 1). Two Saudi female athletes attended: Wodjan Ali Seraj Abdulrahim Shahrkhani, a judo competitor, and Sarah Attar, who ran in the 800m (although neither was able to prepare for the games in Saudi Arabia). This caused controversy in the Kingdom. Although there were some positive reactions, there were also some very strong negative reactions, as was reported at the time. For my own research, quotations from women and men on the barriers to women's participation in sport were taken directly from Twitter (and anonymised by replacing their Twitter IDs with coded numbers). This information would augment the views and opinions gathered from the survey and interviews.

I initially followed 20 twitter accounts highlighted as most regularly using the hashtags '#' translating to '#women_in_sport' and '#female_student_sport', alongside a snowball sample of further relevant accounts retweeted by the initial sample.

Collecting demographic data about the sample was not straightforward, primarily because Twitter does not require users to input or display demographic details. Even determining gender can be difficult and require drawing inferences based on names and pictures. This led to a final sample of 250 accounts, of which I believed 152 to be accounts run by male individuals and 98 to be run by female individuals. All of those individuals appeared to be from Saudi Arabia.

4.4.6 Interview data analysis

Qualitative analysis was applied to the interview questions to identify the emerging themes. The text analysis tool NVivo was used in coding and identifying the themes that arose from the interview responses. A thematic analysis was then prepared.

This study employed a version of the six-phase qualitative analysis process developed by Braun and Clarke (2006: 87). The first phase was familiarization, the second phase was initial code generation, the third phase was sorting codes into themes, the fourth phase was reviewing codes and themes, the fifth phase involved searching for any new themes, the sixth phase was producing the finalised thematic analysis.

For the first, familiarization phase, the main objective was to read and understand the transcribed interviews to gain an understanding of what would be valuable in subsequent phases. The familiarization phase involved producing a transcript of the interviews including all verbal and (where possible) non-verbal utterances and communicative behaviour (e.g. potentially significant coughs or hand gestures). The transcripts were then checked against the audio recordings to ensure accuracy.

For the second, initial code generation phase, the transcribed data was uploaded into the text analysis software NVIVO and the transcripts were examined therein to identify patterns which could be captured by relevant codes or, instead, suggested new or refined codes. The codes were open in that I did not start out with pre-defined codes, but the overall thematic analysis was theoretical rather than inductive, and so the coding process was significantly informed by the four key themes around which the research questions were organised:

   (i)   The dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sports in Al Jouf and Dammam;

   (ii)   the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia;

   (iii)   how different interpretations of Islam relate to attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia;

(iv)   ways in which ideas towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia are changing.

This initial coding process produced some draft codes; examples of this initial process are given below:

Draft code	Data extracts			
Women should be allowed	'Why should women not be allowed to participate in sports? In fact, women's sports should be extended to include all women's schools and universities.' (D1)	'I support the idea of allowing PE for girls in schools, let them participate but that should only be done privately.' (D2)	'The current situation regarding the participation of women in society needs to be enhanced and developed. I think that the society must accept women's participation in sports.' (D6)	'I am in support of a situation whereby I can participate in any sport I want as a woman.' (D7)
Community too culturally conservative	'As for the limited female participation, however, it could be due to the social and religious backgrounds in the first place… If women practice sport in its widest sense, this will be catastrophic to society.' (A1)	'woman's participation in… sports in Saudi Arabia will have its impact on the culture… It may [destroy] families; women would get used to going outside their home very often and even without the knowledge of their husband and family' (A4)	'I think that the participation of the woman in sports in Saudi Arabia will have its impact on the culture in the Saudi society [leading to] ethical problems that threaten Saudi families and influences the culture of the society.' (A9)	'[I]n a conservative society like Saudi Arabia… [there are] major obstacles in applying it.' (D3)
Compatibility of women's sporting participation with Islam	'Islamic teachings urge and encourage female sports. I believe so because it benefits the human body and entertains.' (D1)	'I think that the Islamic teachings do not oppose the practice of female sport because it benefits female Muslims. This is due to the existence of evidence from the teachings of the Messenger (PBUH) which urge us to exercise sport.' (D2)	'I do not see any conflict in the teachings of Islam with female sports…For example, the Prophet raced with his wife and also when he gave instructions on one of the festivals of Al Ansar… to conduct some games where a place was dedicated for women.' (D3)	'the compatibility of Islam and female sports is strong due to the existence of evidence from the teachings of the Messenger (PBUH) which urge us to exercise sport… [e.g.] the race of the Messenger with Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her).' (A2)
Cultural changes in Saudi Arabia	'I think it will have a positive impact as sport is considered healthy… when women realize the importance of sport and exercise it, it means it will affect her society, her relatives and her children in the future and will bring them up in a way whereby they assign importance to sports in their lives.' (D3)	'women's participation in sports will have a positive and a negative side… The negative side has to do with the time allocated for the exercise [which] will be deducted from the time allocated for her household and children, [affecting] their relationship… The end result will lead to the demolition of her family, and…will affect society at large.' (D5)	'The participation of women in sports in Saudi Arabia will affect the culture of the society positively if applied and allowed within the Islamic requirements. The outcome will be healthy bodies and minds.' (D7)	'I think it will have impact on the culture because initially it will be the exercising of sport at schools and then at external clubs and over time the woman will get used to going outside the house.' (A10)

Table 4.2: Draft codes and data examples

These draft codes were then sorted according to the four key themes, in phase three. As the interview questions had been drawn up explicitly to elicit information relevant to the four themes, this sorting process was relatively straightforward and was based on keyword association combined with my own assessment of relevancy.

To look forward to the analysis that I will provide in the next chapter, recall the four research questions around which the above themes were organised. First, what are the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Second, what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Third, how do different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia? Fourth, how are the ideas about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia changing?

In terms of dominant attitudes, even at this stage in the process it was becoming increasingly clear that the interview data was revealing that the dominant attitude towards women's participation in sport was broadly inclusive in nature. Likewise, at this stage it was also beginning to emerge that religious considerations were playing a significant role, as might be expected, but that there were elements of nuance. For example, as can be seen in the responses above in the 'community too culturally conservative' row, although religion is mentioned and explicitly cited as a factor, it is often intertwined with reference to broader socially conservative considerations. Moreover, this entanglement of religious and socially conservative considerations appeared such that it is not immediately obvious how to disentangle them, or, indeed, that they could be disentangled. One possible interpretation of this that I began to entertain at this stage was a Foucauldian one – that perhaps the 'power source' for non-inclusive practices in women's sport is more complicated than simply emanating from the mosque or khutbah. This is an aspect of the data that I found interesting and I discuss in detail below in Chapters 5 and 6.

In the fifth phase, the produced, sorted codes were reviewed for coherence and accuracy, which resulted in the following code tables:

Theme	Codes			
(i) Dominant attitudes towards women's participation	Women should be allowed	Women should be encouraged	x should be taken into consideration re women's sporting participation	Where women should be allowed to participate
	Women should *not* be allowed	Women should *not* be encouraged	Types of sport women should be allowed to participate in	Views on Olympic proposal
(ii) Key social, cultural and civic issues	Community too culturally conservative	Few facilities were women can participate	Religious reasons for supporting limits on women's sport	There is a lack of government support
	General perceptions of women's rights	Barriers preventing women's participation		
(iii) How interpretations of Islam relate to attitudes towards women's sport	Compatibility of women's sporting participation with Islam	How women's sporting participation in other Muslim countries would work in Saudi Arabia	How women's sporting participation in Western countries would work in Saudi Arabia	
(iv) Ways in which ideas towards women's participation in sport are changing.	Individual's changes in beliefs about women's sporting participation	Perceived social and health benefits	Cultural changes in Saudi Arabia	

Table 4.3: Thematic codes

In the fourth phase, I reviewed the codes and their relationship to the themes in order to ensure that my research aims were being properly addressed. In particular, I assessed whether there were sufficient codes to properly address the issue at the core of each of theme. There is inevitability a question of where any amount of detail is sufficient, and research efforts have to cease to at some point, so 'sufficiency' of the codes was determined by me simply by comparing my own expectations as to what might sufficiently address the issue. The sixth phase was producing the finalised thematic analysis.

4.4.7 Twitter data analysis

The tweets were collected then grouped into two categories:

1. The first group reflects people's general views about women's sports and the barriers that prevent women from participating in sport.

2. The second group is related to what people think about the Saudi women who participated in the Olympic Games.

The structural coding process was then used to obtain themes from the tweets. This occurred in three cycles.

The first cycle involved pattern identification. Upon completion of collection, the tweets were transcribed into an analysable electronic format. After this, Nvivo was used to conduct the first cycle of analysis and coding, examining the syntax and semantics to decode the sentiments of the respondents. This was achieved by determining the most common phrases and keywords, a common procedure (see Saldaña 2009: 48). The phrases and keywords were grouped into word clouds. These word clouds were then encoded with the appropriate category labels. Through the entire coding process, there were notable commonalities. I then journalized the themes and patterns developing in the data so that I could refer to it at the second stage of the coding and analysis process.

The second involved pattern comparison. After categorizing the codes, I compared them to each other. The second cycle pattern coding took over so that I could precisely recognize the arising similarities and then summarize them into subcategories for analysis (as recommended by Saldaña 2009).

The third cycle involved the axial coding process. This method proved to be effective in determining how the sub-categories and categories from the first and second phase of coding interrelated. Subcategories emerged using open coding for each question. Then, axial coding was performed to narrow and refine the open coding to discover meaningful themes relevant for each research question.

After the structural coding process was complete, a memo code was developed from the raw data. From this memo code, these seven labels were assigned.

1.   Health benefits

2.   Women's Sports Does Not Contradict Islam

3.   Gender Equity

4.   Culture

5.   Religion

6.   Social change

7.   Should participate only in accordance to the Islamic teachings.

In the final stage, I reviewed the memos that I had written to check how the codes and sub-codes that I had established were connected and how they related to my research questions.

4.5 Limitations: methodological and ethical issues

Two locations were selected for the site of the research. The locations were selected in significant part because they were somewhat representative of the nature of a particular divide

in Saudi society. Dammam was selected as it is liberal, influenced by greater interaction with the West through the oil trade. The second location for the study was Al Jouf, which is more conservative and traditional with less interaction with the West. However, it must be acknowledged that there may be peculiarities in Dammam and Al Jouf which make the data selected from those sources less relevant for wider Saudi Society. Indeed, given that my sample is relatively small, and was not intended to be representative of Saudi society as a whole any 'quirks' in that sample would significantly affect the data. So without a comparison sample which is representative, this possibility cannot be ruled out. However, as this is an exploratory study, an issue such as this is extremely difficult to avoid.

Moreover, I hope that my thesis may motivate a lengthier and more resource-intensive investigation of the sort required to procure and analyse a representative sample of the Saudi populace. This is something that I intend to do after the completion of my PhD, hopefully with the support of Al Jouf University.

A futher issue concerns, given the sensitive nature of the topic, attaining the informed consent of the participants. And here,contextual issues to do with the sex-segregated nature of Saudi society, required that particular measures be taken. The participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research process at any time. This entailed reading a script aloud to each face-to-face participant which outlined the research objectives, before then confirming that participants had understood and were willing to continue vocally. The script also contained reminders that their responses would remain anonymous, that they were free to end the process at any time and to revoke consent, with no penalty to themselves.

Thus, the contextual issues required that the interviews and the questionnaires were carried out in a culturally sensitive way that respected the sex-segregation, and other such norms of Saudi Society. This included a female research assistant, Dr Maha Aldoghmi who is also my aunt-in-law, doing all the face-to-face and direct communication with female study participants. A female research assistant was required because Saudi cultural norms prevent men from conducting research in private with women they are not related to. I personally conducted research with the male participants, yet I had no option but to use a female research assistant to

work with women. Dr Aldoghimi is an experienced interviewer as an assistant professor in the Curriculum and Instruction Department at Al Jouf University. As her relative, I am allowed by Saudi cultural norms to closely liaise with Dr Aldoghimi and I was able to frequently meet with her in private to discuss how best to conduct the interviews.

The most significant shortcoming of being forced to rely on a research assistant in this way is that my analysis of the female interview data may lack richness since I cannot be present during these interviews. I was fortunate, however, in that I was able to very closely consult with Dr Aldoghimi during the entire interview and analysis process in order to minimize this shortcoming.

Regarding the Twitter data, one potential ethical issue that arose with its collection was that the volume of tweets negated being able to seek permission to quote them in my research. However, as Twitter is a micro-blogging site which involves users essentially publishing their tweets on the internet, I believe the quoting of those tweets to be, in principle, no more ethically problematic than quoting any other published material.

In practice, however, I recognised that there might be some risk for post-hoc objections from the Twitter users whose Tweets I collected, so I anonymised the data in an effort to minimize that possibility.

Further, the data that I collected will only be used for research purposes as was made clear to the study participants. The identity and the opinions of the participants will not be indicated in any way in the research. In this way, participants' privacy is ensured. The data is secured or destroyed (digital recordings of interviews, in line with the explicit commitment I gave to all interviewees, were destroyed after six months), with all remaining material kept on a password protected computer and no unauthorised access to the information allowed. Another possible limitation concerns the interview and the questionnaire as data collection instruments. The responses of the participants were all self-reported and there was no way of having absolute certainty that they were always true and that they reflected the real, unadulterated opinions of the participants. This is especially true in a Saudi setting, where women may feel inhibited with regard to expressing their real views, especially if those views are contrary to the prevailing

orthodoxy. In the case of female interview participants, this was compounded by the fact that I was not able to be present in the interviews. In addition, it seems probable that the cultural realities of Saudi Arabia resulted in at least some participants feeling unwilling to express opinions that were unorthodox.

Nevertheless, although it is clear that female participation in sport is a sensitive topic, it is important not to overstate this. At the time of my study it was not illegal or legally dangerous for people to discuss this topic. Similarly, there was already an ongoing debate within Saudi government agencies regarding whether to change existing policy on this issue. For example, in 2012 the Shury Council presented proposals to government ministers recommending the introduction of Physical Education lessons for girls in public schools. The inclusion of two female athletes in the Saudi delegation to the London 2012 Olympic Games also contributed to wider discussion on female participation in sport in Saudi society. Moreover, in accordance with the conditions of my PhD scholarship, the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau has officially signed-off on my research topic. To that extent, my research could be deemed 'government approved'.

Further, I took steps to ensure that any residual hesitancy on the part of participants was mitigated by asking them to give their verbal consent only to participate in the research project, thereby maximising their anonymity, privacy, and modesty consistent with Saudi custom.

Thus, I contend that there were negligible risks associated with public awareness of *involvement* in my research, such as individuals being linked to participation in my research by being seen meeting with myself or my research assistant or by email or phone contact. However, there may have been some potential risks associated with particular views an individual might express within the content of their responses in the interviews, such as if an individual put forward very strongly anti-government views that could subsequently be intercepted by the Saudi authorities. The interview schedule was designed not to invite such potentially inflammatory topics as the basic legitimacy of the Saudi regime, and a plan was put in place to protect all concerned should such 'revolutionary' views be expressed: in the most

severe cases to stop the interview altogether. Fortunately, nothing even close to this unlikely outcome arose.

Relatedly, although each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed, participants in the interviews had the right not to have their interview recorded. Ultimately, no interviewee asked not to have the interview recorded, which reflects, in my view, the relative comfort that participants felt in discussing the issues, even 'on record'.

Finally, a further potential limitation was the requirement for translation between Arabic and English, for both the questionnaire and the interview transcripts. I did the translation myself. As translation is as much art as science, the possibility of error, in particular misinterpretation of meaning, cannot entirely be ruled out. However, I believe that it is unlikely that any translation error-rate would be significant enough to undermine any premise or conclusion of this thesis, as the central Arabic and English terms translated between in this thesis match up well.

Another potential limitation concerned the sample, an issue I have touched on above, which was too small to be able to provide data which was representative of Saudi society as a whole, and was taken from only two locations in the Kingdom: Dammam and Al Jouf. However, this was only ever intended to be an exploratory study, with major case study elements designed to provide richness over generalisability.

Chapter 5: Results and analysis

5.1 Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is to present evidence regarding how beliefs about culture, Islam, and individual's level of education and city of origin may be related to beliefs about women's participation in sports in Saudi Arabia. The information presented in this report was collected from surveys and interviews of Saudi Arabian residents from the metropolitan City of Dammam and the rural city of Al Jouf from May-June 2015. Social media activity on Twitter, from Saudi Arabians more generally, was collected in March 2015. The two cities were intentionally selected so that the information gathered could be diverse and reflective of both the rural and urban Saudis–a key dividing line in Saudi society.

The research subjects were drawn from Al Jouf University, Al Jouf, Saudi Arabia and Dammam University, Dammam, Saudi Arabia, in the men's and women's Medicine and English departments and maintenance and security offices within both universities. These departments and offices are chosen because they exist at both Al Jouf and Dammam universities and likely provide a better sample for comparison than samples drawn across divergent disciplines or occupations, as well as providing for subjects with differing degrees of education.

In Section 5.2, an overview of the research process, including the themes and subthemes will be presented.

In Section 5.3, a summary will be given of the descriptive statistics involved in the survey, interview, and social media research.

In Section 5.4, the demographic data for the research participants will be presented.

In Section 5.5, the interview and survey data for theme (i) will be presented: The dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sports in Al Jouf and Dammam.

In Section 5.6, the Twitter data for theme (i) will be presented.

In Section 5.7, I present an analysis of theme (i).

In Section 5.8, I present the interview, survey, and Twitter data for theme (ii): the key social, cultural and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia.

In Section 5.9, I present an analysis of theme (ii).

In Section 5.10 I outline the interview, survey, and Twitter data for theme (iii): how different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia.

In Section 5.11, I present an analysis of theme (iii).

In Section 5.12, I outline the interview, survey, and Twitter data for theme (iv).

In Section 5.13, I present an analysis of theme (iv).

5.2. Overview of research process: themes and subthemes

The distributed surveys were constructed on the basis of several themes with the sole purpose of shedding light on my research questions. In order to give adequate answers to the research questions, the themes were divided into subthemes, and then presented in the form of sections as illustrated below.

The following themes, based on my research questions, were used to construct the surveys, interviews, and conduct the social media research. (i) The dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sports in Al Jouf and Dammam; (ii) the key social, cultural and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia; (iii) how different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia; (iv) ways in which ideas towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia are changing.

These general themes were broken down into subthemes in the following way.

Theme (i): The dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sports in Al Jouf and Dammam.

1. Should women be allowed to participate in sports?
2. Should women be encouraged to participate in sports?

3. What should be taken into consideration when women participate in sports?

4. Where should women be allowed to participate in sport?

5. What types of sport should women be allowed to participate in**?**

6. Was the joint Olympic proposal with Bahrain appropriate?

Theme (ii): the key social, cultural and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia.

1. The community is too culturally conservative

2. There are too few facilities were women can participate

3. There are religious reasons supporting limits on women's sport

4. There is a lack of government support

5. General perceptions of women's rights in Saudi Arabia

6. Barriers preventing women's participation in sport

Theme (iii): how different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia.

1. Women's participation in sport is compatible with Islam

2. Women's sports as practiced in other Muslim countries would work in Saudi Arabia

3. Women's sports as practiced in other western countries would not work in Saudi Arabia

Theme (iv): ways in which ideas towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia are changing.

1. Individual changes in beliefs about women's participation in sports in Saudi Arabia.

2. Perceived social and health benefits

3. Cultural changes in Saudi Arabia.

5.3 Research participants: descriptive statistics

It will be helpful to provide a brief of overview of the descriptive statistics involved in the survey, interview, and social media research. The data from the survey is used to help frame the study and identify relationships, but it is not an in-depth statistical analysis. The response rates for the survey are presented in table 5.1a below.

Total no. of surveys distributed	Total no. of surveys responded	Response rate
890	444	44%

Table 5.1a: Survey response rate

As can be seen in Table 5.1a, a total of 890 surveys were administered, and there were 444 responses to the survey representing 49.9% of the entire sample. Most of these surveys were returned in their entirety, providing a fruitful source of descriptive data. Although there was a high response rate, several possible reasons have been identified to explain why some of the surveys were returned without responses.

First, the survey itself was relatively extensive, and this might have discouraged some of the respondents from participating. Second, cultural barriers might also have played a role. Some of the women might have feared social consequences from participating in a potentially politically sensitive piece of research.

A more detailed breakdown of the response rate is provided in Table 5.1b below (note, the sample described below is not taken to be representative of Saudi Society):

Gender	Education Level	Dammam		Al Jouf		Total
		Collected with responses	Returned without responses	Collected with responses	Returned without responses	
Men	Non-University Educated	32	14	54	24	124
Women		68	10	23	26	127
Men	University Educated	88	3	74	3	168
Women		62	0	43	6	111
Total		250	27	194	59	530

Table 5.1b: Survey response rate: detailed breakdown

In total, 24 interviews were conducted, 13 in Dammam, and 11 in Al Jouf. Table 5.2 summarises the distribution of interviews according to gender, location, and level of education.

City	Men/ Univ	Men/Non Univ	Women/Univ	Women/Non Univ
Dammam (N=13)	N= 6 /	N=4/	N=3/	NONE
Al Jouf (N=11)	N=5/	N=3/	N=2/	N=1/
Total	11	7	5	1

Table 5.2. Interview sample by city, gender, and education level

As can be seen in the final column, no women at the 'non-university educated' level participated in interviews in Dammam, and only one participated in interviews in Al Jouf. One possible explanation for this is that women without a university education are more likely to

fear possible negative social consequences from taking part in this kind of research. As I highlighted during the ethical approval process for this study, my reason for seeking merely verbal, rather than written, consent from interview subjects was to avoid subjects being concerned that there would be a 'paper trail' of their participation in the programme. But even this may not have been enough for some potential interviewees.

Finally, for the social media activity, 96 tweets were selected during a Twitter survey process that spanned the 12 weeks of the fieldwork period, including 5 hours per week examining Arabic Twitter feeds in the region of the Arabian Peninsula, and searching hashtags related to women and sport. I initially followed 20 twitter accounts highlighted as most regularly using the hashtags '#' translating to '#women_in_sport' and '#female_student_sport', alongside a snowball sample of further relevant accounts retweeted by the initial sample. From the tweets that I encountered, I selected 96 from separate individuals (whose Twitter identities I have anonymised) which were representative of the spread of views that I came across when I was observing Twitter.

5.4 Research participants: Demographics

It will be helpful to provide a brief of overview of the demographics of the participants involved in the research.

Beginning with the surveys, Table 5.3 gives the breakdown of the age-ranges of the respondents.

Age	Total number	Percent
18-25	114	25.6%
26-45	205	46.1%
Over 46	125	28.1%
Total	444	100.0%

Table 5.3: Age group of the participants

From the data above, we can see that the majority of the respondents are between the ages of 26-45 accounting for 45.7 percent, respondents over 46 years of age were the second largest group, accounting for 27.8 percent, while those aged between 18-25 were the smallest group, constituting 25.4 percent.

Next, Table 5.4 gives the breakdown of the levels of education of the respondents.

Education level	Total number	Percent
University Educated	286	64.4
Non-university Educated	158	35.6
Total	444	100.0

Table 5.4 Level of education

In respect to the level of education, the survey sought to gain information about two levels of education. The levels were divided into university educated and non-university educated. From Table 4.3, it can be seen that the majority of the respondents were university educated. University educated respondents represented 64.4 percent of the total sample while the non-university educated respondents comprised only 35.6 percent. Now consider Table 5.5, which details the city of origin of the respondents:

City	Total number	Percent
Dammam	250	56.3
Al Jouf	194	43.7
Both cities	444	100

Table 5.5 City of origin

The survey focused on two regions of Saudi Arabia. Dammam was selected so that the survey could collect data from a metropolitan population, while Al Jouf was selected so that the

survey could collect data from the rural Saudi Arabian population. The majority of the respondents were drawn from the city of Dammam representing 56.3 percent followed by Al Jouf with 43.7 percent.

5.5 Theme (i) interview and survey data: The dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sports in Al Jouf and Dammam

The first theme was: the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sports across Saudi Arabia. This Section will present the data relevant to this theme drawn from the surveys, interview, and social media activity, comparing Dammam with Al Jouf. The sub-themes will be used to structure the presentation of the data.

5.5.1 Sub-theme (1): Should women be allowed to participate in sports?

In the interviews, there was general agreement between the respondents from Dammam that all women should be given a chance to participate in sports. Many of the interviewees from Dammam and Al Jouf expressed an opinion that in general supported women's involvement in sports.

The responses from Dammam will be considered first, along with the survey results, before considering Al Jouf.

A common kind of response from Dammam was given by a university educated man who wondered why women should not be given a chance to participate in sports. According to him, there is the need to ensure the availability of sports facilities in schools and universities. This is what he had to say:

> Why should women not be allowed to participate in sports? In fact, women's sports should be extended to include all women's schools and universities. Schools and private women's clubs should be established in order to exercise women's sports. I am in support of women participating in sports (D1 University educated man, June 2015).

Similar views were found among the university educated women from Dammam. For example, the following interviewee expressed frustration at how she had once attempted to join a women's sport club but could not find any. She felt that as a woman, she should have the right to participate in sports:

> I am in full support of women's sports. Why I feel this is because it is the reality. I was very frustrated five years ago, I wanted to join a Saudi women's [sports] club but I did not find any except the clubs which are part of weight loss clinics. I am in support of a situation whereby I can participate in any sport I want as a woman (D7 University educated woman, June 2015).

These comments were representative of all the 13 interviews which were conducted in Dammam, in which all participants, regardless of age, gender, or education level (noting that there were no non-educated women interviewed), expressed the view that women should be free to participate in sport.

In the surveys given to participants from Dammam, the results largely concurred with the interview responses, although a small minority did disagree with women's participation in sport. First, note that in question 6 of the survey, respondents could either tick *none*, *all*, or select individual sports from a range of options. I grouped together in the *Allowed* category those who had ticked *all* and who had ticked some of the individual sports from a range of options. Table 5.6 details the overall response to the question:

City	Education & gender	Allowed	Prohibited	Total
Dammam	University educated men	80	5	85
	University educated women	58	1	59
	Non-university educated men	37	6	43
	Non-university educated women	36	9	45
	Total	**211**	**21**	**232**

Table 5.6: Should women be allowed to participate in sports? – Dammam

From the table above, we can see that the overwhelming majority of university educated men from the city of Dammam said that women should be allowed to participate in sports: 94.%. And a similar level of support was found in the other education groups. Overall 98% of university educated women were in favour of women being allowed to participate in sport. And although the level of support did drop a little in the non-university educated categories, support was still very high among both men and women (86% and 80% respectively).

Indeed, as can be seen in Figure 1, in the Dammam data there was not a clear relationship of that sort that one might expect between *gender* and views on women's participation in sport.
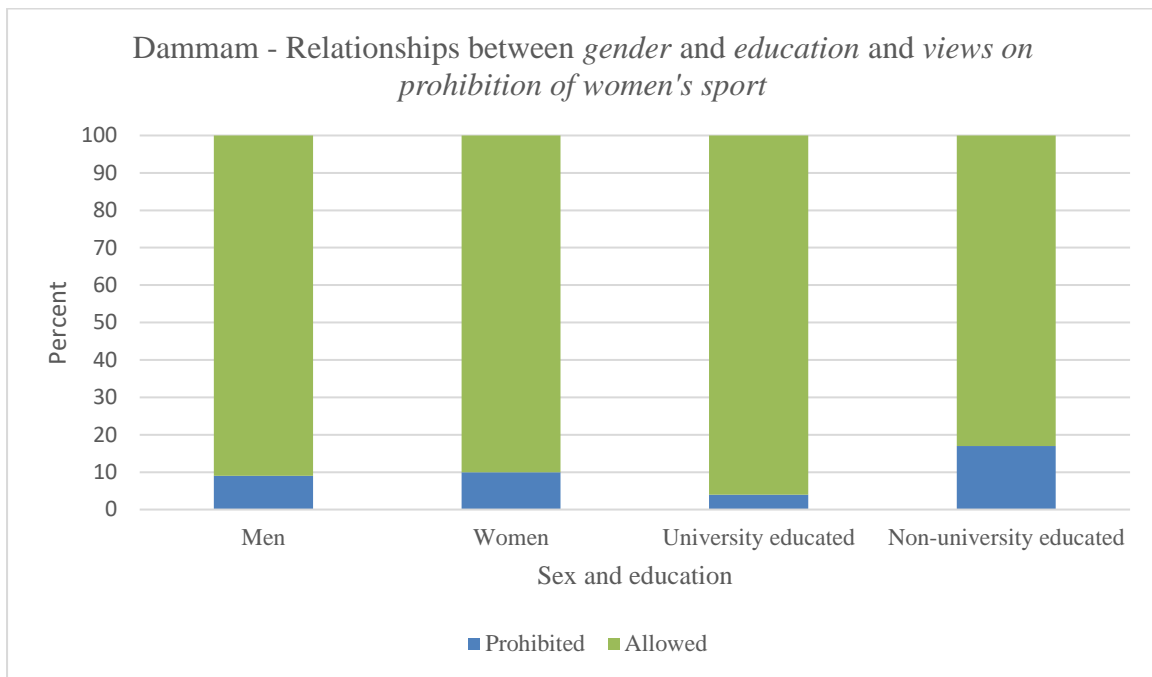
Figure 5.1: Dammam: Views on prohibition of women's sport – gender and education relationships

Proportionally, a lower percentage of women than men held the view that women's participation in sport should be allowed. But the difference was very small: 1%. There was a larger difference between university versus non-university educated participants: 14% more of the former than the latter held that women's participation in sport should be allowed. This suggests that, in the data for Dammam, there is no clear relationship between gender and views

on the prohibition of women's sport, but that being university educated is more strongly associated with holding the view that women's sport should be allowed, compared to non-university educated. Thus, this result has particular significance for my first research question: what are the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? In the Dammam sample, at least, the dominant attitude is overwhelmingly that women should be allowed to participate in sport, with limited gender or level of education differences.

Looking at interview questions from Al Jouf first, most responses were in line with the view found in Dammam that women should be allowed to participate in sports. However, there was also a higher proportion of responses which were less inclined to take that view. For example, one university educated man stated:

> The policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia regarding female sport is a very cautious policy as it is based on the principle of 'warding off evil takes precedence over bringing benefits' and I see that this policy is very good and I see that women should acquire awareness of the importance of female sports at home and by walking in public places so that women can preserve their dignity and save them from harm and harassment, and I suggest that women should get awareness from the media and should be encouraged to exercise the proper sport that suits their physical nature in the appropriate places away from mixing with men (AJ1, University educated man, May 2015).

Significant contrasts with this kind of view, though, was more often given by interviewees. For example, one university educated women from Al Jouf stated that she was strongly in favour of women being able to participate in sport on health grounds:

> I feel proud that the authorities have paid attention to the necessity of practicing female sport. I feel so because of what I see in our society whereby women have become obese and ill as they do not do sport exercises. The issue which made me feel so is the proliferation of obesity surgical operations such as *liposuction,* gastric band and others to reach the ideal weight (AJ2 University educated women, May 2015).

These comments were representative of all the 11 interviews which were conducted in Al Jouf, in so far as there was a mixture of views expressed regarding women being allowed to participate in sport, yet a clear majority were in favour of allowing it.

Turning to the survey data from Al Jouf, a similar spread of views was encountered, as described in Table 5.7:

City	Education & gender	Allowed	Prohibited	Total
Al Jouf	University educated men	47	21	68
	University educated women	34	13	47
	Non-university educated men	17	9	26
	Non-university educated women	16	4	20
	Total	**114**	**47**	**161**

Table 5.7: Should women be allowed to participate in sports? – Al Jouf

As can be seen from the table, support for women to participate in sports was also felt among respondents from the less urban city of Al Jouf. However, from the analysis it was evident that the support was not as strong as that felt in the metropolitan city of Dammam.

Out of 68 university educated men from Al Jouf who responded to this question, only 69% of them responded that women should be allowed to participate in sports, whereas 31% of them said that women should be prohibited from participating in sports. When compared to the support shown by university educated men from Dammam (94%), this is a not insignificant difference.

In comparison, 72% of university educated women who took part in the survey said that they were in support of women's participation in sports, whereas 28% of them said that they were for prohibition. Once again, this support is somewhat less than that of university educated women from the city of Dammam (who were 98% in support).

Turning to the non-university educated men, 65% were in support of women's participation in sports while 34% of them showed support for prohibition. These percentages were somewhat similar to those from non-university educated women since 80% of them responded that women

should be allowed to participate in sports while only 20% said that women should not be given the chance to participate in sports.

Once again, similar to the respondents from Dammam, there was no significant difference in the support for women to participate in sports among university educated men and women. However, there was only a very small difference between non-university educated men and women in Dammam (86% and 80% respectively), whereas there seemed to be larger differences in Al Jouf, with only 65% non-university educated men only being in support. Nevertheless, overall there was still support with 71% of all respondents being in favour.

Regarding any relationship between *gender* or *education* and views on women's participation in sport, as can be seen in Figure 2, below, although there was a stronger relationship between being a woman and views on whether women should be allowed to participate in sport, in contrast to Dammam, the relationship was modest: proportionally, 9% more women than men held the view that women should be allowed to participate in sport.
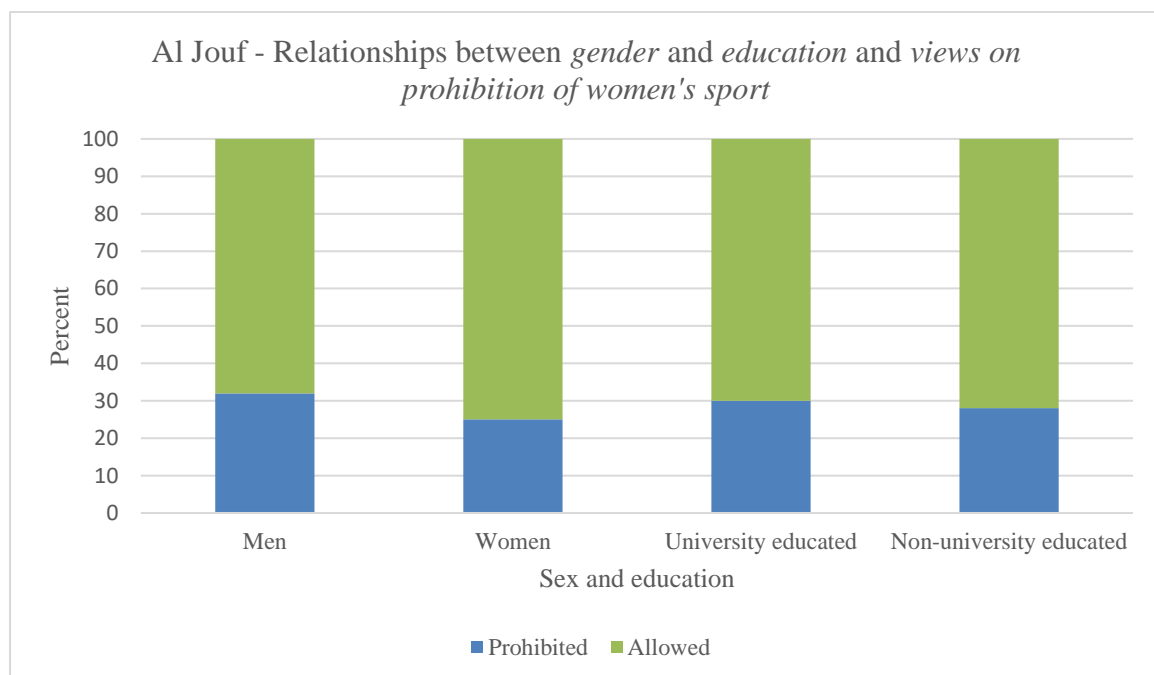
Figure 5.2: Al Jouf: Views on prohibition of women's sport – gender and education relationships

In addition, there was not the same relationship between education and views on prohibition as was found in Dammam. In the data for Al Jouf, 3% more non-university than university educated participants held that women's sport should be allowed.

Combing the data for both Dammam and Al Jouf results in Figure 3:
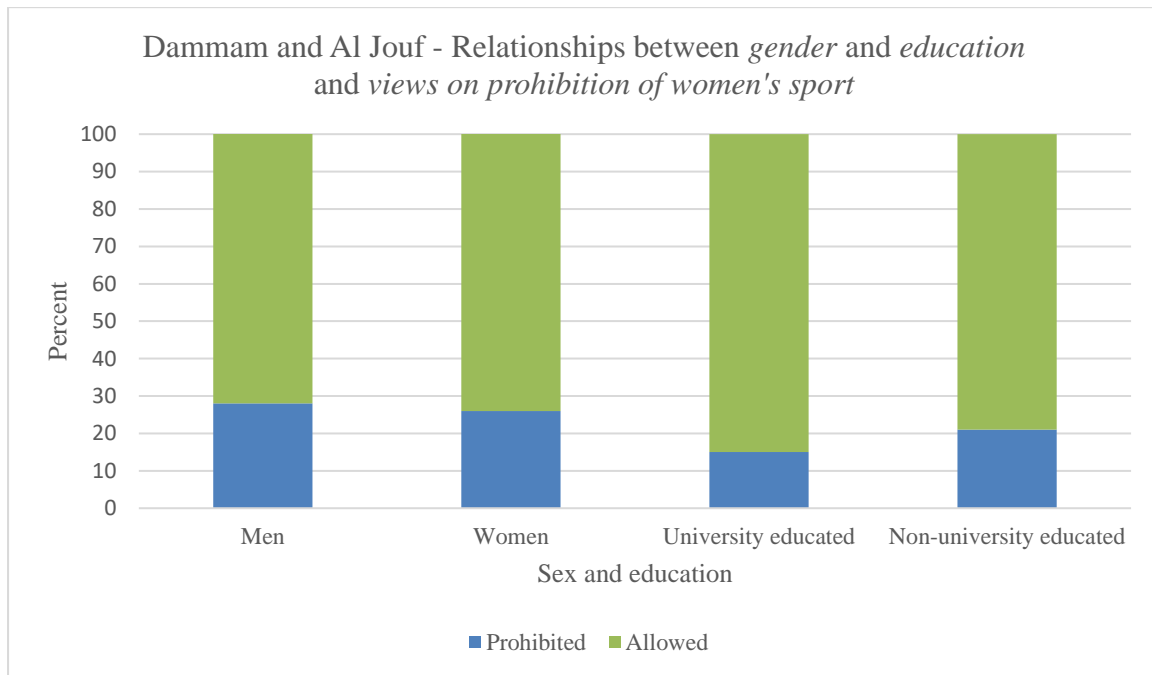
Figure 5.3: Views on prohibition – gender and education relationships

The overall data suggests that there is a slightly stronger relationship between being a woman and holding that women should be allowed to participate in sport compared to being a man: 2%. Although compared to the individual data sets for Dammam and Al Jouf the combined data set has significantly larger base rates–including all the participants–the 2% difference is not very significant. There is a slightly larger difference between university educated versus non-university educated participants: 7% more of the former than the latter held that women should be allowed to participate in sport. But, again, this difference is modest. Consequently, this part of the data only weakly supports the claim that being a woman or being university educated is

more strongly related to holding that women should be allowed to participate in sport than being a man or being non-university educated.

5.5.2 Sub-theme (2): Should women be encouraged to participate in sports?

In the interviews, there was general agreement between the respondents from Dammam that all women should be encouraged (not simply allowed) to participate in sports. However, in Al Jouf, there was more resistance to encouraging than to allowing women's involvement in sports.

Again, the responses from Dammam will be considered first, along with the survey results, before considering Al Jouf.

A recurring reason given by those in Dammam for encouraging women's sport was the health benefits, which all interviewees were in favour of. For example, one university educated woman stated:

> I encourage their participation in PE classes and I behave in this way because I see sport as an important area in the life of every person and it is an important decision because a healthy mind requires a healthy body, and I do encourage all girls to exercise due its importance in human development (D7 University educated woman, June 2015).

In the surveys from Dammam, the results largely concurred interviews, although a greater variety of views was revealed. Table 5.8 details the overall response to the question:

City	Education & gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Dammam	University educated men	12 13%	1 1%	14 15%	62 65%	5 5%	94
	University educated women	6 9%	12 18%	20 31%	26 40%	1 2%	65
	Non-university educated men	16 41%	3 8%	4 10%	16 41%	0 0%	39
	Non-university educated women	5 10%	1 2%	13 25%	29 56%	4 8%	52
	Total	**39 16%**	**17 7%**	**51 20%**	**136 54%**	**10 4%**	**250**

Table 5.8: Should women be encouraged to participate in sports? – Dammam

When asked if women should be encouraged to participate in sports, most university educated males from the city of Dammam agreed.[29] Those who agreed (either strongly or not) represented 70% with a relatively small minority, 14%, saying that they disagreed with the statement. And, 15% neither agreed nor disagreed.

When it came to university educated women, a significant proportion, 42%, agreed (either strongly or not) that women should be encouraged to participate. And slightly more than a quarter, 27% disagreed with the statement indicating that although there was a significantly larger number who agreed than disagreed, the minority who disagreed were of not insignificant size.

Within non-university educated men, the support for women to be encouraged was weaker: 49% of the respondents felt that women should not be encouraged while only 41% felt that women should be encouraged. This marked a significant difference from the figures for the 'allow' question, which were 86% in favour for non-educated men, and 80% in favour for non-educated women. This might suggest that even among those who think that women should be allowed,

---

[29] Please note that a handful of university educated men and women from Dammam ticked more than one option, e.g. both 'agree' and strongly agree' probably because they wanted to express that their view was somewhere between the two options. For the sake of simplicity, all responses were counted.

there is still the belief that women participating in sport is wrong in some sense (suberogatory, perhaps).[30] Alternatively, it might simply show that respondents were concerned about generating opposition to allowing women to participate in sport by any overt encouragement.

In contrast, for non-university educated females: 66% of them agreed that women should be encouraged to participate in sports with only 12% of them disagreeing with the statement, which was more similar to the range of views found among educated women.

Regarding any relationship between *gender* and *education* and *views on encouraging women to participate in sport*, consider Figure 4, below.
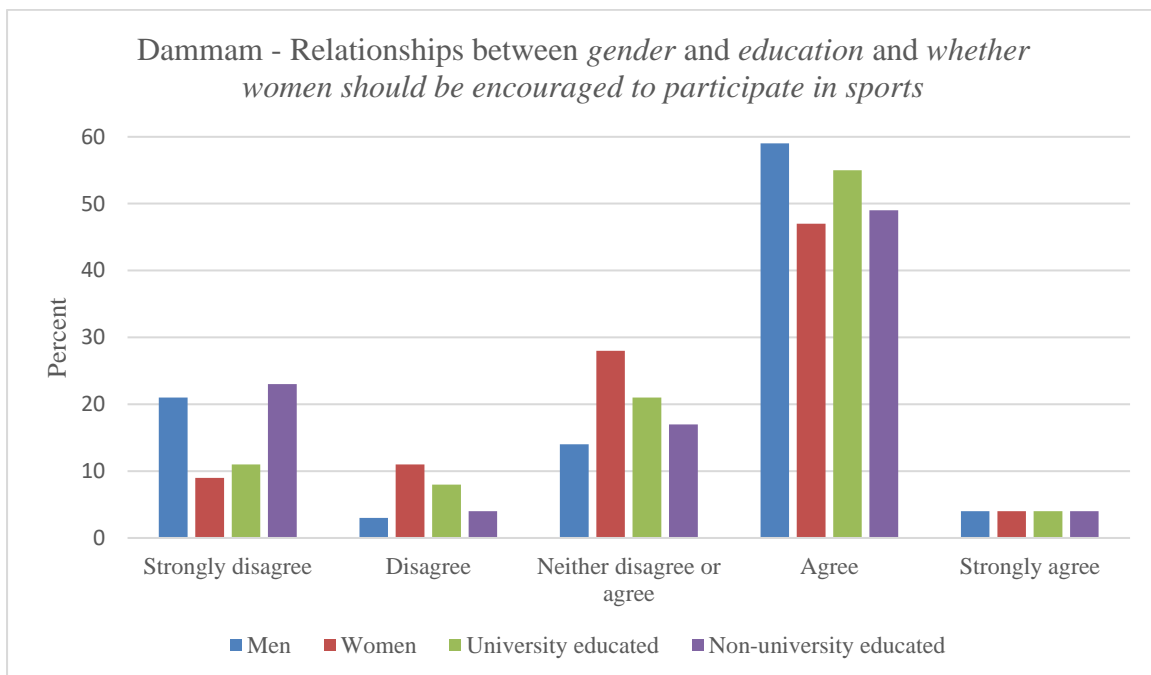
Figure 5.4: Dammam: Views on encouragement – gender and education relationships

The data presents a mixed picture which does not support drawing any strong inferences about any relationships. Consider gender, for example. If a starting assumption is that women will be

---

[30] The notion of an act being 'suberogatory' is somewhat controversial, but the basic idea is that some acts might be wrong without being strictly forbidden (any example is bound to controversial, but proposed examples have included: being ungrateful, or needlessly holding up a queue). The companion notion of supererogatory acts (acts which are morally good but not obligatory, such as donating one's kidney to a stranger in need) is more widely accepted. See Heyd 2016, esp. § 2.

more likely to agree that women should be encouraged, then this assumption is not supported. All of the demographic categories opted for 'strongly agree' in the same proportion: 4%. In addition, 20% more men than women 'agreed' that women should be encouraged to participate in sport. And although 57% more men than women 'strongly disagreed', 73% more women than men 'disagreed'. Thus, the data for Dammam does not give a clear signal on gender relationships.

Regarding education level, if the starting assumption is that university educated participants will be more likely to agree that women should be encouraged, then this assumption is not well-supported as the picture is mixed. Both university-educated versus non-university educated participants opted for 'strongly agree' in the same proportion: 4%. Proportionally 11% and 19% more university participants opted for 'agree' and 'neither disagree nor agree respectively', whereas 50% more university educated than non-university educated participants chose 'disagree', but for 'strongly' disagree this proportional difference was essentially reversed. This suggests that there is no clear relationship between education level and views on whether women should be encouraged to participate in sport.

Now compare to the situation in Al Jouf, looking at interview questions first. There were two interviewees, both non-university educated men, who expressed strong views that women should not be encouraged to participate in sport (although both men also felt that women should not be allowed to participate in sport in general). Both based their view on a mixture of culture and religion. For example, the first stated that:

> Female sport in Saudi Arabia is not suitable for it violates the teachings of Islam and that does not fit the nature of the Saudi society. I am satisfied that the Saudi government has not allowed women to do sport. Because that would lead to breach of the teachings of the religion and contradicts the opinion of the senior Muslim scholars and lead to alienating society and women... [women's sport is] in breach of the teachings of Islam as well as the traditions and customs in Saudi Arabia due to excessive mixing of men and women (AJ9 Non-educated man, May 2015).

However, most of the responses in the interview were more in favour of encouraging women to participate in sport. For example, one university educated woman stated that she thought that sport should be encouraged in order to:

> improve the fitness of women and to fight obesity [and further stating that:] I encourage it as it helps [those in education] perform well academically (AJ3 University-educated women).

Indeed, all the women from Al Jouf who were interviewed were in favour of encouraging women to participate in sport.

Now consider the survey responses from Al Jouf, as described in Table 5.9:

City	Education & gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Al Jouf	University educated men	5 6%	9 10%	8 9%	49 56%	16 18%	87
	University educated women	1 2%	4 8%	13 25%	19 37%	14 27%	51
	Non-university educated men	1 3%	4 13%	12 38%	11 34%	4 13%	32
	Non-university educated women	1 5%	3 14%	5 23%	10 45%	3 14%	22
	Total	**8 4%**	**20 10%**	**38 20%**	**89 46%**	**37 20%**	**192**

Table 5.9: Should women be encouraged to participate in sports? – Al Jouf

As we can see in the Table, 74% of university educated men expressed support for women to be encouraged to participate in sport. Only 16% felt that women should not be encouraged to participate in sports.[31]

---

[31] Please note that a handful of university educated men and women from Dammam ticked more than one option, e.g. both 'agree' and strongly agree' probably because they wanted to express that their view was somewhere between the two options. For the sake of simplicity, all responses were counted.

In comparison, for university educated women although support amongst them was lower, at 55% very few disagreed that women should be encouraged to participate in sports: 10%.

Among university non-educated men, though support was not as prominent as that expressed by university educated males, 47% agreed that women should be encouraged to participate in sports. For non-university educated women, 59% agreed with such encouragement.[32]

With regards to any relationships, consider Figure 5:
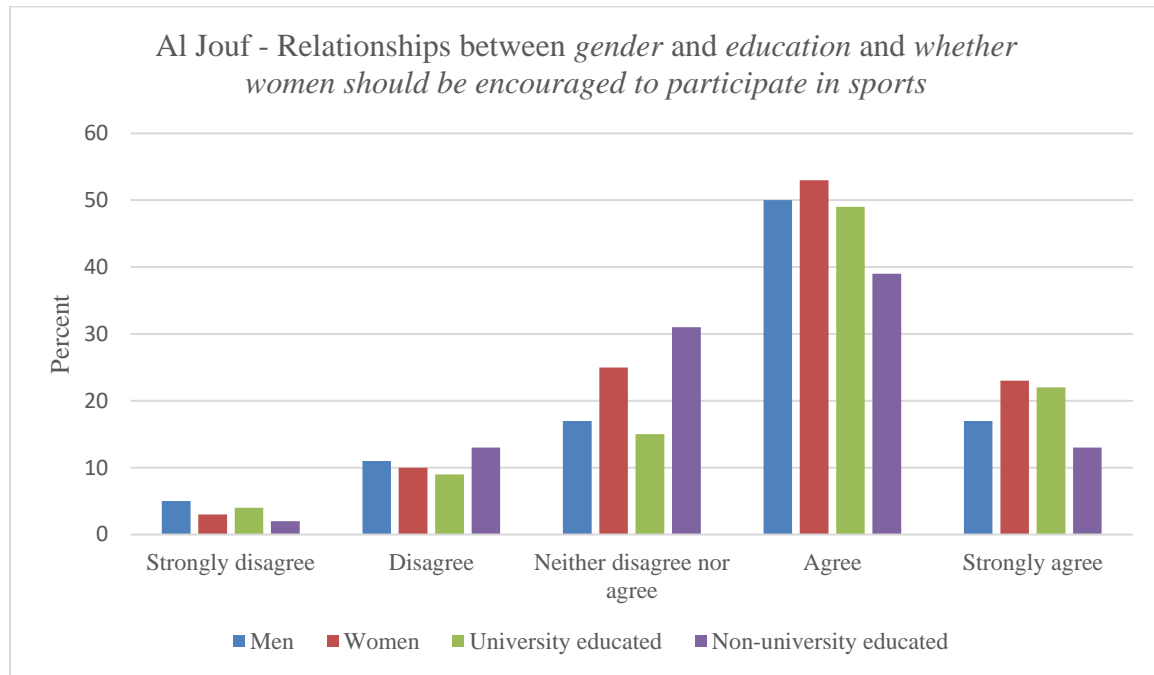
Figure 3.5: Views on encouragement – Al Jouf

The Al Jouf data suggests that there is a slightly stronger relationship between being a woman and holding that women should be encouraged to participate in sport, compared to being a man. For 'strongly disagree' 40% less women than men chose the option (although the base rates were very low), and for 'disagree' 9% less women than men chose the option. For 'agree' and 'strongly

---

[32] Again, please note that a handful of non-university educated men and women from Al Jouf ticked more than option, e.g. both 'agree' and strongly agree' probably because they wanted to express that their view was somewhere between the two options. For the sake of simplicity, all responses were counted.

agree' 6% and 26% more women than men chose the options, respectively. For 'neither agree nor disagree' 32% more women than men chose the option. The overall picture in the Al Jouf data, therefore, appears to support the hypothesis that women are less resistant than men to the idea of encouraging women to participate in sport.

5.5.3 Sub-theme (3): What should be taken into consideration when women participate in sports?

In the interviews, there was general agreement between the respondents from Dammam and Al Jouf that a number of significant matters of comportment and behaviour should be taken into consideration. These will now be discussed. Again, the responses from Dammam will be considered first, along with the survey results, before considering Al Jouf.

An important point to emerge from the interviews was that most respondents expressed qualified support for women's participation in sports only if this occurred in accordance with the teachings of Islam. For example, one university educated woman stated:

> Women should exercise sport within the limits of Islamic law and at places far from the eyes of men to maintain privacy and with the consent of her husband and the family without neglecting her duties towards her husband and children. (D9 University Educated woman, June 2015).

Participation of women in sports in accordance with Islamic teachings got the strongest level of support from respondents of all categories. The more conservative respondents from Al Jouf showed more support to this than they did to the previous theme. This highlights the extent to which women's participation in sport is dependent on religious views. There may be both practical as well as ideological reasons for this: given the many restrictions on women's autonomy in Saudi Arabia, even those who have views of the most liberal persuasion might, for tactical political reasons, advocate for women's participation in sport to be in strict adherence with Islamic teachings. And, of course, it seems likely that many will hold this view sincerely.

Turning now to the survey responses, for this subtheme participants of the survey were asked to tick what they felt was the most important consideration if women were allowed to participate in sport. The survey participants were given a list of options to choose from:

Segregation of men and women; ensuring women's modesty and chastity;[33] respecting the right of men to forbid women relatives to participate in sport; ensuring women should keep up with their duties as wives and mothers; none of the above.[34] In the breakdown of the data, for concision these were re-labelled as follows (respectively):

1. Sex seg.

2. Modesty and chastity

3. Male auth.

4. Family duties

5. None of the above

Each respondent was asked to tick 'all that apply' from the list. The results are displayed in Table 5.10:

---

[33] 'Modesty' is here defined as a mode of dress and comportment which is intended to avoid encouraging sexual attention from others. 'Chastity' is here defined as a mode of sexual behaviour in accordance with traditional Islamic teachings whereby sexual relations occur only within marriage.

[34] The assumption being that there is a widespread view that women participating in sport might be made more vulnerable in some sense or other, hence it might be considered advisable that they exercise only in groups, or under the eye of a watchful guardian.

City	Education & gender	Sex seg.	Modesty and chastity	Male Auth.	Family Duties	None of the above	Total
Dammam	University educated men	68 77%	59 67%	31 35%	40 45%	25 28%	88 100%
	Non-university educated men	26 81%	19 59%	20 63%	21 66%	26 81%	32 100%
Al Jouf	University educated men	68 92%	47 64%	40 54%	46 62%	25 34%	74 100%
	Non-university educated men	43 80%	30 56%	15 28%	22 41%	42 78%	54 100%

Table 5.10: What should be considered when women are participating in sports? – University and non-university educated men

As seen from the table above, 77% of university educated men from Dammam said that sex segregation should be taken into consideration. And, 67% indicated that they thought modesty and chastity should be considered. Family duties came third within university educated males from Dammam with 45%, and male authority came fourth at 35%, while none of the above was taken to be significant by the fewest number of respondents, with only 28% selecting it. Hence, most of the university educated men from Dammam felt that sex segregation was the most important issue to consider.

When compared to university educated men from the city of Al Jouf, the figures were somewhat similar: 92% of university educated men from Al Jouf said that sex segregation should be taken into consideration. This figure is higher compared to that from Dammam indicating that there is at least some difference between these groups. And 64% felt that modesty and chastity should be considered. When compared to Dammam, the difference is not very significant. For family duties, 62% held that they should be considered; male authority came fourth with 54% while none of the above came last at 34%.

Moreover, the results for non-university educated men were generally similar for both Dammam and Al Jouf, although one difference appears to be that more non-educated men in both places opted for *none of the above*. It is not immediately clear why that was the case, not least because participants who chose *none of the above* could have done so for a wide variety of different reasons.

Now compare to the situation in Al Jouf, as outlined in Table 5.11:

City	Education & gender	Sex seg.	Modesty and chastity	Male Auth.	Family Duties	None of the above	Total
Dammam	University educated Women	40 65%	33 53%	7 11%	28 45%	14 23%	62 100%
	Non-university educated women	41 60%	28 41%	13 19%	22 32%	14 21%	68 100%
Al Jouf	University educated women	37 86%	26 60%	16 37%	25 58%	11 26%	43 100%
	Non-university educated women	19 83%	13 57%	10 43%	11 48%	4 17%	23 100%

Table 5.11: What should be considered when women are participating in sports? – University and non-university educated women

As can be seen in the third column, 65% of university educated women from Dammam held that *sex segregation* was of most importance. *Modesty and chastity* was second with 53% of respondents choosing it. *Family duties* came third at 45%, *none of the above* was fourth at 23% percent while *male authority* was last at 11% percent.

In Al Jouf, 86% of the university-educated respondents also felt that sex segregation should be considered, higher than that from Dammam. Slightly higher than in Dammam, 60% chose *modesty and chastity*. Also higher than in Dammam, 58% held that attending to family duties should be of concern in relation to women's participation in sport. *Male authority* was chosen by only 37% of the respondents. The least opted for consideration was *none of the above* with only 25%, a low level quite similar to Dammam.

Now consider the data for non-university educated women from Al Jouf and Dammam. Apart from for *none of the above* there were some significant differences: 83% in Al Jouf versus 60%

in Dammam chose *sex segregation*; 57% in Al Jouf versus 41% in Dammam chose *modesty and chastity*; 43% in Al Jouf versus 19% in Dammam chose *male authority*; 48% in Al Jouf versus 32% in Dammam chose *family duties*.

Regarding any relationships, consider Figure 6, below:
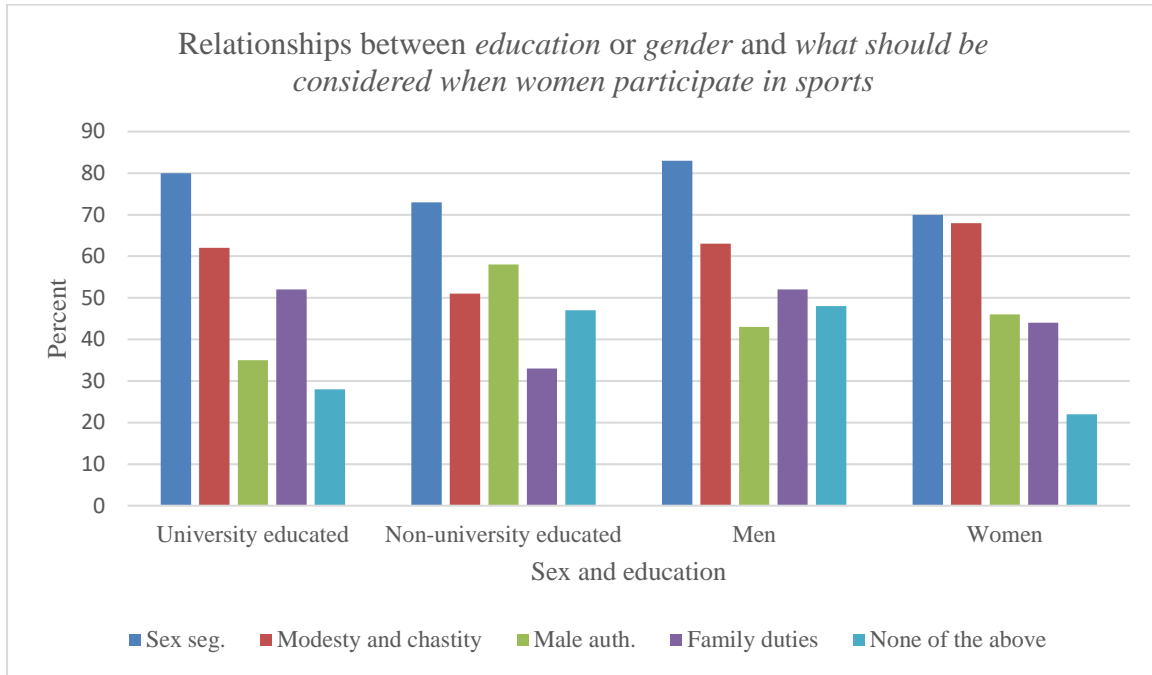
Figure 5.6: What should be considered when women participate in sport – education and gender relationships

The data presents a picture which does not support drawing strong inferences about any relationships. Both university and non-university educated participants held that the most important consideration was sex segregation and the proportional difference between them was modest: 9% more university educated than non-university educated participants. Similarly, there was a modest difference of 16% more university educated than non-university educated participants who chose *modesty and chastity*. In addition, a significant proportion more of university educated than non-university educated participants held that *family duties* should be considered: 37%.

If education level is a determinant of more liberal attitudes and having a more liberal attitude makes it less likely that one would prefer sex segregation or have concerns about modesty and chastity or family duties, then these results could be surprising. But the overall sample is small, the differences modest, apart from for family duties, and it is not clear that what counts as a liberal attitude in Saudi Arabia is easy to interpret: there may be some cultural assumptions which are so widely held that they cannot be deemed either 'liberal' or 'conservative' (I discuss this issue further in Chapter 6). Thus, there are not good grounds for drawing any strong conclusions here.

There was a more significant difference with regards to *male authority*: 40% more non-university educated than university educated participants held that such authority should be taken into consideration when women participate in sport. This is the kind of result that might be expected if the sort of causal relationship between level of education and degree of liberal attitudes that was identified in Chapter 3 is operating in the sample. Thus, although the sample is small, there is evidence of an explicable, even expected relationship between level of education and how important participants deemed male authority to be.

This also suggests a possible explanation for, on the one hand, the stronger relationship in the sample between being university educated and choosing *sex segregation*, *modesty and chastity*, and *family duties*, and on the other, the stronger relationship between being non-university educated and choosing *male authority*. One could argue that, relatively, male authority is the most explicitly patriarchal of all the options, and thus that this suggests that there may be an relationship between level of education and possessing more patriarchal views. Indeed, this is what one would typically expect.

Interestingly, this possibility is somewhat supported by the *gender* relationships. For both men and women sex segregation and modesty and chastity are of most significance. The relationship for *sex segregation* was 16% stronger for men than women, and for *modesty and chastity* 7% stronger for women than men. There were similarly modest differences in the relationships for *family duties*, 15% more women than men, and *male authority*, 7% more men than women. Thus, that there is no very significant difference between the genders with regards to *male authority*

suggests that education level appears to the be the most significant factor associated with the plausibly most explicitly patriarchal viewpoint.

5.5.4 Sub-theme (4): Where should women be allowed to participate in sport?

Further support for the above reflections can be found in the data related to the fourth sub-theme, which has particular relevance for my second research question: what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? In the interviews, from both Dammam and Al Jouf, some held that sport should only ever be practiced in private. Such examples, and contrasting responses, will now be detailed. Again, the responses from Dammam will be considered first, along with the survey results, before considering Al Jouf.

The only response in the interviews was to suggest that women should engage in sporting activity privately, where 'privately' was taken to mean any space which is either only occupied by members of the woman's immediate family or is a space which is sex segregated (more will be said about how 'privately' might be understood below). For example, one university educated woman stated that:

> I have a subscription in one private club for women and they observe privacy with separated places for women only. I am in favour of this way of doing things. (D8 University educated woman, June 2015).

In the surveys given to participants from Dammam, the results largely concurred with the interview responses, although a greater variety of views was revealed. To obtain this, respondents were asked 'in what locations should women be allowed to practice sport in Saudi Arabia?' and were then asked to tick all that apply from the following list of options:

1. Nowhere

2. Anywhere

3. Private home

4. Private gym

5. Private holiday accommodation

6. Schools

7. Universities

8. Sports stadiums

9. Public park

10. Private park

(There was also an 'Other – please specify' option, which no respondent opted for.)

Out of 250 respondents in Dammam, 21 chose 'nowhere', the remainder chose at least one of the options from 2-10. Interestingly, as can be seen in Table 5.6, only 21 respondents said that women should be prohibited from participating in sport. Hence, presumably 19 respondents would appear to think both that women participating in sport should not be prohibited but also that it should be practiced nowhere. At first glance, this is a peculiar result but might mean that respondents were distinguishing legality and morality: a person can consistently hold that x should not be illegal even though x is morally wrong (for example, there are instances of promise breaking which are wrong, but which, one might think, should not be subject to legal enforcement). Indeed, if the supposition is that some of the more conservative attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia are driven by explicitly paternalistic thinking, this might explain the result–if A feels paternalistic towards B, then A may think B should not do all sorts of things, but also feel that involving the law in stopping B doing those things might be inappropriate. To use a simple example for illustrative purposes: if a parent finds a child with recreational drugs, then they can feel that the child should not be using those drugs whilst also not involving, or thinking that they ought to involve, the authorities in the matter.

When producing Table 5.12, below, options 2, 8, and 9 were taken to indicate that the respondent held that women should be allowed to practice sport publicly, the remaining options were taken to indicate that the respondent held that women should be allowed to practice sport

184

privately, as the word 'private' was either an explicit label on the option, or, in the case of 'schools' and 'universities' can be taken to entail sex segregated sporting practice as all schools and universities in Saudi Arabia are sex segregated.

Those who held that women should not be allowed to practice sport anywhere were put to one side (n=21) and results collated for the remainder. Hence, under the groupings 'only private' and 'public' the survey results for this subtheme can be seen in Table 5.12:

City	Education & gender	Only Private	Public	Total
Dammam	University educated man	65	18	83
	University educated woman	44	19	63
	Non-university educated man	42	0	42
	Non-university educated woman	33	8	41
	Total	**184**	**45**	**229**

Table 5.12: Where should women be allowed to participate in sport? – Dammam

From the table above, we can see that, of those who felt that women should be allowed to practice sport somewhere, 78% of respondents who were university educated men from Dammam held that such practice should be in private. Whereas, only 22% held that women should be allowed to practice sport publicly. Hence, most university educated respondents from Dammam held that women should participate in sport only privately. Similarly, most of the university educated women, 70%, from Dammam held that women should participate in sport only privately, and 30% held that women should be allowed to participate in public.

As the table also shows, of those who felt that women should be allowed to practice sport somewhere, non-university educated men were in consensus that women should practice only in private. For non-university educated women, the results were somewhat, although not spectacularly, different, with 80% holding that women should practice sport only in private, and 20% holding that women should be able to do sport in public.

In comparison, the results for Al Jouf can be seen in Table 5.13:

City	Education & gender	Only Private	Public	Total
Al Jouf	University educated man	41	6	47
	University educated woman	28	6	34
	Non-university educated man	17	0	17
	Non-university educated woman	14	2	16
	Total	**100**	**14**	**114**

Table 5.13: Where should women be allowed to participate in sport? – Al Jouf

Out of 194 respondents in Al Jouf, 80 chose 'nowhere', the remainder chose at least one of the options from 2-10. Again, this might seem a peculiar result just as in the case of Dammam, above, but perhaps the explanation that I offered above involving paternalism and distinguishing legality and morality would suffice here, too.

Hence, of those who felt that women should be allowed to practice sport somewhere, 87% of respondents who were university educated men from Al Jouf held that such practice should be in private. Whereas, only 13% held that women should be allowed to practice sport publicly. Hence, the overwhelming majority of university educated respondents from Al Jouf held that women should participate in sport only privately. Similarly, most of the university educated women from Al Jouf, 82%, held that women should participate in sport only privately, and 18% held that women should be allowed to participate in public.

Among the non-university educated men in Al Jouf, there was a consensus (as there was in Dammam) that women should participate in sport only privately, and only 13% of non-university educated women from Al Jouf held the women should participate in sport publicly.

Overall, the results from Dammam and Al Jouf presented a similar picture, although attitudes in Al Jouf did seem to be somewhat more conservative than attitudes from Dammam. However, given the relatively modest sample sizes for some groups, e.g. *non-university educated women* in Al Jouf (n=14), a degree of caution in drawing too many conclusions would seem justified. Nevertheless, one consistency which appeared here and throughout the

data concerned the relationship between educational level and degree of liberal attitudes: those who were at least university-level educated were significantly more likely to adopt a liberal attitude about sporting participation in general, and on questions such as where women should be allowed to participate in sport in particular. And this was true in both Dammam and Al Jouf. Moreover, this is the sort of result we should expect given the literature that we considered in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3), in which a link between education level and degree of liberal attitudes appeared to be identified. With the results from Dammam and Al Jouf, it appears that non-university educated respondents are more likely to express illiberal than liberal attitudes about woman's sport, including where women should be allowed to practice it.

Regarding any relationships, consider Figure 7, below:
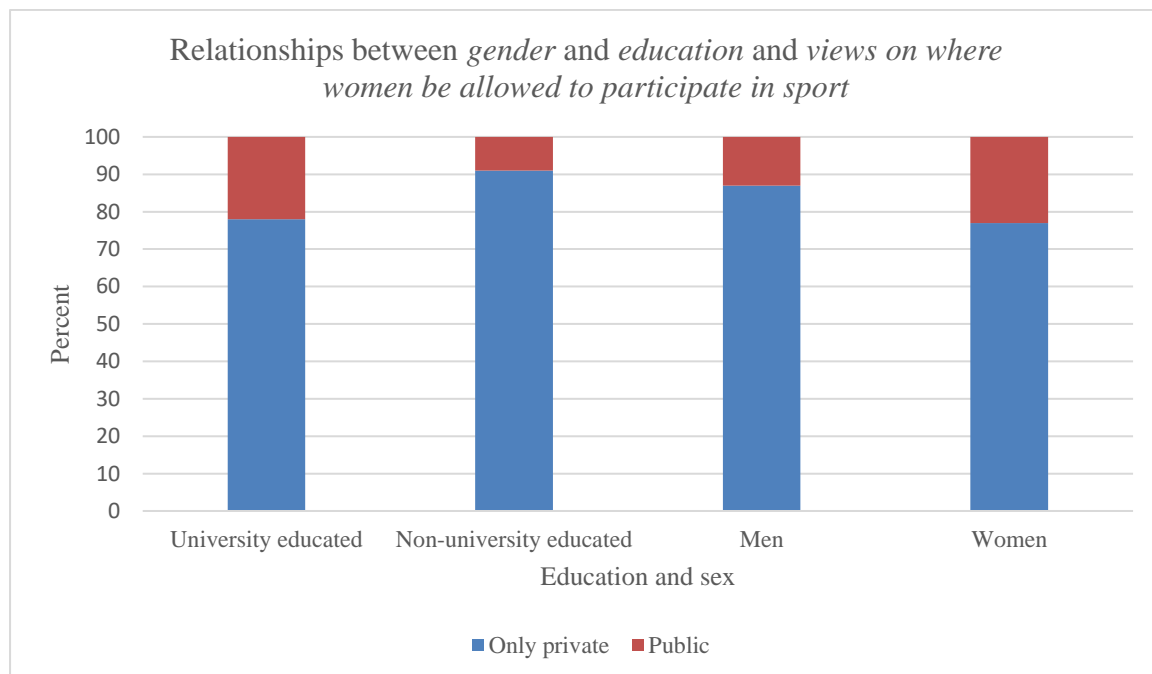
Figure 5.7: Where women should be allowed to participate in sport – Gender and education relationships

As can be seen, there does appear to be a stronger relationship between being university educated and being more likely to hold the view that women should be able to participate in sport publicly, although it is modest: 14%. Similarly, there is also a modest difference in the strength of the relationship between being a woman versus being a man and views on public participation: 11%. Nevertheless, the consistency of this result, which was also reflected in the

sub-samples for Dammam and Al Jouf does suggest that there may be grounds for concluding that in the overall sample the relevant relationships are not simply noise.

5.5.5 Sub-theme (5): What types of sport should women be allowed to participate in?

For the fifth sub-theme there was no relevant data on this sub-theme in the interviews, so the focus here will be entirely on the survey data. Again, the responses from Dammam will be considered first before considering Al Jouf.

For this sub-theme, respondents were asked 'In Saudi Arabia, which sports should women be allowed to participate in?' and were then asked to tick all that apply from the following list of options:

1. None

2. All

3. Running

4. Swimming

5. Volleyball

6. Basketball

7. Football

8. Archery

9. Shooting

10. Fencing

11. Equestrian

12. Table Tennis

(There was also an 'Other – please specify' option, which no respondent opted for.)

The sports on this list were chosen for two main reasons (I discuss the sport selection for this question in more detail above in Section 5.4.3). First, sports which are popular in Saudi Arabia. Second, sports which are explicitly discussed in Islamic teachings: swimming, equestrian, shooting, and archery.

In Dammam, out of 250 respondents, 21 chose 'none', 45 respondents chose 'all'. These numbers are the same as those who expressed the view that women should be prohibited from participating in sport (n=21), and those who held that women should be able to participate in sport publicly (n=45). The remainder chose at least one of the options from 3-11. In Table 5.14 below, the data for the university educated men who chose options 3-11 is presented:

City	Education & gender	Running	Swim.	Volleyball	Basketball	Football	Archery	Shooting	Fencing	Equest.	T. Tennis	Total
Dammam	University educated men	43 66%	41 63%	32 49%	34 52%	34 52%	45 69%	41 63%	33 50%	34 52%	43 66%	65 100%
Al Jouf	University educated men	22 47%	17 36%	16 34%	16 34%	16 34%	19 40%	16 34%	16 34%	16 34%	26 55%	47 100%

Table 5.14: Types of sport women should participate in – University educated men

As can be seen in the above table, there were no overwhelming differences with a relatively even spread. The low base rates (at most n=43) mean that caution in drawing conclusions here is advisable. Nevertheless, it does appear that most people who were prepared to tick one sport would also tick most others. Thus, there is evidence that in the sample 'not all' amounted to 'most' for many participants.

In addition, it seems worthwhile to reflect on the potentially gendered perceptions of these sports. Arguably, as fencing is a physical combat sport and physical combat is typically viewed as a masculine endeavour, this could explain the relatively low percentage of participants who chose it. However, volleyball, which is not typically considered a masculine sport, was chosen by even

fewer participants. I suspect that at least some of the variation among the different sporting types is simply noise in the data.

In Table 5.15 below, the data for the university educated women who chose options 3-11 is presented:

City	Education & gender	Running	Swim.	Volleyball	Basketball	Football	Archery	Shooting	Fencing	Equest.	T. Tennis	Total
Dammam	University educated women	39 92%	35 83%	31 74%	24 57%	23 54%	25 60%	27 64%	27 64%	24 57%	36 86%	42 100%
Al Jouf	University educated women	20 77%	17 65%	12 46%	12 46%	17 65%	16 62%	16 62%	15 58%	12 46%	20 77%	26 100%

Table 5.15: Types of sport women should participate in - University educated women.

As can be seen in the above table, again there were no overwhelming differences with a relatively even spread. Again, this appeared to be because most people who were prepared to tick one sport would also tick most others. There was perhaps limited evidence that sports which were more traditionally perceived to be masculine, such as fencing or football, were chosen by fewer participants. But, again, given the low base rates (no higher than n=39), this conclusion should be treated as largely speculative.

Putting aside possible concerns about the base rates, one possible explanation for the differences is the 'public/private' divide. Given that all those who chose 'some' rather than 'all' also chose 'private' rather than 'public', it may be that their choices for the type of sport were partly driven by concerns about what was more likely to be done privately. Running on a treadmill, for example, is typically easier to do privately than playing team sports.

Regarding any relationship, consider Figure 8, below:
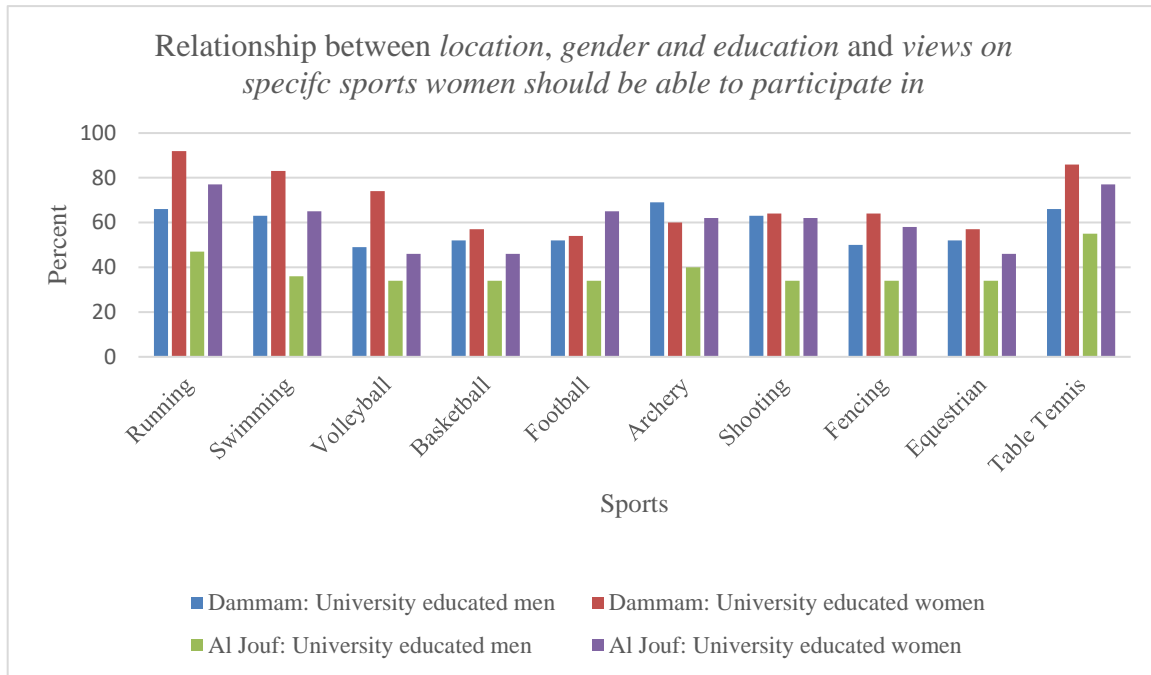
Figure 5.8: Views on types of sport – Gender and education relationship

Perhaps the best evidence for any relationship can be found in the contrast between university educated women from Dammam and University educated men from Al Jouf. In every category, university educated women from Dammam were more likely to say that women should be allowed to participate compared to university educated men from Al Jouf. On average, across all sport types considered, university educated women from Dammam were 40% more likely to say women should be able to participate in particular sports. And some positive difference held between university educated women from Dammam and all other demographic groups in almost all sport categories. This suggests that, among the university educated in both Dammam and Al Jouf who did not choose 'all' or 'none', there is a stronger relationship between being a women from Dammam than being a man or being from Al Jouf.

Indeed, although the base rates are very low, the data for those who chose 'none' and 'all' largely supports this. For example, 21 in total chose 'none' but only one of those was a university educated woman from Al Jouf.

5.5.6 Sub theme (6): Was the joint Olympic proposal with Bahrain appropriate?

In 2015, a prominent Saudi official suggested that Saudi Arabia should submit a bid to host the men's only Olympic Games. The proposal included the suggestion that Bahrain would host a corresponding Olympic Games for women. As we saw in Chapter 2, this proposal was dismissed by the International Olympics Committee (IOC) on gender rights grounds. The episode did help to reveal some of the complex attitudes towards women's involvement in sport amongst those interviewed and is relevant for my first and second research questions in particular: what are the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? What are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? How are ideas about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia changing?

In the interviews, respondents from Dammam regardless of their level of education felt that the proposal for a men-only Olympics was problematic because it was gender-discriminatory. For example, one university educated woman stated:

> I feel that the kingdom's proposal to host men only activities is inappropriate because it discriminates between women and men (D9 University educated woman, June 2015).

And those from the non-educated category held similar views

> In my opinion, it is a step that the Kingdom did not consider enough. It was too early to bid to host the Olympic Games because female sports were not allowed in Saudi Arabia in the first place. The rejection is abnormal because the state does not allow women to practice sport. The objectives of the Olympic Games, as far as I know, are that sport is the right for everyone, without excluding women (D11 Non-university educated man, June 2015).

However, some were more ambivalent. For example, one university educated woman stated that:

> As for the rejection of the Olympic Commission of the Saudi proposal to host male games only and describing it as discriminatory between men and women, I see that the decision does not differentiate between man and woman and does not take into account the

religious factors. The Saudi official should have considered the terms and conditions for hosting before making the proposal (D7 University educated woman, June 2015).

In contrast, the respondents from Al Jouf were more sceptical of the proposal and expressed views about how the proposal was un-Islamic or not suitable for Saudi Arabia more generally. For example, one non-university educated man stated:

> Thank God that the Olympic Committee declined the proposal of Saudi Arabia to host the Olympic Games which are in breach of the teachings of Islam and interfere in Saudi Arabia's exceptional status that should be respected because it represents the direction for Muslims. As for the committee's view that the proposal is discriminatory, it remains a viewpoint relevant to them and does not concern me (AJ9 Non-university educated man, May 2015).

These were the predominant sentiments expressed by respondents from the city of Al Jouf regardless of their level of education. It indicates that, to some extent, these respondents have been influenced by conservative interpretations of Islam as Islam was frequently referenced in their responses. These respondents felt that Saudi Arabia bears the traditional role of protecting the Islamic faith, a protective role seen to be incompatible, by some, even with the proposal to host a men-only Olympic Games alongside the woman's equivalent in Bahrain.

Finally, my Twitter analysis provided further data about the Olympic proposal (as well more general attitudes towards women's participation in sport). I will now consider this data.

5.6 Theme (i): Twitter data: The dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sports in Al Jouf and Dammam

A variety of responses were encountered from those tweeting about women's participation in sport in general, and the Olympic Games proposal in particular. One might think it likely that those tweeting about this subject on Twitter are younger Saudi's with a greater interest in and proficiency with technology. One might also think it likely that Saudi's using Twitter may well

have a more global outlook. Hence, one might expect to find more positive views about women's participation in sport, but as we will now see this was not entirely the case.

Yet, there were many tweets which expressed some form of support or other for women's participation in sport. For example, one Twitter user, 1421, expressed very positive views about women's participation in sport:

> Women should participate in the Olympiad; it is a big challenge. Having one of them win a medal would allow women a wide scope of participation in our sport. (Twitter user: 1421).

Another Twitter user, 8, went so far as to criticise what he saw as the influential religious minority who are advancing their own interests at the expense of women participating in sports. As he stated:

> Unfortunately, however one protests against women participation, nobody will hear from you, as the influential religious minority in the country that opposes the people's opinion work to let their own agenda pass (Twitter user: 18).

In contrast, a different Twitter user, 126, in response to the participation of Saudi women in the Olympic Games, tweeted:

> The evil door is open; may God protect us against it… and protect us and our daughters from every evil (Twitter user: 126).

Most women who tweeted expressed support for women participating in sport in general and the Olympics in particular. One Twitter user, 1313, stated that she thought that:

> The funny, sad issue is that we have no PE classes at schools and no official female sport, yet, all of a sudden, there came Saudi female participation in the Olympiad (Twitter user: 1313).

Along similar lines, a different Twitter user, 141, stated with some exasperation that she couldn't understand:

Why are women prevented from attending sport events! Why is sport prevented at girls' schools! Is sport now suffering from sex discrimination too!! (Twitter user: 141).

In total, out of 96 tweets, 61 expressed a view which was supportive of women's participation in sport, and 28 were clearly not supportive. The remainder were more ambiguous or ambivalent. Hence, 64% of the tweet sample was supportive of women's participation in sport to at least some significant degree, and 29% were not supportive. If we compare these figures to the results for sub-theme (1), concerning whether women should be allowed to participate in sport at all in Saudi Arabia, perhaps surprisingly there were more hostile views, proportionally, found on Twitter than in the survey samples for Dammam and Al Jouf. This suggests that perhaps there is not a very significant generation gap when it comes to views on women's sport–that even if Twitter users tend to be younger, their views can still be relatively conservative. Alternatively, it could be explained by a relative lack of a generation gap in Twitter usage in Saudi Arabia.

With regards to my research questions, this is clearly relevant for first, second, and fourth research questions: What are the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Second, what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Fourth, how are the ideas about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia changing?

5.7 Theme (i): Analysis

To conclude this theme, there are two key aspects to focus on. First, the overall picture that emerges from the theme (i) data. Second, how my theoretical analysis can make sense of that data. I shall combine my discussion of these two aspects in what follows.

In both the interview and survey data, there was a large majority who supported women being allowed to participate in sport. Indeed, among the interviewees, only Al Jouf had any respondents who held that women should not be able to participate in sport, and even then, this was a small minority. Among the questionnaire participants, Al Jouf also has the largest proportion who did

not hold gender-inclusive views on women's participation in sport, although still a minority: 29% (n=47). Indeed, geographic differences were larger than all other differences that were measured. In Dammam, only 10% of participants held that women should be prohibited. In contrast, gender and education differences were less significant: only 7% more university than non-university educated and 2% more women than men held that women should be allowed to participate in sport.

Thus, this invites reflections on why the geographic differences are more significant than the gender or education differences. One explanation is that the relative urbanity of Dammam versus the relative rurality of Al Jouf could account for the difference. However, given the small sample sizes, the difficulties inherent in both defining 'urbanity' and 'rurality', and the challenges in even attempting to test this (an attempt I did not make), this must be considered merely a potential explanation. Nevertheless, when considered in the light of my Butler-Foucault model of power, further illumination might be provided here.

Consider: if the practice of gender-exclusivity in sport is taken to be an oppressive practice, then this raises questions about the source for this oppressiveness. One very notable feature of oppression that can be observed in recent history is the apparent role of increasing modernity in, at least to some extent, reducing oppressiveness (especially for women in many parts of the world). Of course, 'modernity' is hard to define precisely, but common definitions include the following aspects (see Calhoun 2002). The political, economic, and cultural features that characterize industrialized, 'developed' societies–most traditionally in the western world, but also, increasingly, globally. These features often involve sophisticated political bureaucracies which are technocratic or democratic in nature, highly productive (at least partially) market-based economies, and self-confident, literate cultures, which prioritise science and technology alongside ideas of pursuing societal growth and progress. In addition, the European enlightenment, typically understood as a period of significant and relatively sudden expansion in human knowledge, is often considered to be the proximate point of genesis for modernity in this sense.

Interestingly, Foucault discusses modernity and attempts to define it. In Foucault's view modernity is a matter of taking a certain perspective on the world. As he states:

> I wonder whether we may not envisage modernity rather as an attitude than as a period of history. And by 'attitude', I mean a mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people; in the end, a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task. A bit, no doubt, like what the Greeks called an ethos… Modernity is often characterized in terms of consciousness of the discontinuity of time: a break with tradition, a feeling of novelty, of vertigo in the face of the passing moment. And this is indeed what Baudelaire seems to be saying when he defines modernity as 'the ephemeral, the fleeting, the contingent' (1984: 38).

Here, Foucault takes a certain kind of self-consciousness as being the characteristic feature of modernity–a self-consciousness as to what it means to be modern. Modernity begins, for Foucault, when people begin to debate whether they are modern and what, in tandem, modernity means. This account fits with both aspects of standard 'historical period' views identified above: that modernity begins with the enlightenment, and that modernity involves political, economic, and cultural features that characterize industrialized societies. Because, first, the enlightenment can be understood as the beginning of certain kinds of self-conscious thought, and, second, the political, economic, and cultural features that characterize industrialized societies can be understood as both partly stemming from those kinds of self-conscious thought, and as providing the main examples on which those self-conscious thoughts focus. In other words, a Foucauldian account of modernity holds that it begins when large-scale reflection on the 'are we modern?' question begins and then develops when possible answers to that question, such as 'democracy and technocracy are modern', become the subject of self-conscious debate as to why they are taken to be suitable answers. This, I think, is the Foucauldian understanding of modernity as an 'attitude', and it provides a philosophical framework within which to understand standard 'historical period' accounts of modernity.

Thus, if modernity is an attitude in something like this sense, then it could support my potential explanation of the result whereby geographic differences are of greater significance in the data than gender or education differences. If more urban versus rural outlooks are grounded in different attitudes towards perceived modernity–with more urban attitudes involving a more self-consciously positive attitude, and conversely for rural attitudes–then this could further account for the result.

Another interesting connection here concerns the role of oppression. As I discussed above, the source of the oppressive attitudes that the survey and interview data highlighted, most particularly in Al Jouf, invites analysis. Given the foregoing reflections on modernity, it might be tempting to say that the source is a lack of modernity. But matters, in my view, are more complex than this. Again, Foucault has put forward relevant considerations here; note, for instance, when he discusses:

> what might be called 'the paradox of the relations of capacity and power'. We know that the great promise or the great hope of the eighteenth century, or a part of the eighteenth century, lay in the simultaneous and proportional growth of individuals with respect to one another. And, moreover, we can see that throughout the entire history of Western societies… the acquisition of capabilities and the struggle for freedom have constituted permanent elements. Now the relations between the growth of capabilities and the growth of autonomy are not as simple as the eighteenth century may have believed. And we have been able to see what forms of power relation were conveyed by various technologies… disciplines, both collective and individual, procedures of normalization exercised in the name of the power of the state, [and] demands of society or of population zones… What is at stake, then, is this: How can the growth of capabilities be disconnected from the intensification of power relations? (1984: 41).

What Foucault appears to be suggesting here is that a key source for the oppressive practices in the modern world can be found in a dilemma at the heart of modernity itself: grow the power of individuals and the groups they constitute or shrink the ability of individuals and groups to have the power to oppress one another. This, perhaps, offers another candidate for the source of the

198

oppressiveness of the gender-exclusive views detected in the data: as 'modernity' in Foucault's attitudinal sense increases then the possibility for such oppression also expands.

There is a significant caveat here, however. As I mentioned above, one very notable feature of oppression that can be observed in recent history is the apparent role of increasing modernity in, at least to some extent, reducing oppressiveness. Thus, if there is the dilemma that Foucault identifies, then how does this reduction occur–how is the dilemma resolved? One possible answer to this question is that the resolution occurs via an eventual balancing of the oppressive capacities (that is: the power) of the relevant groups. Indeed, one might characterise the feminist project partly in terms of the goal of achieving a better balancing of the power balance between the genders.

And, in achieving this balancing, considerations of where the power source for these oppressive practices lie are key. As I discussed above, again a Foucauldian analysis can assist here: we can answer that the source is: *everywhere*. In the sense that: the oppressive practice thrives in virtue of the widespread beliefs, among men and women, that there should be such societal structures as sex segregation–beliefs which seem to be, in the survey and interview data, held largely regardless of gender, education, or urbanity (noting the comments I made above about the urban/rural differences).

Turning to encouragement, there is also a majority in support of women being encouraged to participate in sport, but a somewhat less significant majority than in the case of the 'allow/prohibit' question. It must also be noted that comparing the responses for the two questions is not straightforward due to the differences in structure. For the 'allow/prohibit' question the response options were binary, for the 'encourage' question, the Likert scale was used. Nevertheless, less participants were prepared to say that women should be encouraged versus allowed, and this was true across all groups.

There are various possible explanations for why this is the case. But one is that some participants are more willing to tolerate women's participation in sport without feeling able to fully endorse it to the point of feeling that it should be encouraged. Another possible explanatyion is that some respondents who were in favour of allowing but not encouraging could be of the view that

women's participation in sport is suberogatory rather than forbidden. Alternatively, it could be that respondents who were in favour of allowing but not encouraging were judging the possible consequences of a campaign of encouragement: making the assessment that such a campaign might produce resistance such that it would be better if matters proceeded 'more quietly'. I believe resolving which, if any, of these explanations is correct (they may each be true for at least some participants), would be an interesting area for further research.

I will discuss these results further in the conclusion chapter, but briefly the above results may be consistent with two claims I have been advancing. First, that there is no straightforward connection between the persistence of non-inclusive attitudes and practices towards women's participation in sport and gender: as Foucault highlights, power is distributed. Second, that changing this state of affairs is best led by those who exist within it: if Saudi women have a complicated relationship with their own status and opportunities in Saudi society, then, culturally 'external' proscriptions for action and change may prove to be problematic. Indeed, this has particular relevance for my fourth research question: how are the ideas about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia changing?

Regarding sub-theme (3), it would appear that among university educated men from both cities, sex segregation was considered to be of most importance when women are participating in sport. Given the present state of Saudi society, this is perhaps unsurprising. The prospects for sex de-segregation would currently therefore seem to be remote. Given the extent to which sex segregation is a standard method for ensuring successful policing of norms of chastity, it may be the case that part of the reason for the preference for sex segregation would also be because of beliefs about how best to maintain the virtues of modesty and chastity. This would certainly make sense given the standard messages contained in a wide range of Islamic teachings and in Saudi culture more generally, as was discussed in Chapter 3. I discuss this issue further in Chapter 6 where I suggest that there may be certain beliefs which are so widespread and deeply held that they amount to 'cultural axioms'–assumptions which are accepted by default by members of a culture to a large extent irrespective of other demographic differences. In the current case, this supposition is supported by fact that both women and non-university educated

participants agreed to a largely similar degree with men and university educated participants that sex segregation and modesty and chastity should be considered.

Another perhaps surprising result was how low *male authority* was relative to the other options for both university and non-university educated men. If Saudi society is as explicitly patriarchal as it is often seen to be, then one might expect *male authority* to be more widely chosen. This would appear to invite two (not necessarily mutually exclusive) alternative explanations. First, it could be that respondents are not conscious of concerns about male authority driving their thinking or are not prepared to consciously admit as such. Second, that a more nuanced analysis of the power relations at work in Saudi society might be required, rather than simply describing the society as 'patriarchal' and taking that to be a sufficient explanation.

Nevertheless, as was also discussed above, there does seem to be a noticeable relationship between non-university educated participants and *male authority*. Taken at face value, this could suggest that patriarchal beliefs are more widespread, or influential, among the non-university educated demographic.

And yet, overall *male authority* was still surprisingly low relative to the other options. But if we apply the theoretical framework which was developed in Chapter 4, then this could be explicable. Consider again the Foucauldian picture of how power is distributed in society. As Foucault states:

> power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere... power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society (1978: 93)

As we saw in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.5), this understanding of power suggested a much more 'distributed' than 'top-down' analysis of how power works in general, such that power is not simply meted out by powerful figures, or institutions, but rather flows through society as blood does through a body, and exists in the network of social interactions in which all members of society engage. And, as we also saw in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.5), this view has prominent

adherents in feminist theory, most famously, perhaps, in Butler, who applied Foucault's analysis of power to gender; as she states:

> Foucault points out that juridical systems of power produce the subjects they subsequently come to represent. Juridical notions of power appear to regulate political life in purely negative terms… But the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures (1990: 2).

As I stated in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.5), it is my intention to highlight how the 'productive' and subjectifying nature of the limiting of participating of women in sport in Saudi Arabia arises out of the distributed power relations across society. To borrow Foucault's analogy: just as micro-physics might be taken to show how ordinary objects are ultimately nothing over and above sub-atomic particles and the relations between those particles, societal, gendered power relations can also be given a kind of 'micro-physical' analysis in so far as they can be shown to be nothing over and above the relevant individuals, their beliefs, and the relations they stand in to one another.

And, in the data for this subtheme, we can begin to apply this theoretical framework. Note, for instance, the popularity among men and women, whether university educated or not, whether rural or urban, that sex segregation was the most important issue to consider in relation to women's participation in sport. In contrast *none of the above*, which might be taken to include those with the most liberal attitudes about the ways in which women might participate in sport, was always either the least, or second least popular option (among university educated respondents, at least). Thus, if the practice of sex segregation in sport is taken to be an oppressive practice, and the question arises of where the 'power source' for this oppressive practice resides, then, with Foucault's analysis in hand, we can answer: *everywhere*. In the sense that: the oppressive practice thrives in virtue of the widespread beliefs, among men and women, that there should be sex segregation–beliefs which seem to be, in the survey sample at least, held largely regardless of gender, education, or urbanity.

Similarly, for sub-theme (4) the results may be explicable in terms of the Butlerian and Foucauldian analysis of power according to which power is distributed and 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down' (a key part of my answer to my second research question: what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia?). Despite the above the noted relationship differences between gender and education level, the clearest signal in the data appeared to be the degree of agreement among the demographic groups regarding where women should practice sport: privately. If, as I believe is likely, this belief is held by a similar majority of the Saudi population as a whole, then this would explain the persistence of the practice. Perhaps, indeed, the belief that women should practice sport privately–most plausibly for reasons to do with sex segregation and perceived modesty and chastity–is among the cultural axioms, or closely derived from such, which underwrite the current state of affairs for women's sport in the Kingdom.

For sub-theme (5), again there appears to be some evidence, of modest force, for the view that gender and education may be associated with relatively more liberal views on women's participation in sport. If so, then there are two features of this that invite explanation. First, why is the relationship apparently quite modest, rather than strong? Second, why the apparently relatively widespread agreement that women should be able to participate in most but not all sport? The issues connect in important ways to at least my first and second research questions.

I will address these questions at greater length in Chapter 6, but it will be worthwhile to put forward some brief reflections here. In particular, the apparently widespread nature of the 'most but not all' view would support the broadly 'bottom up' Foucauldian analysis of social power that has been employed in much of this thesis. That the 'most but not all' view is so widespread is further evidence of the deeply embedded nature of the psychology which, in my view, underwrites the state of affairs for women's sport in the Kingdom. This could also account for the modesty of relationship between gender and education and liberal views on women's sport. The instructive experiences of gender–that unique epistemic standpoint, or situated knowledge in something like Haraway's sense (1988)–has effects which are difficult to predict cross-culturally. One might expect that being a woman would be more likely to give one experiences that influence one to have more liberal views about women's sport. And this

might be so, up to a point, but it may also be that being a woman in Saudi Arabia can also give one experiences which may influence one to have fewer liberal views about women's sport. If so, then this could explain the mixed, even somewhat 'muted', relationship between being a woman and views on sport that have been revealed in the sample in this and other sub-themes.

For sub-theme (6), as I discussed above, 64% of the tweet sample was supportive of women's participation in sport to at least some significant degree, and 29% were not supportive. Compared to the results for sub-theme (1), concerning whether Saudi women should be allowed to participate in sport, perhaps surprisingly there were more hostile views, proportionally, found on Twitter than in the survey samples for Dammam and Al Jouf. This could be evidence that perhaps there is not a very significant generation gap when it comes to views on women's sport–that even if Twitter users tend to be younger, their views can still be relatively conservative. Alternatively, it could be explained by a relative lack of a generation gap in Twitter usage in Saudi Arabia.

With regards to my research questions, this is clearly relevant for first, second, and fourth research questions: What are the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Second, what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Fourth, how are the ideas about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia changing?

5.8 Theme (ii) interview, survey, and Twitter data: The key social, cultural and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia

The second theme was: the key social, cultural and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia (which is related to my second research question). This Section will present the data relevant to this theme drawn from the surveys, interview, and social media activity, comparing Dammam with Al Jouf. The sub-themes will be used to structure the presentation of the data.

Examining the data revealed six subthemes. They are:

1. The community is too culturally conservative
2. There are too few facilities were women can participate
3. There are religious reasons supporting limits on women's sport
4. There is a lack of government support
5. General perceptions of women's rights in Saudi Arabia
6. Barriers preventing women's participation in sport

Each of these sub-themes, one of which is also relevant for my third research question (how do different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia?) will now be examined in turn.

5.8.1 Sub-theme (1): The community is too conservative

Saudi Society can be viewed as conservative, and if this perception is correct then that conservativeness would severely limit the ability of women to participate in sports. For example, under the system of male guardianship, Saudi women of all ages need their male guardian's consent (often written) to receive certain kinds of health care, to work, to study, to marry, or to travel. Male guardians can be fathers, husbands, brothers, or even minor sons. In 2009 the Saudi government accepted a recommendation by the United Nations Human Rights Council to abolish the system but has so far failed to do so. Saudi Arabia was also, until recently, the only country in the world to ban women from driving.

In the interviews, the responses from participants, regardless of their level of education, age, gender or city of origin indicated that they felt that there were very few opportunities and chances for women when it comes to sports. For example, one university educated man from Dammam stated that:

> The current situation regarding female sports is that female participation is very poor and there are no chances for women. If we look at conservative cities, we don't find interest in the female sport neither at schools nor elsewhere because the community is so conservative (D4 University educated man, June 2015).

This invites questions about what the foundation of the conservativeness is. Some of the Twitter data spoke to this issue, citing religion as one of the reasons why women should not participate in sports. Yet, the sentiments expressed on Twitter were not bound to any religious teachings but were deeply rooted in the customs of the Saudi society. Many of them felt that the Saudi kingdom should not adopt foreign cultures but stick to their own. For example, one Twitter user, 89, stated that:

> We came to learn that we rejected many things which are not prohibited neither by religion or norms but because they were of our customs (Twitter user 89).

Another Twitter user, 1315, highlighted the cultural dimension of the restrictions on women's sport, calling it 'taboo':

> For men, sport is seen as an expansion in the body size. For women, sport is a taboo (Twitter user 1315).

A different Twitter user, 123, stated that that Saudi culture was 'exceptional':

> It is the exceptional culture of the Saudi society and the homeland of the two holy shrines. We want football but we do not want to see unveiled girls. Is it necessary to display the girls? Football is a male sport and nothing else (Twitter user 123).

Another Twitter user, 819, also framed the issue in cultural terms:

> She can exercise walking in her neighbourhood or buy a gym machine and practice sport at her home. As for sport clubs, there is no urgent cultural need for them (Twitter user 819).

Finally, another Twitter user, 112, expressed scepticism about the geo-political value of women participating in sport in the international arena:

> Seven medals at the Asian championship do not befit the status of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Our participation is considered complete without the participation of woman as it the case with the rest of the Muslim countries (Twitter user: 112).

As I discuss further below in the theme (ii) summary, this data does appear to invite questions

about what the ultimate source of the conservatism is: e.g. religion or broader cultural tenets which just happen to find religious expression in certain contexts. This, I suggest, is a difficult issue to resolve, but may prove to be a fruitful avenue for further research. I turn now towards sub-theme (3).

5.8.2 Sub-theme (2): There are too few sport facilities where women can participate

In 2011 the Saudi government announced plans to introduce physical education for girls in state schools, but this has yet to be fully implemented. Prior to these plans being announced, there was a series of government-enforced closures of women's gyms in 2009 and 2010, on the grounds that they were unlicensed. This hindered some limited progress that Saudi women had been making up till that point in establishing and frequenting gyms and fitness centres, sometimes set up in private homes. Since the closure of the gyms, the government has refused to issue commercial licenses that would allow them to reopen.

Participants of this survey did not hesitate to express their concerns that there were very few or no sport facilities that admit women apart from a handful that remain scattered in the larger cities, private schools and universities. For example, one non-university educated man interviewed in Dammam stated:

> It is not appropriate. I feel so because of the small number of clubs and because the government did not improve female sports (D12 Non-university educated man, June 2015).

The limited availability of sports facilities for women was also noted by interviewees in Al Jouf. For example, one university educated man commented on the relatively limited availability of sporting facilities for women:

> Female sport is not officially available except at some clubs in big cities and universities and this limits participation (AJ6 University educated man, May 2015).

This sentiment was echoed by women too. For example, one university educated woman stated:

> Female sport is unofficial in Saudi Arabia. Because female sport is unavailable except at private schools and universities. There are no places where we can go and participate (AJ3 University educated woman, May 2015).

As I discuss further below in the theme (ii) analysis, and in Chapter 6, this data does seem to highlight that lack of facilities is an important factor. I turn now towards sub-theme (3).

5.8.3 Sub-theme (3): There are religious reasons supporting limits on women's sport

For anyone to self-identify as a religious person seems likely to entail that their religious beliefs have a significant influence on their general outlook on the world. Hence, for many Muslim women in Saudi Arabia, it seems likely that religious beliefs have just that kind of influence. This has relevance for my second, third, and fourth research questions: what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? How do different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia? How are ideas about women's participation in Saudi Arabia changing?

As we have seen in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4), Islam generally promotes fitness and good health and can be interpreted as encouraging both women and men to engage in sports. Nonetheless, as we will now see, some interviewees felt that there are religious grounds for restricting women's sport. One issue that invites reflection is whether religious grounds are always explicit, or whether they are sometimes implicit and underpin other kinds of explicitly non-religious reasoning which concludes that women's sport should be limited in some way. For example, the social environment, whether in the urban cities or rural cities, was raised by a number of interview participants as not being conducive for women to get involved in sports. Some of the respondents commented that cultural and religious beliefs make the situation even worse, by demanding that women should not participate in sports. As one non-university educated man from Al Jouf stated:

> Female sport is not recognized officially in Saudi Arabia and is not available. I see that the female sports in Saudi Arabia are not suitable for it violates the teachings of Islam and that does not fit the culture of Saudi society (AJ9 Non-university educated man, May

2015).

Here, we seem to see religious and non-religious grounds for limiting women's sport being intertwined in the interviewees response. And if these types of reasons can be explicitly tied together in this way, then it may be that this can happen implicitly also–either consciously or unconsciously from the relevant individual's own perspective.

Some voiced opposition to the limits placed on women's sport by those arguing from religious grounds. For example, a university educated woman from Dammam stated that:

> I am not happy with the situation of female sports in Saudi Arabia. The reason why I feel so is because the unavailability of the appropriate general climate to exercise female sport. Culture and misinterpretations of Islam have limited women on what they can do (D9 University educated woman, June 2015).

Analysis of Twitter data also revealed that religion appeared to be a significant barrier to women's participation in sports. Though, as we have seen, there are those who felt that it is a misinterpretation of Islam, a substantial amount of those who were against women's sport tried to present reasons based on some interpretation of Islam. For example, one Twitter user, 131, stated that:

> If the news about the female clubs were true, then this is forbidden and it will drag our country into more corruption. Therefore, oh you the president of the General Presidency of Youth welfare (GPYW) fear Allah! (Twitter user 131).

In a similar vein, another Twitter user, 112, stated that:

> Allah the Almighty says: 'And stay in your houses, and do not display yourselves like that of the times of ignorance…' should our girls understand what is beyond the female sport, they will say #our girls are pioneers and not players (Twitter user 112).

Another Twitter user, 41, expressed this unequivocal view:

By Allah, the truth is quite clear. Mind, logic and the (sound) innate nature indicate that female sport is complimentary to the calls for the mixing of chaste women with men and going out of the house (Twitter user 41).

And another Twitter user, 21, reported that:

Some Saudi clerics have campaigned for women's gyms to be shut down; a preacher declared that sport could cause women to lose their virginity (Twitter user 21).

Finally, Twitter user 99, stated that:

Introducing PE for girls at schools is embarrassing and foolish in my country when sport is considered a religious and ideological issue that is being debated as to whether it is permissible or forbidden (Twitter user 99).

Thus, in general, one theme which seems to run through these expressed views is an apparent concern with the relationship between womens' supposed sexual virtue and sport, with religious beliefs about what is required for women to remain sexually virtuous seemingly prominent. This is potentially interesting, and I discuss this further in the Theme (ii) analysis below. I turn now towards sub-theme (4).

5.8.4 Sub-theme (4): There is a lack of government support

With regards to women's sport, the Saudi Government's official statements have oscillated between outright rejection and vague promises of liberalization and expanding the available opportunities for girls and women to participate in sports. As we will see, this has led to dissatisfaction from many participants in this study.

For example, although the government has given a green light to health clubs, participants felt that they do not offer a wide variety of sporting activities compared to those available for men. To make the matters worse, these health clubs are always attached to hospitals, inaccessible to many and too expensive for common citizens.

Most of the participants were in full agreement that the government of the Saudi kingdom was

not doing enough to support women's sport. For example, as one university educated woman from Al Jouf stated:

> The policy of the Saudi government is not appropriate. I would like to see female clubs available all over the kingdom (AJ4 University educated woman, May 2015).

A key point which arises out of this sub-theme is that there are important questions to ask here about what drives the government's stance, which I consider below in the theme (ii) analysis, offering some possible explanations for this which may prove to be relevant for the Islamic feminist movement. I turn now towards sub-theme (5).

5.8.5 Sub-theme (5): General perceptions of women's rights in Saudi Arabia

One pattern which emerged from the interviews involved the variety of perceptions among participants concerning the rights of Saudi women. Amongst those interviewed some individuals supported the idea that women's rights should be extended, whilst others rejected this. What was also evident is that though some respondents supported active participation in sports, it did not necessarily entail that they were in support of extending women's rights in other spheres of social and cultural life such as allowing women to drive or vote in elections.

As expected, support for extending women rights was strongly felt among university educated respondents from the relatively more cosmopolitan city of Dammam. A university educated man from the city of Dammam expressed support and felt that if women rights were extended then society would benefit greatly. He also felt that women play a very important role in the Saudi society and for this reason; they should not be denied rights. As he stated:

> Campaigning for women to drive, vote and participate in sports is a legitimate right for women and a step in the right direction and will contribute to the success of the community and raise awareness of society in the importance of sport whenever there is support from official bodies and when society is educated in the importance of sport. It is also due to the importance of women in the Saudi society and because sport is her right and society must recognize and apply it (D3 University educated man, June 2015).

And university educated women tended to agree. For example, one participant stated that:

> The activist movements which campaign to allow women to drive, vote and exercise sports represent a good step. I support this in order to pay the attention of society to women issues in the Saudi society and to stir the still water in such a way to get their rights. I see that these movements will succeed if they are organized properly (D7 University educated woman, June 2015).

In contrast, opposition for extending women rights was more strongly felt in the rural city of Al Jouf. Nonetheless, one university educated man from the urban city of Dammam was also against it. He was the only respondent from the city of Dammam to oppose the extension of women rights. As he stated:

> I do not support these movements to get women's rights (D5 University educated man, June 2015).

Opposition was more strongly felt in the rural city of Al Jouf. For example, one non-university educated woman stated that:

> As for the movements which call for women to be allowed to drive and vote, I strongly disagree due to their contradiction to the state rules and regulations. They will never succeed (AJ4 Non-university educated woman, May 2015).

Finally, one university educated man saw a conflict between Islam and the movements for women's rights in Saudi Arabia. As he stated:

> I see that the movements which call for the right of women in driving and voting are movements which do not care about the religious aspect of the matter. Had they introduced their project in such a way which takes the Islamic teachings into consideration, it would have been much more acceptable. But such movements call for the liberation of women from the teachings of Islam as they claim. That is why they fail. I hope they will not succeed. Should a movement call for allowing women to drive, I would demand that it should fulfil the Islamic requirements and focus on creating awareness (AJ1 University educated man, May 2015).

What these interview responses present is a complex picture, therefore. On the one hand, there does seem to be a relationship between being situated in the relatively more cosmopolitan city of Dammam and having more liberal views generally about women's rights and emancipation. On the other hand, it does appear that not all of those in favour of women's participation in sport see it explicitly as an issue of women's rights or emancipation–preferring instead to express disapproval of some of the key goals of that movement in Saudi Arabia. As I will discuss below in the analysis for this theme and my final chapter this is important for Islamic feminists to consider. I turn now towards sub-theme (6).

5.8.6 Sub-theme (6): Barriers preventing women's participation in sport

This section of the analysis concerns barriers that prevent women from participating in sports. As we will see, in the interviews government inaction was most often cited as the barrier to women's participation in sport, whereas in the survey data tradition features particularly prominently, whereas, perhaps surprisingly, Islamic teaching was not very often cited by participants (in either the interview or survey data).

For example, most participants from Al Jouf felt that tradition was preventing women from participating in sport. Indeed, one university educated man suggested that it was clearly the government's responsibility to change the situation; as he stated:

> I cannot see that the Saudi government's policy supports female sports adequately, and I wish the Saudi government would pay much more attention to female sports by educating society, opening female clubs and providing an educational curriculum in schools in order to give women their rights to exercise sport as this has health and social benefits for women themselves and for their families (D5 University educated man, June 2015).

Along similar lines, one university educated woman suggested that the government of Saudi Arabia was not doing enough to support women's sport. She felt that if the government provided women-only sports clubs, it would improve the situation:

The Saudi government does not support female sport as it should do. The changes that I would like to see include the government support for female sport by providing female only sport clubs. I suggest these changes in order to give the women the appropriate place in female sport and increase their participation (D9 University educated woman, June 2015).

The lack of government support was also echoed by a non-university educated man from Dammam, who asserted:

I see that the policy of the Saudi government is conservative but this perception must be changed, because the social consciousness has developed and there must be some changes that do not contradict the teachings of Islam and which are in line with the customs and traditions of Saudi society, with the emphasis on segregation between the two sexes (D10 University non-educated man, June 2015)

Turning now to the survey data, participants were given options listed in the table below and asked to 'tick all that apply'. The results were as follows:

City	Education & gender	Islamic teachings	Tradition	Male authority	Gov. policy	Lack of facilities	Lack of money	Attitudes towards women
Dammam	University educated man	12	56	29	27	26	14	20
	University educated woman	9	34	32	19	21	6	25
	Non-university educated man	10	27	15	12	11	3	12
	Non-university educated woman	11	29	24	13	20	7	22
	Total:	**42**	**146**	**100**	**71**	**78**	**30**	**79**

Table 5.16: Barriers preventing women's participation in sport – Dammam

Tradition was the most mentioned barrier among university educated men from Dammam with 64% of those participants identifying it as the major barrier. Male authority came second with

33% of participants mentioning it, government policies came third, and lack of facilities was fourth with 30%. University educated men from Dammam identified Islamic teachings the least often (after lack of money) as a barrier preventing women from participating in sports.

Among university educated women from Dammam, tradition was also identified most often by respondents, with 55% choosing it. Male authority was chosen next most frequently with 52% of participants identifying it. Lack of facilities was chosen by 34%, and Islamic teaching was chosen by only 15%.

Among non-university educated respondents, the results were similar. Tradition was identified most frequently by respondents (84% for men, 43% for women), followed by male authority (47% for men, 35% for women). Apart from a lack of money, Islamic teaching was again the least frequently chosen option by both men (31% for men, 16% for women).

Hence, in general, participants from Dammam appear to most frequently consider tradition and male authority as a barrier in the way of women's participation in sports, whereas Islamic teaching and lack of money are the least frequently chosen barriers.

In Al Jouf, similar results were found, as shown in Table 5.17 below:

City	Education & gender	Islamic teachings	Tradition	Male authority	Gov. policy	Lack of facilities	Lack of money	Attitudes towards women
Al Jouf	University educated man	8	51	24	20	26	9	19
	University educated woman	3	38	24	20	17	5	27
	Non-university educated man	2	19	1	9	2	3	13
	Non-university educated woman	3	15	10	5	8	5	14
	Total:	**16**	**123**	**59**	**54**	**53**	**22**	**73**

Table 5.17: Barriers preventing women's participation in sport – Al Jouf

Again, university educated males most frequently identified tradition as the major hindrance to women participating in sports: 69%. This was followed by lack of facilities, 35%, and male authority, 32%, while Islamic teaching, 11%, was the least frequently chosen option. University educated women also identified tradition as the biggest obstacle, 88%, and also chose Islamic teaching as a barrier least frequently, 7%. Among non-university educated respondents, the broader results were not dissimilar with tradition being most frequently opted for, and Islamic teaching least frequently.

Regarding any relationships, consider Figure 9:
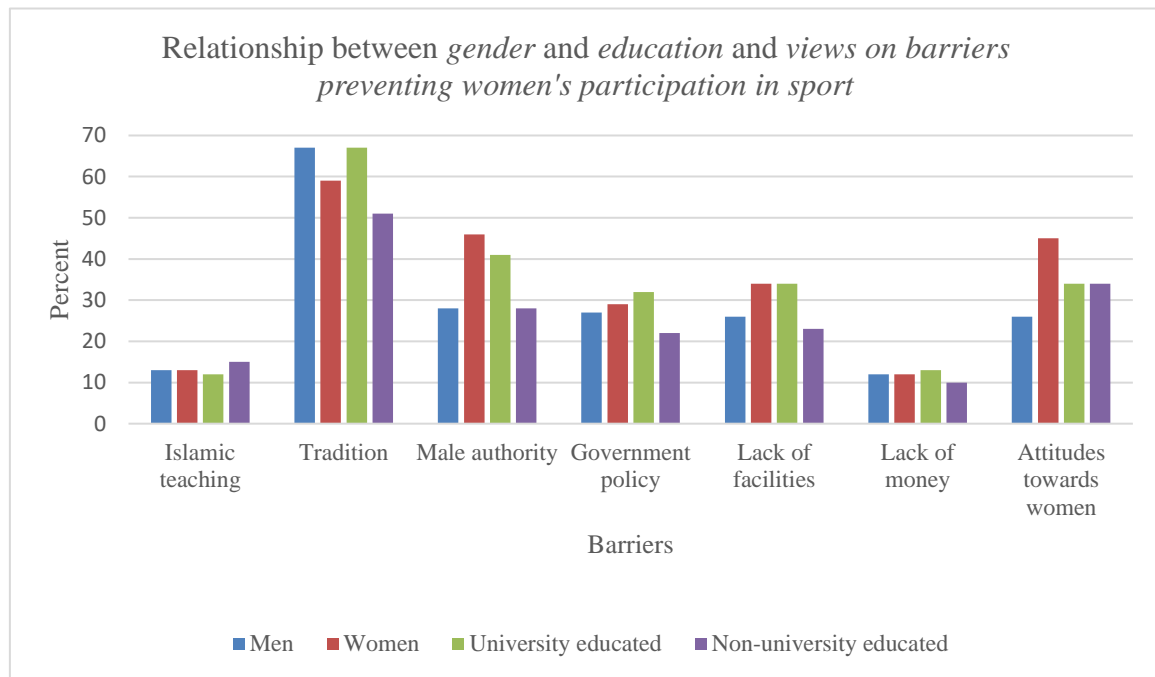
Figure 5.9: Views on barriers – gender and education relationship

For gender, the most interesting results are that there is a stronger relationship between being a woman and choosing *male authority* and *attitudes towards women*. For both, proportionally 40% more women than men chose the option. Thus, although the sample was small, within the sample at least the relationship seems clear. It is also the kind of result that might be predicted if one views the contemporary situation in Saudi Arabia with a feminist eye. Nevertheless, it

should be noticed that while significantly more women than men chose *male authority*, those who did constituted a minority of women overall: 46%.

For education, for a majority of the barriers there was a stronger relationship between being university educated and choosing one of those barriers compared to being non-university educated. Taking this relationship at face value would suggest that the sample supports the hypothesis that being university educated is associated with more liberal views on women's sport: the mere recognition of barriers is itself a sign of a liberal outlook. This is the kind of result that would be expected given, as was discussed in Chapter 3, there is a causal relevance between education level and liberal views.

The proportional difference between university and non-university educated participants were all in the 25-32% range for *tradition*, *male authority*, *government authority*, *lack of facilities*. In contrast, there was very widespread concurrence on *Islamic teaching* across all of the demographic categories, the proportional range was 13-15%.

Thus, as I will discuss in more detail immediately below, there is some there is some evidence that gender and education level may be associated with certain views, although the relationships are not always consistent and are often quite weak.

5.9 Theme (ii): Analysis

Regarding sub-theme (1), in which there was evidence in the interview and Twitter data that, in some general sense, 'conservativeness' is both perceived to be, and may be an actual driver of, the current state of gender-inclusivity in sport and PA in the Kingdom. Regarding this, one might ask: what comes first, the religion or the culture? Did an already conservative culture adopt and inculcate a conservative religion, or did conservative religious ideas lead to a more conservative culture? It is not immediately obvious that these questions are answerable. But what can be said is that the religious and more broadly cultural influences on attitudes towards women's sport might be so deeply intertwined as to be effectively inseparable. But, whatever the ultimate source of the relative conservatism of Saudi society is, it does seem to be a

prevalent feature of the polity, and one which figures prominently in Saudi citizen's conscious engagement with the issue of women's sport.

In terms of my research questions, these considerations are relevant in particular for my second and third research questions: what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Third, how do different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia?

Regarding sub-theme (2), it seems probable that the lack of sporting facilities, and the relative inaccessibility of those which are available, is a significant hindering factor in the way of increasing women's participation in sport. This is particularly relevant for the 'civic' part of my second research question: what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? Moreover, this can be judged not just based on these interview responses.

As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 6, the issue of a lack of facilities interacts in different ways with the issue of sex-segregation, with the widespread preference for the latter perhaps being utilisable as leverage to increase the range of facilities available to women, so long as the importance of access to sport and PA is recognised. This latter issue forms part of my broader 'health argument' which I suggest Islamic feminists should pursue.

Regarding sub-theme (3), one issue which seems to run through the expressed views is an apparent concern with the relationship between women's supposed sexual virtue and sport, with religious beliefs about what is required for women to remain sexually virtuous seemingly prominent. This is noteworthy for my second and third research questions: what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? And how do different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia?

Even general comments about 'immorality' or 'corruption' appear likely to be motivated by fears about sexual immorality or corruption. This again brings us to the question of the relationship between general cultural conservatism and specifically religious conservatism. What, it might be asked, is more basic: the cultural or the religious? As discussed above in, this question resists a

quick and easy answer, but at the very least both cultural and religious grounds for limiting women's sport seem very closely connected and to be continually associated in the minds of many participants in this study.

In pragmatic terms, this issue may not need to be fully resolved in order for Islamic feminists to make some significant progress towards increasing gender-inclusivity in sport. As I argue in Chapter 6, the 'low hanging fruit' for Islamic feminists involves working within a framework which accepts sex-segregation but pushes for recognition of the importance of PA and sport for women's health, and the provision of opportunities and encouragement to pursue them. This, I believe, is possible regardless of what the source of any historic resistance is.

Regarding sub-theme (4), and the issue of governmental support, one important question to ask about the government's stance is: what drives it? There might seem to be three possible explanations for the relative inconsistency that has led to the kinds of frustrations expressed by AJ4. First is that the government desires to remove at least some of the limits on women's sport but does not because it fears the internal political consequences. Second is that the government does not desire to remove at least some of the limits on women's sport. Third is that there are competing forces inside the government which lean either towards the first or second option, leading to the government as a whole not always being entirely consistent in its approach to the matter. Perhaps the third explanation is the most plausible, given that governments tend to be entities which are continually subject to internal competing forces in a manner which often affects the consistency of their outward behaviour. This clearly relates to my second research question: what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia?

Regarding sub-theme (5), which concerned interview data on what the general perceptions of women's rights in the Kingdom are, what the interview responses present is a complex picture.. On the one hand, there does seem to be a relationship between being situated in the relatively more cosmopolitan city of Dammam and having more liberal views generally about women's rights and emancipation. On the other hand, it does appear that not all of those in favour of women's participation in sport see it explicitly as an issue of women's rights or emancipation–

preferring instead to express disapproval of some of the key goals of that movement in Saudi Arabia.

There may, therefore, be evidence here of the need for a distinctively Islamic feminist movement rather than simply a feminist movement simpliciter (if there is such a thing–it may well be that all feminisms are situated). Given the examples of 'internal psychological barriers' that have been introduced above, and how deeply culturally embedded they seem to be, then surmounting those barriers, particularly for large numbers of individuals, is likely to be challenging. I believe that those best placed to meet that challenge are those who are natively situated within the culture. I discuss this issue further, and in detail, in Chapter 6.

In terms of my research questions, there is a connection here to my first, third, and fourth research questions: what are the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? How do different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia? How are ideas about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia changing? Indeed, with the above considerations we can see how these questions overlap. The issue of 'internal psychological barriers' in particular is a key junction where these questions meet. That is, the possibility of such internal barriers is relevant for the source of dominant attitudes, how they influence religious interpretation, and the prospects for change. As I will discuss below in my final chapter this is important for Islamic feminists to consider.

For sub-theme (6), which concerned barriers which prevent women's participation in sport, for gender, the most interesting results are that there is a stronger relationship between being a woman and choosing *male authority* and *attitudes towards women*. For both, proportionally 40% more women than men chose the option. Thus, although the sample was small, within the sample at least the relationship seems clear. It is also the kind of result that might be predicted if one views the contemporary situation in Saudi Arabia with a feminist eye. Nevertheless, it should be noticed that while significantly more women than men chose *male authority*, those who did constituted a minority of women overall: 46%.

For education, for a majority of the barriers there was a stronger relationship between being university educated and choosing one of those barriers compared to being non-university

educated. Taking this relationship at face value would suggest that the sample supports the hypothesis that being university educated is associated with more liberal views on women's sport: the mere recognition of barriers is itself a sign of a liberal outlook. This is the kind of result that would be expected given, as was discussed in Chapter 3, there is a causal relevance between education level and liberal views.

The proportional difference between university and non-university educated participants were all in the 25-32% range for *tradition*, *male authority*, *government authority*, *lack of facilities*. In contrast, there was very widespread concurrence on *Islamic teaching* across all of the demographic categories, the proportional range was 13-15%.

Thus, as we have seen above, there is some evidence that gender and education level may be associated with certain views, although the relationships are not always consistent and are often quite weak. This combined with the small sample size, means that one should be cautious in drawing conclusions which are too strong.

Nevertheless, with the Foucauldian analysis of power in mind, according to which power is distributed across, and thus embedded in, all members of the society, the above results can be explained. On the one hand, there data for this subtheme does reveal somewhat greater demographic disparities than has been revealed previously, particularly for gender. But on the other hand, this data does all suggest that there is relatively widespread agreement among the demographic categories for many options, and strikingly close agreement for *Islamic teaching* in particular, may be taken to suggest that there are largely gender and education-invariant cultural forces at play. And when considered as a part of the data as a whole, this conclusion is further supported, as I will discuss further in Chapter 6.

5.10 Theme (iii) interview and survey data: how different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia.

As has been discussed by Kay (2006), Livengood and Stodolska, (2004), and Martin and Mason (2003), among others, the issues associated with women's participation in sports are

significantly intertwined with different interpretations of Islam. In almost all Islamic societies, the position of religion is the most prominent amongst all social institutions and caries the greatest significance in the lives of Muslims. Among Muslims in Saudi Arabia, the position of women is unique.

As we have discussed above in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5) there is enforced adherence with Islamic codes governing women's life pattern, relationships with relatives and others, and status in society. With regards to sport, one common position is that women's participation is allowed provided a few Islamic principles are adhered to, including maintenance of 'Hijab' (covering of the hair, face and other secret parts of the body), modest behaviour, and avoidance of gambling.

Based on what the interviewees had shared in the interviews, it was evident that different interpretations of Islam played a significant role in whether women's participation in sport was allowed or not. The geographical location of the respondent also played an important role on the direction that these interpretations took.

Analysis of the interviews around this theme brought up three Subthemes:

1. Women's participation in sport is compatible with Islam

2. Women's sports as practiced in other Muslim countries would work in Saudi Arabia

3. Women's sports as practiced in other western countries would not work in Saudi Arabia

I will now delve into each of these subthemes in turn, which are directly relevant to my second and third research questions: what are the key social, cultural, and civic issues that affect women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? And how do different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia?

5.10.1 Sub-theme (1): Women's participation in sport is compatible with Islam

Importantly for my first research question (what are the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia?), university educated men and women from Dammam

felt that Islam supports women's participation in sports. There appeared to be less support from both groups in the city of Al Jouf. The level of education did not seem to play a prominent role here. For example, one university educated woman stated that:

> I think that Islam urges us to exercise sport without specifying a particular sex. I think Islam instructs us to maintain the body health via swimming and horse ride (D8 University educated woman, June 2015).

Along similar lines, a university educated man stated that:

> I think that the Islamic teachings do not oppose the practice of female sport because it benefits female Muslims. This is due to the existence of evidence from the teachings of the Messenger (PBUH) which urge us to exercise sport; the race of the Messenger with Aisha (May Allah be pleased with her) is just an example (D2 University educated man, June 2015).

However, an important point to emerge from the interviewees was that the support was also conditional. Women were allowed to participate in sports only in accordance to Islamic teachings. For example, one non-university educated man stated:

> Islam does not prevent women from participating in sports provided it is conducted according to the Islamic law and the social norms that preserve the status of Muslim women. The exercise should be in places far from mixing with men, and with the approval of their parents to go to female centres. The religion of Islam is a tolerant religion when all the conditions are met (D10 University non-educated man, June 2015).

As did the following university educated woman from Al Jouf:

> As a woman, I feel that the compatibility of Islam and female sports is strong but we should practice it according to sharia law (AJ2 University educated woman, May 2015).

In Al Jouf, support for the claim that women's participation in sport is compatible with Islam came from only one university educated man. And like the interviewees from Dammam, he felt that women should only participate in accordance with the teachings of Islam. As he stated:

> Islam does not prohibit but supports the practice of sport for both sexes provided to adhere to the Islamic teachings. And I do believe in this based on my study of the Koran and tracing the teachings of the Nobel Prophet (PBUH) in urging women to exercise sport as in the example of the Prophet's race with his wife Aisha (AJ8 University educated man, May 2015).

This section of the analysis sought to understand how different interpretations of Islam are associated with views on women's participation in sports. The following survey data relevant to this was obtained. Consider first Table 5.18:

City	Education & gender	Encouraged	Allowed	Tolerated	Prohibited	Punishable offence	Total
Dammam	University educated man	20	37	17	8	3	85
	University educated woman	13	27	14	1	4	59
	Non-university educated man	3	19	12	5	4	43
	Non-university educated woman	10	18	10	5	2	45
	Total	**46**	**101**	**53**	**19**	**13**	**232**

Table 5.18: How women's sports should be treated according to Islam–Dammam

A majority of the university educated men felt that according to Islam women should be either encouraged, 23%, allowed, 42%, or tolerated, 19%. Those who felt that women should be prohibited from participating in sports constituted 9%, and those who held that women who participate should be punished constituted 3%.

The majority of university educated women also felt that Islam was in favour of women's participation in sports, with 21% indicating that Islam encouraged women's sport, 44% allowed, and 23% tolerated. Only 2% and 6% of respondents felt that Islam dictates prohibition or punishment.

The situation was similar with non-university educated respondents. Most of whom also held that Islam allows, tolerates, and encourages women's sports.

Regarding any relationship between gender or education and views on how women's sports should be treated according to Islam, consider Figure 10, below:
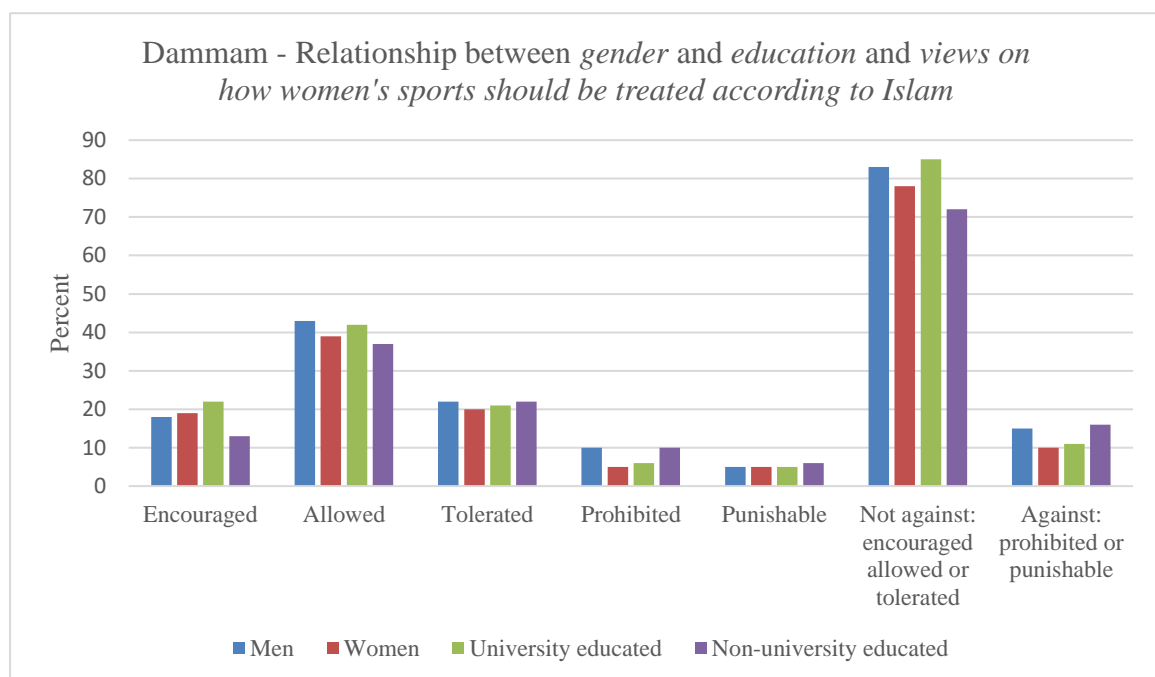
Figure 10: Views on how women's sport should be treated according to Islam – Dammam

As can be seen, the data does not indicate that there is a very significant relationship between gender and the relevant views. Further, if the starting hypothesis is that there will be a stronger relationship between being a woman, versus being a man, and maintaining the view that Islam holds that women's participation in sport should be encouraged, allowed, or tolerated, then the data does not support that hypothesis. Proportionally, 5% more women than men chose

'encouraged', but 9% more men than women chose both 'allowed' and 'tolerated'. For 'prohibited', 50% more men than women chose the option, but the base rates were very low (only 5% of women and 10% of men, n=3 and n=16, respectively), so this difference is unlikely to be very significant. In addition, there was no difference in the proportion of men and women who chose 'punishable'.

Moreover, proportionally more men than women chose 'not against' and although proportionally fewer women than men chose 'against' the base rates for the latter category were much lower than the former. The overall picture for Dammam, therefore, does not suggest that there is a consistent, clear relationship between gender and views on how women's sport should be treated according to Islam.

With regards to level of education, there was somewhat stronger evidence for an relationship between being university educated and being more likely to chose 'encouraged' or 'allowed' and less likely to chose 'prohibited' or 'punishable'. Proportionally more university educated participants chose 'encouraged' and 'allowed', and less chose 'prohibited' and 'punishable'. Slightly more non-university educated participants chose 'tolerated', but the difference was less than 5%. Moreover, proportionally 18% more university educated than non-university educated participants chose 'not against', and 45% less university educated than non-university educated participants chose 'against' (although the base rates were relatively low for 'against'). Overall, therefore, in the Dammam data there is a weak but largely consistent relationship between education level and views on how women's sport should be treated according to Islam.

Turning now to the Al Jouf data, consider Table 5.19:

City	Education & gender	Encouraged	Allowed	Tolerated	Prohibited	Punishable offence	Total
Al Jouf	University educated man	13	24	19	10	2	68
	University educated woman	5	27	7	2	5	46
	Non-university educated man	2	10	6	6	2	26
	Non-university educated woman	1	14	2	1	2	20
	Total	**21**	**75**	**34**	**19**	**11**	**160**

Table 5.19 How women's sport should be treated according to Islam–Al Jouf

Significantly, many from Al Jouf chose not to respond to this question. It is not immediately obvious why. Of those who did respond, most university educated men felt that Islam was in favour of women's participation in sports: 18% of them said that Islam encourages women's sport, 32% said that it allows women to participate, and 26% said that it tolerates. This pool represented the majority of the respondents under this category. Only 14% university educated males from Al Jouf felt that Islam prohibits women's participation in sports, and less than 3% held that Islam dictated that that participation was a punishable offence.

In addition, University educated women from this city also expressed their confidence that Islam was not against women participating in sports. Most of them responded that Islam encourages, 12%, allows, 63%, or tolerates, 16% women's participation in sports. Only 5% held that Islam prohibited participation, and 12% that Islam deems it a punishable offence.

Among non-university educated men and women, most also felt Islam either encouraged, allowed, or tolerated women's participation in sport, with 69% of those who responded choosing one of those options, and 85% of women (including non-responses, these figures are 33% and 74% respectively).

Regarding any relationships, consider Figure 11:
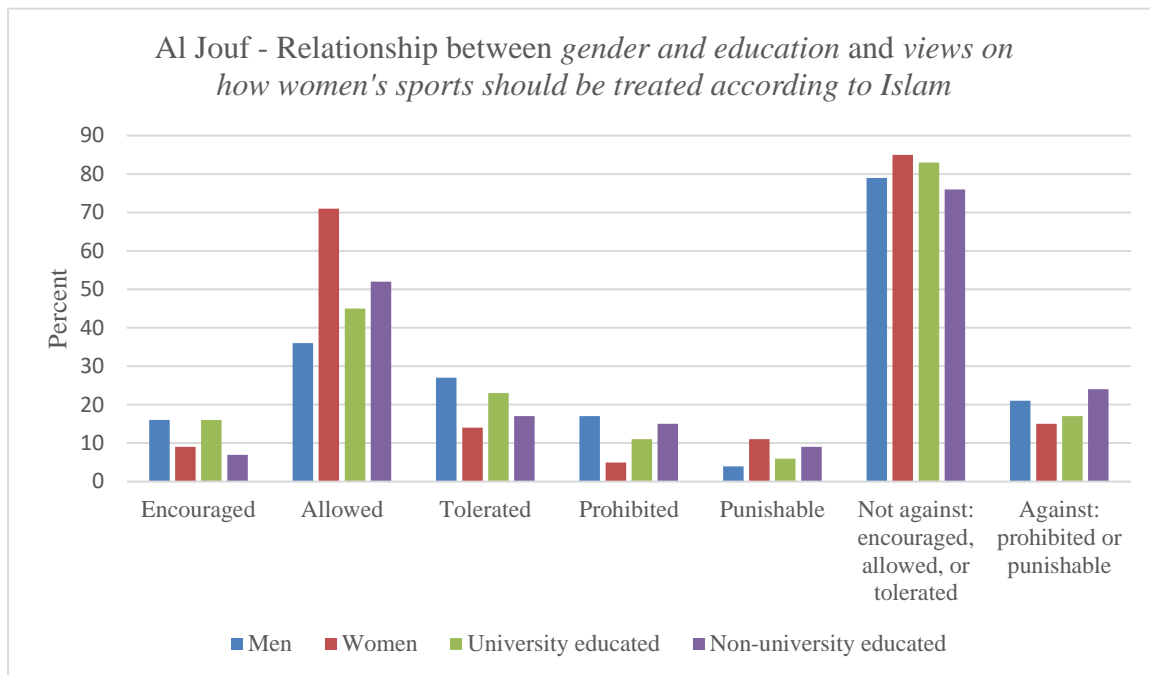
Figure 4: Views on women's sport and Islam-Al Jouf relationships

Again, like the data from Dammam, the data from Al Jouf does not indicate that there is a very significant relationship between gender and holding the relevant views. If the starting hypothesis is that there will be a stronger relationship between being a woman, compared to being a man, and holding that Islam is not against women's participation in sport, then the data only very weakly supports that hypothesis. Slightly over 7% more women than men held that Islam is 'not against' women's participation in sport, and while 29% less women than men held that Islam is 'against' women's participation, the base rates were very low (n=21 and n=15, respectively). Thus, the data for Al Jouf suggests, at most, that there is a weak relationship between gender and views on how women's sport should be treated according to Islam.

With regards to level of education, there was also evidence for a weak relationship between being university educated and being more likely to choose 'not against', and less likely to choose 'against'. Proportionally, 8% more university educated than non-university educated

participants chose 'not against', and 29% less university educated participants chose 'prohibited' or 'punishable' (noting that the base rates for the latter were low). This suggest that in the Al Jouf data there is a weak but consistent relationship between education level and views on how women's sport should be treated according to Islam.

In summary, perhaps the most striking feature of the data is the significant majority, in both Dammam and Al Jouf, who hold that Islam is not against women's participation in sport. This is important for answering my first research question and is consistent with the overall picture of the sample that has been present in the data: broad support for women's participation in sport that is apparently underwritten by the belief that such support is not inconsistent with other deeply embedded cultural beliefs. Here, we see that a major example of one type of deeply embedded cultural belief, religious belief, fits this pattern.

5.10.2 Sub-theme (2): Women's sports as practiced in other Muslim countries would work in Saudi Arabia

About half of the interviewees did not find fault with other Muslim countries such as Jordan and Egypt allowing women to participate in sports since those policies fitted with the relatively more open, less conservative cultures in those countries. And these respondents were convinced that if such policies were introduced into Saudi Arabia they would be successful. In terms of my research questions, this highlights an interesting aspect of how cultural and religious issues might affect the possibility for change (my second and fourth research question): if the culture is seen as 'ready' or 'accepting' of the relevant practices then there may be more openness to the relevant change occurring. Thus, there may be a kind of 'reform dilemma'–reform is difficult if the culture is not 'ready' but once the culture is ready it is more possible, but the culture may only be ready once enough believe it already is.

As evident from their sentiments below, most of the respondents who felt that more inclusive policies would be successful in Saudi Arabia were university educated.

For example, one university educated man from Dammam stated that:

In other Muslim countries, female sport is more popular than in Saudi Arabia. I feel so because they are less conservative and I think it is a successful policy that should be applied as soon as possible and because the religion of Islam is flexible and urge to exercise sport (D1 University educated man, June 2015).

A university woman from Dammam concurred:

As for the Muslim countries, such as Egypt and Jordan, which allow the participation of women in sport, I do encourage them for adopting and supporting women in their exercise of sport due to its importance. If Saudi Arabia adopted the policy of these countries, it would be a successful policy and I think that there is similarity between the composition of these societies and the Saudi society in addition to the similarity in language and religion (D7 University educated woman, June 2015).

In Al Jouf, again those expressing these kinds of views tended to be university educated. For example, one woman stated:

My feeling towards the Muslim countries which allow women to exercise sport is that they are advanced and civilized countries which care about male and female heath welfare. I feel so because sport is necessary and important. The result will be impressive and useful because it contributed in promoting awareness in society about the necessity and benefits of sports (AJ2 University educated woman, May 2015).

As much as most of the respondents felt that the adoption of policies from the less conservative countries could work for Saudi Arabia, three respondents from the rural city of Al Jouf felt that the adoption of these policies will not be good for Saudi Arabia. There were also two residents from Dammam who shared these feelings.

One university educated man from Dammam expressed doubts about how politically possible it would be:

As for the Kingdom, this never applies to it. Should it be applied, there would be fierce opposition because Saudi Arabia is a religious and conservative society. And also our society needs awareness in the first place (D4 University educated man, June 2015).

230

And one university educated woman from Al Jouf also expressed doubts:

> My feeling towards the Muslim countries which allow female sport is that this is suitable for those countries. Because their cultures are different from that in Saudi Arabia. It is a threat to our culture from Egypt and Jordan which have a constitution different from that in Saudi Arabia. I see that such a policy is not suitable for Saudi Arabia because of its religious position (AJ3 University educated woman, May 2015).

In summary, it seems that those who believed that the more liberal approach to women's participation in sport which is taken in other Muslim countries would not work seemed to believe it for two main reasons. First, there were those who appeared committed to some interpretation of Islam according to which it would be morally wrong for any Muslim to support a more liberal approach to women's sport. Second, there were those who appeared to be making a kind of pragmatic judgement: namely that it *would* not work rather than *should* not work, where the 'not working' would presumably amount to causing a major backlash of some sort.

5.10.3 Sub-theme (3): Women's sports as practiced in other western countries would *not* work in Saudi Arabia

Though there was a general agreement among the interviewees that Islam should allow women to participate in sports, all respondents agreed that western style female sports are not appropriate for Saudi Arabia. This speaks directly to my first and fourth research questions (what are the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia? And how are ideas about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia changing?).

For example, one university educated man stated:

> I feel that Western countries have gone too far in the practice of women's sports to the extent that women engage in sports that do not fit their physical nature. We should not be surprised because the Western society does not take religious teachings into consideration and I do not think that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will apply such

policies because it is unacceptable Islamically and socially (AJ1 University educated man, May 2015).

And such views were not restricted to the university educated. As one non-university educated man stated:

My opinion about the European countries, America and Australia is that they are immoral countries and do not rely in their policies on religion and that they exploited the woman in all fields. I do not believe that this policy will be adopted in the Kingdom because the kingdom applies the religion of Islam in all its fields (AJ10 Non-university educated man, May 2015).

Nor were these views restricted to one gender. As one non-university educated women stated:

My feeling towards the western countries which allow the female sport, I do not support sports in western countries. Because it disagrees with the teachings of Islam by committing so many negative practices and sports have no restrictions and do not suit the physical nature of women, let alone the unlimited mixing with men. (AJ4 Non-university educated woman, May 2015).

As I will discuss below, this resistance to straightforwardly importing Western-style women's sporting practices might provide an example case which helps to justify the need for a distinctively Islamic feminism, and is important for my third and fourth research question (how do different interpretations of Islam influence attitudes towards women's sport in Saudi Arabia? And how are ideas about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia changing?).

5.11 Theme (iii): Analysis

For sub-theme (1), the data suggests that in the Al Jouf data there is a weak but consistent relationship between education level and views on how women's sport should be treated according to Islam.

In my view, caution is required when considering this data, due to limitations in the sample size particularly. But it does at least invite the questions about why there might be such a relationship. I discuss in some detail possible explanations for this in my concluding chapter, but, in brief, the most obvious explanation appeals to the liberalising effect of education on people's beliefs.

For sub-theme (2), perhaps the most striking feature of the data is the significant majority, in both Dammam and Al Jouf, who hold that Islam is not against women's participation in sport. This is important for answering my first research question and is consistent with the overall picture of the sample that has been present in the data: broad support for women's participation in sport that is apparently underwritten by the belief that such support is not inconsistent with other deeply embedded cultural beliefs. Here, we see that a major example of one type of deeply embedded cultural belief, religious belief, fits this pattern.

It may be worthwhile to briefly speculate at this point about the potential implications of this result were it to be generalised to the whole Saudi population (a matter, which, of course, is currently unconfirmed–although my prediction would be that the generalisation is likely to hold). One potential implication is that any religiously motivated opposition to greater gender-inclusivity in Saudi sport is likely to be minority opposition (although that opposition may still be powerful), opposition which may be placatable through (a) theological argument; and (b) ensuring that reform measures fit within more broadly agreed Islamic norms. This speaks to all of my research questions and is another example of how they overlap. In particular, how change might be affected may well be dependent on what the dominant attitudes already are, the role religious interpretation might play and how this all fits with the broader features of the culture.

Indeed, for (a), we have already discussed in Chapter 3 some of the relevant theological considerations that could be brought to bear. For (b), we have evidence in the sample for what such 'broadly agreed Islamic norms' might look like. For example: sex segregation or Islamic dress codes. I will discuss this issue further in Chapter 6, where I will discuss in greater detail

how I believe these sorts of political practical realities may be best addressed within an Islamic feminist framework.

For sub-theme (3), it seems that those who believed that the more liberal approach to women's participation in sport which is taken in other Muslim countries would not work seemed to believe it for two main reasons. First, there were those who appeared committed to some interpretation of Islam according to which it would be morally wrong for any Muslim to support a more liberal approach to women's sport. Second, there were those who appeared to be making a kind of pragmatic judgement: namely that it *would* not work rather than *should* not work, where the 'not working' would presumably amount to causing a major backlash of some sort.

Further, the interview data for this sub-theme appears to support the reflections I offered above: namely that religiously motivated opposition might reasonably be expected to be a minority (although possibly powerful) opposition. If so, then this suggests that the practical political steps that should be taken towards increasing gender-inclusivity in sport, while needing to take careful account of the religious terrain, are eminently achievable.

Finally, it would seem that there is a relatively general hostility to the idea of straightforwardly importing Western-style women's sporting practices into Saudi Arabia, across genders, education levels, and geographic locales. The reasons for this seemed to involve elements of cultural nationalism, views on gender, and religious considerations. As I discuss in my conclusion chapter, this helps to motivate my claim that Islamic feminism is the best placed movement to improve gender-inclusivity in sport in the Kingdom.

5.12 Theme (iv) interview survey, and Twitter data: ways in which ideas towards women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia are changing.

As has been discussed above, Women in Saudi Arabia have made some progress in participating in sports for health, competition, and professional opportunities, yet significant barriers remain. In this section I examine participants' responses with regard to how their ideas about women's

sport have changed, which provides data directly relevant to my fourth research question (how are ideas about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia changing?).

5.12.1 Sub-theme (1): Individual changes in beliefs about women's participation in sports in Saudi Arabia

Regardless of their location, gender, or level of education, responses from the interviewees indicate that there have been notable changes in the beliefs of many people. Nonetheless, these changes are predominantly occurring amongst university educated respondents. Moreover, health benefits were most often cited as the reason why people had started to appreciate sports for everyone. For example, one university educated man stated:

> At the beginning, female sport was not important for me and I rejected it and over time this idea began to fade slowly and I started to applaud and support it. First, when I noticed the large number of diseases and the spread of obesity in society that require to exercise sport in order to reduce it (D4University educated man, June 2015).

This pattern was also found among women interviewees. For example, this woman stated that:

> There are changes due to the importance of sport and the need for special women clubs and at universities. This is to prevent obesity and due to girls' strong wish achieve fitness (AJ3 University educated woman, May 2015).

And this non-university educated woman agreed:

> As for my view regarding female sport, I would say there are changes. Since the Kingdom occupies the third position in obesity and that 80% of the Saudi society resort to gastric band operations which have some risks and cause death, we call for special clubs for women (AJ4 Non-university educated woman, May 2015).

It might be thought that these individual changes in belief form part of a wider trend of changes in Saudi Arabia. For example, the recent move by the Saudi government to allow women to drive cars. Indeed, many of the respondents were optimistic that the Kingdom's perception of women's

participation was changing, and that Saudi Arabia was becoming less strict when it comes to the interpretations of Islam. Nonetheless, many of the interviewees still believed that women's sports should be practiced in accordance with the teachings of Islam.

Moreover, the people felt that once women are allowed to participate in sport activities, the society will be heading towards granting them their full rights. Many of the respondents were convinced that allowing women to participate in sports will lead to a more open society that tolerates everyone regardless of their gender. For example, one university educated man stated:

> I think that women's participation in sports in Saudi Arabia will have a positive impact on Saudi culture by clarifying the importance of sport in the lives of people and transmitting aspects of the Saudi culture by participation in sports, both internally and externally. In addition, participating in sports opens a window for communication between the people at home and abroad, which contributes to raising the level of cultural and sport awareness (D2 University educated man, June 2015).

And this university educated woman agreed:

> I see that the woman's participation in the field of sports in Saudi Arabia will have its positive impact on the culture in the Saudi society by increasing the level of cultural awareness about sports in general and the women's sport in particular (AJ2 University educated woman, May 2015).

As did this non-university educated woman:

> I see that the woman's participation in the field of sports in Saudi Arabia will have its impact on the culture and woman will become more open; a stance that will have its impact on its social environment (AJ4 Non-university educated woman, May 2015).

In summary, these responses, which are highly relevant for my fourth research question, would seem to suggest that women's participation in sport is perceived by the interviewees as forming part of a wider set of changes which, in some general sense, count as 'progress'. What this might suggest is that those who are in favour of women's increased participation in sport view it as part of a wider liberalising political project which they support.

5.12.2 Sub-theme (2): Perceived social and health benefits

As we have seen, improvements in health was one of the main reasons participants in this study advocated for women's sport, which is significant data for my fourth research question (how are the ideas about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia changing?). Further evidence for this was gleaned from Twitter, where users expressed their concerns that Saudi women were among the most obese and unhealthy women in the world and they therefore found no reason why women should be barred from participating in sports. For example, one user, 419, stated:

> Sport prevents illnesses and limits obesity and this is a healthy culture that girls' schools must adhere to. There must be also non-profitable female clubs (419).

An additional user, 195, made the point that health is a right:

> Sport is a healthy lifestyle which is the right of all. We hope that the ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health cooperate to establish it and provide sport halls so that everyone can exercise it (Twitter user 195).

And user 31 was strongly critical of those who oppose women's sport:

> Scientific research confirms the significance of sport for physical and psychological health wellbeing. However, only the Salafis in Saudi Arabia talk to us about the risks of #Female sport. They live in another world (Twitter user 31).

Other respondents expressed their fear that the failure of women to get involved in PA could result to higher levels of illnesses. For example, 61 stated that:

> 83% of Saudi women do not exercise sport at all, how much will be the percentage of illnesses amongst them after few years? (Twitter user 61).

Along similar lines, 141 put forward the point that:

> The ratio of osteoporosis, lack of vitamin D and weight gain among women has become constantly on the increase due to the lack of exercising sport in a special atmosphere of their own (Twitter user 141).

Even those who held that not all sports were suitable for women were often keen to concede the health benefits. For example, 1319 stated that:

> This does not mean that she plays weights or football. What I mean is that she performs fitness exercises to maintain her psychological and physical health wellbeing (Twitter user 1319).

And another user, 191, saw sport as a possible positive distraction from other uses of 'energy':

> Female sport is important for the body and the psychology of the girl and not only for that of the boy as long as it is practiced in a confined place, with body covering dress. Why is this? To discharge their energy. It is better than discharging it in harmful practices (Twitter user 191).

In summary, the force of the appeal to physical health as an argument in favour of women's participation in sport seems clear, and this is important for my fourth research question in particular. We have seen already in Chapter 2 the strength of evidence in favour of the possible benefits of sporting activity. Indeed, while social, cultural, ethical, or religious considerations are perhaps inevitably going to prove more controversial in many quarters, the 'harder' science behind the health benefits of PA perhaps provides the strongest, in practical terms, argument in favour of women's participation in sport. If so, then this would have clear political implications for those pursuing greater opportunities for women to participate in sport, particularly in relation to how the arguments in support of those greater opportunities are made.

5.12.3 Sub-theme (3): Cultural changes in Saudi Arabia

Even though many felt that women participation in sports would be good for the Saudi culture, there were those who were opposed to it–arguing that it would negatively impact the people. Geographic location and gender played a prominent role here with five out of six who felt this being men from the rural city of Al Jouf, and one woman also from Al Jouf. For example, one university educated man stated that:

Yes, there will be impact by means of conduct and dress. They will lead to a compromise on some values such as modesty and the veil (AJ6 University educated man, May 2015).

Going further than this, a non-university educated man raised explicitly religious concerns:

I think it will have impact on the culture because initially it will be the exercising of sport at schools and then at external clubs and over time the woman will get used to going outside the house; a practice which the religion of Islam cautions against unless there is a desperate need for it (AJ10 Non-university educated man, May 2015).

Finally, one non-university educated woman expressed concerns about what she saw as potential ill effects of a social, or family nature:

it may be a door that destroys families; woman would get used to going outside her home very often and even without the knowledge of her husband and family (AJ4 Non-university educated woman, May 2015).

In addition, there was survey data relevant to this sub-theme. Consider table 5.20:

City	Education & gender	Total responses	Women's wellbeing & quality of life	Equality with men	Improve moral education	Improve health	Greater than equality with men	Loss of virginity	Become politically active
Dammam	University educated men	81	30	9	27	70	19	4	7
	University educated women	58	35	11	14	58	20	2	9
	Non-university educated men	38	13	0	9	32	12	5	1
	Non-university educated women	45	17	3	12	40	21	6	2
	Total	**222**	**95**	**23**	**62**	**200**	**72**	**17**	**19**

Table 5.20: Effects of women's sport on Saudi women and Saudi society - Dammam

When asked how the position of women would change in the society if women are allowed to participate in sports, a majority of university educated men from Dammam who responded, 86%, felt that women's health will be improved, 37%. A substantial number of these respondents also felt that those women's wellbeing and life quality will improve: 37%. Exactly one third that women's moral educated would be improved. And 23% held that women's sporting participation would lead to women achieving greater than equality with men, whereas half that, 11%, felt that it would lead to equality with men. Only 5% thought that women would lose their virginity as a result, and 9% that they would become politically active.

All University educated women from Dammam felt that women's health would improve if they are given the chance to participate in sports. And 60% felt that women's wellbeing and life quality would improve as a result of participating in sports. The proportion of respondents who felt that greater than equality with men might result was 34%, and 24% that it would improve women's moral education.

These sentiments were also echoed among non-university educated participants. Most of them felt that women were poised to getting better health and higher living standards. Very few of them felt that women would lose their virginity or become politically active. However, it should be noted that around half of non-educated respondents, 52%, felt that women's participation in sport would result in women achieving greater than equality with men.

Regarding any relationships, consider Figure 12:

Figure 12: Views on expected effects of women's sport – Dammam relationships

As can be seen, there does seem to be a slightly stronger relationship between being a woman versus being man and holding more 'positive' views about the expected effects of women's participation in sport. For example, 12% more women than men chose 'improve health', and 28% more women than men chose 'improve wellbeing and quality of life'. Similarly, there appears to be a somewhat stronger relationship between being university educated and holding more 'positive' views. For example, 23% more university educated than non-university educated chose 'improve women's wellbeing and quality of life', and 4% more chose 'improve health'.

Thus, in the data for Dammam there appears to be a modest positive relationship between both the 'woman' and 'university educated' variables and views on the more positive expected effects of women's participation in sport, compared to the complementary variables.

The broader results from Al Jouf were relatively similar. Consider table 5.21:

City	Education & gender	Total responses	Women's wellbeing & quality of life	Equality with men	Improve moral education	Improve health	Greater equality with men	Loos of virginity	Become politically active
Al Jouf	University educated men	63	24	5	22	48	28	5	3
	University educated women	44	24	6	20	36	19	3	12
	Non-university educated men	23	5	2	6	13	12	2	4
	Non-university educated women	20	9	2	5	16	3	4	2
	Total	**150**	**62**	**15**	**53**	**113**	**62**	**14**	**21**

Table 5.21: Effects of women's sport on Saudi women and Saudi society – Al Jouf

Most university educated men who responded, 76%, also felt that women would benefit health wise if they were given the chance to participate in sports. And 38% also felt that the quality of life for women would improve if the chance to participate was given to them. University educated women also shared similar sentiments with a majority of those who responded to the question, 81%, citing health benefits as the most important effect to women. Greater than equality with men was taken to be a result by 44% of men and 43% of women respondents from Al Jouf who were university educated. Among non-university educated respondents, the responses followed a broadly similar pattern.

Regarding any relationships, consider Figure 13:

Al Jouf - Relationships between *gender and education* and *views on effects of women's sport on Saudi women and society*
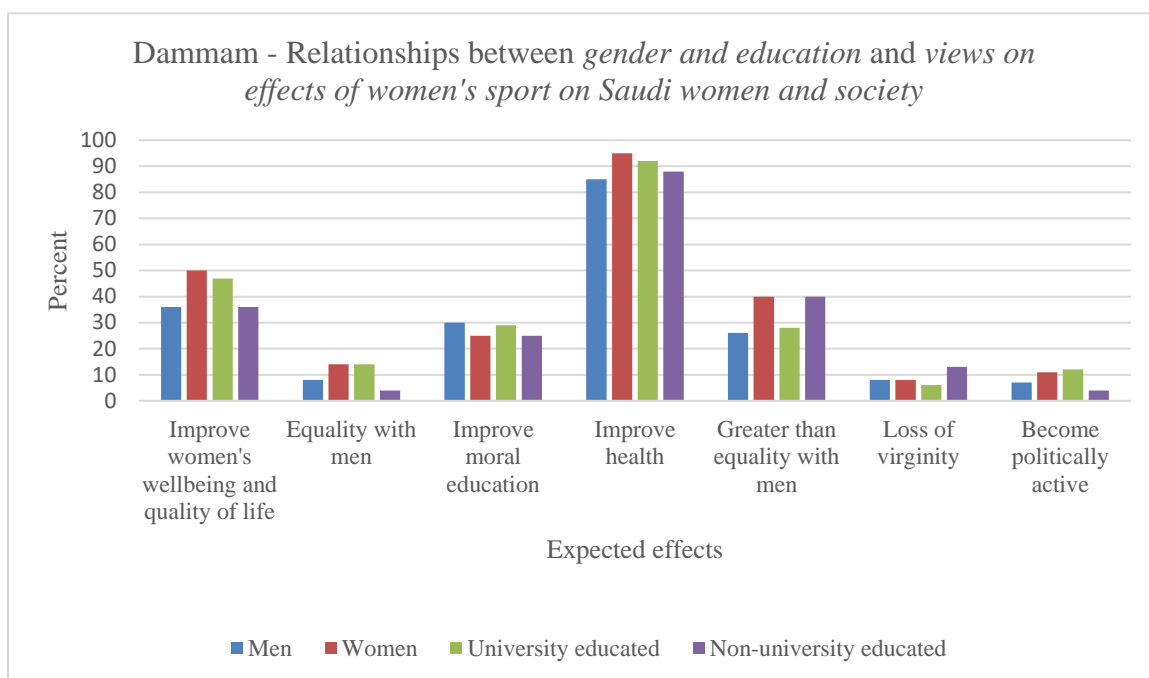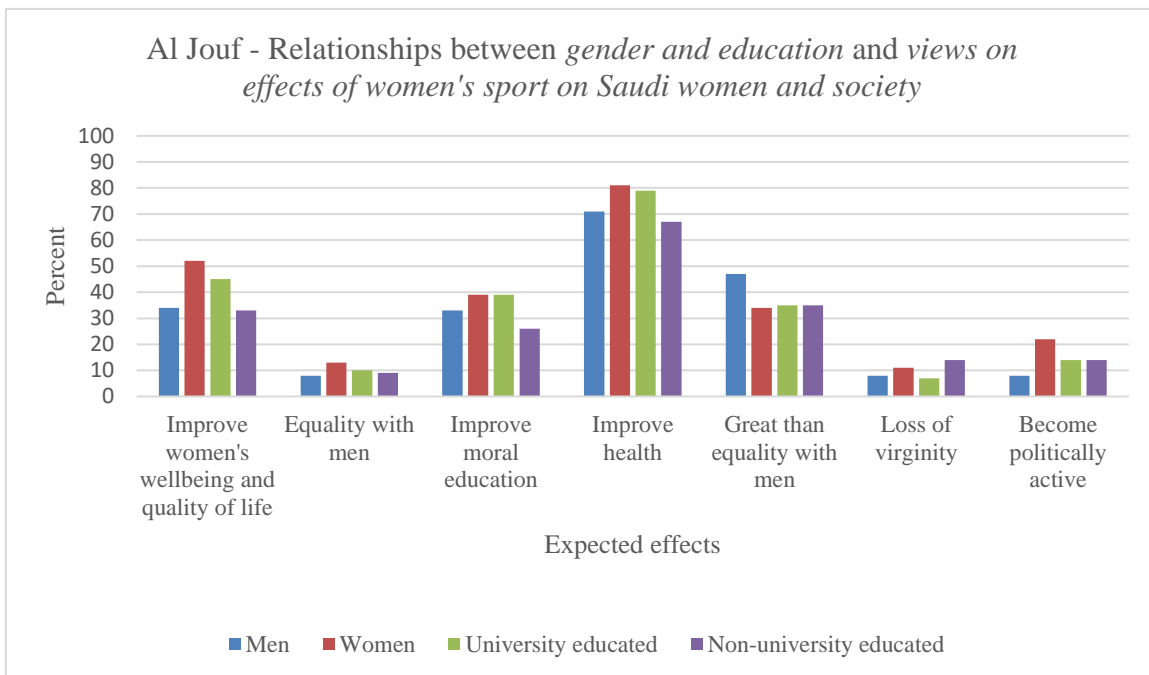
Figure 5: Views on expected effects of women's sport-Al Jouf relationships

Similar to Dammam, there does seem to be a slightly stronger relationship between being a woman versus being man and holding more 'positive' views about the expected effects of women's participation in sport. For example, 12% more women than men chose 'improve health', and 35% more women than men chose 'improve wellbeing and quality of life'. Similarly, there appears to be a somewhat stronger relationship between being university educated and holding more 'positive' views. For example, 27% more university educated than non-university educated chose 'improve women's wellbeing and quality of life', and 15% more chose 'improve health'.

Thus, in the data for Al Jouf there appears to be a modest positive relationship between both the 'woman' and 'university educated' variables and views on the more positive expected effects of women's participation in sport, compared to the complementary variables. As this is a consistent result in both Dammam and Al Jouf, then it can be concluded that this modest positive relationship appears to hold for the data overall.

In summary, the evidence for this sub-theme appears to be broadly in agreement with the evidence from most of the other sub-themes. On the one hand there is good evidence that across the demographic differences that this study has measured there is relatively widespread agreement. But on the other hand, there is some limited evidence that there is a modestly stronger relationship between being a women, or being university educated, or being from Dammam and the relevant variable, compared to being a man, or being non-university educated, or being from Al Jouf. I discuss this issue further in Chapter 6, immediately below.

5.13 Theme (iv): Analysis

For sub-theme (1) the responses, which are highly relevant for my fourth research question, would seem to suggest that women's participation in sport is perceived by the interviewees as forming part of a wider set of changes which, in some general sense, count as 'progress'. What this might suggest is that those who are in favour of women's increased participation in sport view it as part of a wider liberalising political project which they support.

Interestingly, though, as we saw above, there is evidence that there is quite widespread resistance to this progress involving a straightforward importing of Western-style sporting practices into Saudi Arabia. This resistance was widespread in the sense that it held, in the sample, across genders, education levels, and geographic locales. There appeared to be a mixture of reasons for this, which included cultural nationalism, gender views, and religion.

This suggests that there is a possible socio-cultural 'tension' which would need to be carefully understood and navigated by any political project. Namely that, on the one hand, there is an expectation of, or even demand for, progress in some broadly liberal sense. But on the other hand, that such progress is expected to occur within locally emergent norms which reflect the Islamic and Arabic character of the culture. Thus, this provides justification for the claim that the political movement best placed to understand and navigate this tension is the Islamic feminist movement, particularly for the goal of increasing gender-inclusivity in sport or women's condition in the Kingdom more generally.

For sub-theme (2), the force of the appeal to physical health as an argument in favour of women's participation in sport seems clear, and this is important for my fourth research question in particular. We have seen already in Chapter 2 the strength of evidence in favour of the possible benefits of sporting activity. Indeed, while social, cultural, ethical, or religious considerations are perhaps inevitably going to prove more controversial in many quarters, the 'harder' science behind the health benefits of PA perhaps provides the strongest, in practical terms, argument in favour of women's participation in sport. If so, then this would have clear political implications for those pursuing greater opportunities for women to participate in sport, particularly in relation to how the arguments in support of those greater opportunities are made.

It will also be useful here to reflect again on the conceptualisations of health that were discussed in Chapter 2. Recall the definition given in the WHO constitution: 'A state of complete physical, social, and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion 1986).

Associated conceptualisations of health that are widely endorsed in the public health literature include that health is a means to an end which:

> can be expressed in functional terms as a resource which permits people to lead an individually, socially and economically productive life…health is a resource for everyday life, not the object of living. It is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources as well as physical capabilities [and represents] a fundamental human right' (Health Promotion Glossary, WHO, 1998: 1).

This is an expansive conceptualisation of health. Consequently, this potentially wide-ranging implications for social policy and societal organisation. Achieving health understood as a complete state of physical, social, and mental wellbeing would appear to require that society be, among other things: peaceful, poverty free, equitable, be situated in a sustainably stable natural environment, and that individual's have sufficient opportunity for the attainment of meaningful goals (e.g. fulfilling interpersonal relationships, spiritual satisfaction, or professional success).

As I first noted in Chapter 2, recognising this fact demonstrates the extent to which health is deeply connected to a broad range of social, economic, and even religious conditions.

I will return to this point at length in Chapter 6, where I will highlight how the 'health argument' (as I call it below) in support of increasing gender-inclusivity in sport may best be put.

For sub-theme (3), the evidence appears to be broadly in agreement with the evidence from most of the other sub-themes. On the one hand there is good evidence that across the demographic differences that this study has measured there is relatively widespread agreement. But on the other hand, there is some limited evidence that there is a modestly stronger relationship between being a woman, or being university educated, or being from Dammam and the relevant variable, compared to being a man, or being non-university educated, or being from Al Jouf.

I discuss this issue further in Chapter 6, immediately below, where I highlight how this can be made sense of from within a Butlerian and Foucauldian framework, which understand power as emerging from the psychologies of individuals, in particular their beliefs. This, I will suggest, is an important issue for feminists to note, and has potentially significant implications for any political strategy aimed at increasing gender-inclusivity in sport.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

My central contention: there are key social and policy changes which can align with some of the central goals of Islamic feminism via a health-centred movement with the promotion of PA and sport for girls and women at its core. I will stress this point at various junctures by summarising my key findings, reflecting upon them in the light of my broader Foucauldian and Butlerian framework, and showing how both can support the health-centred movement I advocate.

I begin with an overview of relevant parts of my data as a springboard to introduce my claim regarding the importance of an Islamic feminist approach and how this can be informed by a Foucauldian and Butlerian framework. Then, in Section 6.1., I outline how current and future policy can play a significant role in fostering greater gender-inclusivity in sport in the Kingdom. In Section 6.2. I outline my 'health argument' which I contend could be a powerful tool in pursuing that greater gender-inclusivity. Finally, in Section 6.3. I discuss the prospect for social change more generally, summarise my recommendations, and outline some future research possibilities.

Chapter 5 began with the dominant attitudes towards women's participation in sports in parts of Saudi Arabia. What seems clear from the analysis is that support to participate was relatively similar across education levels, city of origin and gender, and that a majority of respondents felt that women should be able to participate in sports. Although, as we have seen, a closer examination of the data did seem to reveal some interesting patterns.

For example, when it came to women's participation in sport, for all the 13 interviews which were conducted in Dammam, all participants, regardless of age, gender, or education level (noting that there were no non-university educated women interviewed), expressed the view that women should be free to participate in sport. And, in the surveys given to participants from Dammam, the results largely concurred with the interview responses, although a small minority did disagree with women's participation in sport. Similarly, support for women to participate in sports was also found among respondents from the less urban city of Al Jouf.

However, from the analysis it was evident that the support was not as strong in Al Jouf as that felt in the metropolitan city of Dammam. Hence, with regard to the issue of women's participation in sport, a key relationship which might exist is between Saudi attitudes towards women's participation in sport and being from a more rural rather than urban environment. Indeed, other relationships, such as between attitudes and difference in levels of education, did not seem as significant. This is a relationship which might prove to be a useful focus for further research.

Another important point to emerge from the data was that most respondents in interviews expressed qualified support for women's participation in sports only if this occurred in accordance with the teachings of Islam. And in the survey data, the requirement that the participation of women in sports be in accordance with Islamic teachings got the strongest level of support from respondents of all categories. The perhaps more conservative respondents from Al Jouf showed the most support for this requirement. This could suggest that religious views might play a role in determining views on women's participation in sport. (This would fit with a belief that seems widespread in the Academy: that religious belief is typically conservative in a broad sense and is associated with other conservative beliefs on social issues.) And as we discussed above, there may be both practical as well as ideological reasons for this: given the many restrictions on women's autonomy in Saudi Arabia, even those who have views of a more liberal persuasion might, for tactical political reasons, urge for women's participation in sport to be in strict adherence with Islamic teachings. And, of course, it seems probable that many will hold this view sincerely.

Moreover, this issue invites reflection on the role that Islamic feminism and the Foucault and Butler inspired analysis of power that I have invoked above. A central concern of Islamic feminism is with scriptural interpretation, particularly where those interpretations affect the lives of women. Thus, for those who hold that women's participation in sport should be in strict adherence with Islamic teachings, the issue of what those Islamic teachings are, exactly, is of obvious significance. Here, there is a clear, central role for Islamic feminists to champion a more inclusive agenda by helping to liberalise scriptural understanding.

Alongside this, my analysis, which draws on Butler's perspectives on gender and Focauldian notions of power, can also assist in illuminating matters, in my view. The key feature of that analysis is that social power is distributed and emerges out of the interacting psychologies of individual citizens who to a large extent endorse, tolerate, or simply fail to question existing orthodoxies. In challenging such orthodoxies, again Islamic feminism is likely to be (and in my view should be) a main protagonist, not least because it is a movement which is able to 'translate' between orthodox and more progressive ideologies (I discuss this latter point in much greater depth below).

An example which is relevant here involves sex segregation, an issue which was a significant point in my data. Indeed, among university educated men from both cities, sex segregation was considered the most important restriction to be placed on women's participation in sport. Given the extent to which sex segregation is a standard method for ensuring successful policing of norms of chastity, it may be the case that part of the reason for the preference for sex segregation would be because of beliefs about how best to maintain the virtues of modesty and chastity. This would certainly make sense given the standard messages contained in a wide-range of Islamic teachings and in Saudi culture more generally. This also fits with the Neo-Foucauldian model of power: once beliefs get embedded to a certain extent they become unstated assumptions, and all else gets framed in terms of those assumptions (again, I discuss this in more detail below). And, it seems clear to me, it would difficult to navigate the issue of sex segregation in women's sport in Saudi Arabia without involving Islamic feminist perspectives.

A relevant result from my data which speaks directly to this point, which was also one of the most surprising results, was the mixed picture with regards to how male authority was rated by respondents relative to the other options for what should be taken into consideration when women participate in sport. On the one hand, male authority was not chosen as often as most other considerations. This could be surprising because, if Saudi society is as explicitly patriarchal as it is often seen to be, then one might expect male authority to be more widely chosen. This would appear to invite two (not necessarily mutually exclusive) alternative explanations. First, it could be that respondents are not conscious of concerns about male

authority driving their thinking or are not prepared to consciously admit as such. Second, that a more nuanced analysis of the power relations at work in Saudi society might be required, rather than simply describing the society as 'patriarchal' and taking that to be a sufficient explanation. Such a nuanced analysis, in my view, is best informed by an Islamic feminist perspective which syncretises both Muslim and feminist perspectives.

Relatedly in the sample there was a positive relationship between being university educated and choosing *sex segregation*, *modesty and chastity*, and *family duties*, whereas there was a positive relationship between being non-university educated and choosing *male authority*. Thus, there may be a modest relationship between level of education and possessing more patriarchal views, as might be expected. If so, there would appear to be an opportunity for increasing understanding among those who are non-university educated, with an Islamic feminist approach to be preferred, in my view.

And, as we saw, that there may be this modest relationship is somewhat supported by the fact that both men and women held that sex segregation and modesty and chastity are of most significance. And there were very modest differences in the relationship for *male authority*: 7% more men than women, suggesting that education level appears to be the most significant factor associated with the most explicitly patriarchal viewpoint.

And within a Neo-Foucauldian analysis of power as distributed across members of society, including both men and women, these results can perhaps be made sense of. If sex segregation and other restrictive practices are upheld by all members of society through their beliefs and practices, and thereby widely made to seem legitimate, then this would explain why 'male authority' was reported as being of less relative importance than might be expected in the sample as a whole. The only support that the data in the sample gave for the supposition that views on male authority were associated with a variable of interest was in relation to education level. Given how widespread and, relatively speaking, inclusive access to all levels of education is in Saudi Arabia (as was highlighted in Chapter 3), this is potentially explainable within the Neo-Foucauldian model: perhaps education reaches sufficiently far and wide for its effects to be detectable from the 'bottom up'. If, according to the Neo-Foucauldian analysis of

power, the kind of power which underwrites major social features of a society resides in the psychologies of the vast majority of individuals in that society, then the more widespread the potential influence on said psychologies, the more likely a detectable effect (all else being equal). Hence the explicability of an educational effect on the Neo-Foucauldian model.

(Note: I am not arguing that this is a true explanation, per se – my data does not support that–it may well just be a quirk of the sample, or that those who are highly educated are less likely to fit their views to those of perceived authorities. What I am suggesting is that this is a potential explanation for the result. Much more empirical work would be needed to verify or falsify such a potential explanation.)

The Neo-Foucauldian analysis of how the power relations exist in society can also be applied to the popularity among respondents of the 'private' option when deciding where women should engage in sporting activity. Even among university educated women–the group one might intuitively expect to be most liberal in their views on women's sport–70% from Dammam and 82% from Al Jouf held that women should only participate in sport privately. To explain this, Foucault's analysis of power seems forceful: the persistence of the restrictive practice of denying women the opportunity to practice sport in public persists not simply because of men insisting that it not be so, because, as it might be put, of male hegemony. But rather, it persists because of the widespread distribution of beliefs and social habits across the population–across the genders–which uphold and endorse it. As Foucault states: 'power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere' (1979: 93).

Moreover, the role of sex and the body in power asymmetries can be further illuminated by other aspects of Foucault's work. In particular, Foucault's notion of 'bio-power' is pertinent here. As he states:

> by [biopower] I mean… the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the 18th century, modern

Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species (2007: 1).

And, Foucault's notion of biopower can be used to help make sense of the sex-segregation requirement which appears to be so readily endorsed in the sample. Perhaps, so deeply embedded are the forms of bio-power which have come to dominate Saudi society that the very fact of sex segregation and its consequences is now a basic part of a variety of political strategies, including but by no means limited to those concerning gender-inclusivity in sport.

Returning to the issue of power's ubiquity, there is some broader empirical evidence which lends some weight to this analysis. In particular, some of the literature highlights that most Saudi and other Muslim women would reject the view that they are oppressed. For example, in their introduction to *Muslim Women and sport*, an edited collection of perspectives on Muslim women and sport predominantly constituted by the views of Islamic women, Benn et al. have suggested that there is a need for greater understanding of the socio-political nuances of women's position in many parts of the Islamic world (see 2010: 1-9). Benn et al. cite the issue of gender-inclusion in the Olympic Games as one example of the kind of nuance they have in mind. As has been discussed above, a standard Western feminist criticism regards the discriminatory exclusion of Muslim women from the Olympic games. Saudi Arabia provides a clear example of this. However, as Benn et al. point out, on the one hand there is evident force in the view that women's right to compete in sporting contexts should be defended against political or culturally motivated efforts to deny that right. But on the other hand, the rights of women who embody their faith in part by sincerely adopting privacy and other behavioural practices which preclude participation in the Olympic Games should also not have their rights denied, and thus should, where possible, be catered to in sporting contexts. For example, by the provision of opportunities to participate in events organised in line with the relevant religious practices (Benn et al. 2010: 3-4).

Relatedly, Al-Kayed (2015) and Rajakhan (2014) found that women wear Islamic dress for reasons that might be described as 'means-end rational'. For instance: in order to avoid unwanted attention from males, or to gain respect, or to avoid having to conform to what are

perceived as unrealistic or oppressive ideals of beauty. And the right to make such practical choices should certainly be respected, in sporting events and elsewhere.

These reflections on some of the nuances involved in understanding the issue of gender-inclusion in Islamic contexts provides support for the neo-Foucauldian analysis of power that I have proposed as well as the general normative claim that progress on the issue of gender-inclusion might be best pursued by an indigenous Islamic-feminist movement. First, the extent to which the relevant beliefs and practices about gender appear to be deeply embedded among Muslim women helps to explain the persistence of what are typically perceived from the western perspective as gender inequities (not as 'merely' inequalities). And second, as Benn et al. state:

> Islamic feminism offers a way to understand and empower Muslim women from inside the religion by recognising that a faith-based approach is the only way forward for many women and men (2010: 8).

Recall the discussion from Chapter 3 about the important equality/equity distinction and how that distinction can assist in making sense of aspects of the gender-inclusion issue in the Islamic world. A further key aspect of inequity versus inequality is that the latter is easier to identify from a 'globally neutral' perspective than the former. For example, the 'inequality question': *are as many women as men employed in industry x?* would seem to admit of a clear, univocal answer: yes or no. And the relevant answer should be accepted by any rational person irrespective of their cultural or other learned perspectives. In contrast, the 'inequity question': *is equality distribution y in industry x inequitable?* is less obviously the kind of question which easily admits of a clear, univocal answer.[35] The persistence of involved debates about the latter type of question, and the relative lack of such debates about the first type of question, are evidence of that.

---

[35] Recall, an equality distribution can be defined as the total range of equality-relevant properties that two groups share (or don't share). To use a neutral example just to illustrate the notion, to describe the equality distribution between Scottish and Irish people, one would have to describe all the equality-relevant properties had by each group, and state the nature and degree of any differences.

This suggests that determining when a particular state of affairs is inequitable, rather than merely unequal, is much more difficult. The best explanation for why this is the case, in my view, is that judgements about inequity are more often influenced by 'locally partisan' factors: culture, individual circumstances, and such like. The strongest evidence in support of this is perhaps the well-documented existence of diachronic and synchronic differences in population-level moral judgements in cultures. For example, most 19th century Britons judged that women should not be able to vote whereas most 21st century Britons judge that they should (this is a diachronic difference in a culture); and most 21st century Britons judge that women should be able to hold the highest offices of government whereas most 21st century Saudis judge that women should not be able to hold those offices (this is a synchronic difference across cultures). These differences in judgement, it seems, are broadly speaking the result of culture.

Thus, if disputes about equity are locally partisan, and the debate about women's participation in sport in Saudi Arabia is one such dispute, then this provides further justification for my claim that change is to best be achieved via the Islamic feminist movement. No other feminist movement, it seems clear to me, is better placed to successfully navigate the relevant locally partisan factors.

And here, it appears that there is clear scope for progress to be made by a health-centred movement with the promotion of PA and sport for girls and women at its core. As I will discuss in more detail below, there are already both powerful cultural assumptions and broader social policy commitments regarding the very significant value of the mental and physical health of women and girls. And the Islamic feminist movement may be best placed to motivate change by appealing to those cultural assumptions and policy commitments.

A key reason for why is the Islamic feminist movement is best places is legitimacy: those calling for social action by Muslim women are far more likely–should, indeed, be far more likely–to have those calls heeded if they are living public Muslim lives. If so, then the need for an Islamic feminist movement to address the issue of gender disparities in the Islamic world more generally, and Saudi Arabia in particular, is made especially clear.

A key question that arises at this point concerns the processes of how this might be achieved: if change must, or would best occur 'from within' how do those who are not members of the 'in group' (but are members of the 'out group') play any role? What role, for example, should Islamic men, or non-Islamic Western women, play in this process? I think these are difficult questions to answer, but perhaps the change in understanding of gender and societal gender relations that occurred in many parts of the developed world over the past two centuries may provide an instructive model.

Consider: on the one the hand, the feminist expressions and movements that arose, it seemed, 'from within' an in-group. Examples include Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (1792), or the suffragette movement. For ease, I will call such expressions and movements 'gender-indigenous'. On the other hand, there were significant *non*-gender-indigenous contributions too, such as John Stuart Mill's influential essay *On the Subjection of Women* (1869). Interestingly, in the case of Mill's essay, he credited his wife, Harriet Taylor Mill, and his stepdaughter, Helen Taylor (both prominent feminists of the period), with having a strong influence on his thinking.

These significant episodes in the development of feminist thought and action in the industrialised nineteenth and twentieth century world perhaps, therefore, contain the elements of a useful model of gender-indigenous thought and action *in dialogue* with non-gender-indigenous thought and action. A model, indeed, that may be used to provide an initial answer to the key question that was raised: if change must, or would best, occur from within an in-group how do those who are in the out-group play any role? The answer to this question is bound to be complex, but at least one key role that those from without can play is the role of *interlocuter*. In short, as John was–intellectually–to Harriet, those in the out-group can be to those in the in-group.

Indeed, this understanding of *interlocution* between the in-group and the out-group appears to be in congruence with the Neo-Foucauldian analysis of societal power relations that has been adopted and applied in this thesis. Recall, on the interpretation of Foucault that was drawn from Butler and parts of Foucault's writings, I advanced the claim in Chapter 4 that expressions like

'gender power relations' should be understood as referring to 'a complex strategical situation' which is best understood in a way analogous to how 'micro-physics' analyses material objects (Foucault 1978: 93; 1977: 26)–i.e. as emerging from the interactions of all the basic elements of the overall system (in the case of gender power relations, the social system). In the case of gender power, the basic elements are of course people's psychologies–in particular their beliefs and related mental states (not sub-atomic particles, as such). If so, then this would explain and, indeed, predict, the broader gender-cultural categories of the in and out-groups and the justification, *need* even, for those in the out-group to engage in interlocution with those in the in-group–if the goal is to change the complex strategical situation that we refer to with terms like 'gender power relations'.

Consider, again the question that I raised above was: if change must, or would best occur 'from within' how do those who are not members of the 'in group' (but are members of the 'out group') play any role? Consider two out-groups in this context: Saudi Muslim men and Western, non-Muslim women. One possible approach the former could take might be to engage in a form of 'HeforShe' type movement, where a particular kind of 'ally' political symbolism could be combined with advocacy and political engagement in a manner which is clearly intended to be supportive of the aims of the Islamic feminist movement. Similarly, the latter could engage in a 'SheforShe' type movement. It will be worthwhile taking some time to consider some of the complexities that such movements might face.

And here, the central observation of Foucault on power that has been a focus of this thesis is relevant. If one wishes to change the properties of a complex strategical situation involving, say, gender, then one cannot do so *without changing the micro-strategical properties of the situation*–i.e. without changing such key basic elements as certain beliefs of people of all relevant genders and their beliefs about how they are and should be related to each other.

Therefore, understanding the process of interlocution is, I believe, of central importance. There would appear to be five main possible results of this process of interlocution between the in and out-group: (i) a new belief is disseminated: i.e. a belief that someone had previously not considered is adopted by them; (ii) the 'truth value', *true* or *false*, of a belief held by someone

is reversed: i.e. what they held as true is now taken to be false or vice versa; (iii) the truth value of a belief held by someone is reinforced: i.e. what they held to be true with some credence level, they now hold with a stronger credence level; (iv) a belief is eliminated: i.e. a belief that was held by some proportion of a group is then no longer held by any members of that group; (v) no change in belief occurs.

Crucially, whether belief dissemination, reversal, reinforcement, or elimination will occur appears to depend on the nature of the in/out-group interlocution *at least somewhat independently of the intentions of those engaging in the interlocution*. For example, someone in the out-group intending to introduce a new belief to someone in the in-group may, despite their intentions, simply cause the in-group individual to reinforce existing beliefs. And there is a particular problem here for western feminism because of both historical and contemporary western colonialism. As was first discussed in Chapter 3, this dramatically complicates the process of 'exporting' the ideology of western feminism into contexts in which feminist theories and rhetoric have been employed as tools of colonial and post-colonial geo-political control.

This invites questions about how this complicated terrain might best be navigated, and here what might be called 'meta-beliefs' appear to play a crucial role–where a 'meta-belief' is a belief about the degree to which other beliefs are open to change. Consequently, those in the out group should reflect carefully on the interlocution process and how best to approach it with particular focus on what the 'meta-beliefs' of the in-group are.

I will discuss this issue further below, but first it will be helpful to summarise the Neo-Foucauldian model of indigenous political change that I have been outlining.

The model begins with the in/out-group distinction. This distinction invites a question, what role should those who are *out* play for those who are *in* where there is a perceived need to enact political change for the benefit of those who are *in*? The proposed answer is: engage (at least) in interlocution, where this involves those who are in and those who are out bringing their systems of belief into contact with each other through the exchange of ideas. Five main outcomes appear most likely: (i) new belief dissemination; (ii) reversal of belief truth value;

(iii) reinforcement of belief truth value; (iv) elimination of belief; (v) no change. Importantly, which of the five outcomes interlocution produces can be hard to predict and may not easily align with the intentions of those in the out group, but meta-beliefs of the in-group regarding which of their beliefs are open to change appear of central significance to this issue. For example, consider the issue of sex segregation again and how interlocution might work with regards to one of the out-groups we began considering above: Western, non-Muslim women. It may be the case that, say, western, non-Muslim feminists may argue against sex segregation but in doing so simply activate the 'meta-belief' in their interlocutors that the sex-segregation belief is not open to change, thus unintentionally causing a reinforcement of the belief in sex segregation.

Therefore, if the model I have proposed is accurate, then there are good reasons for those in out-group to tread carefully, especially with regard to the issues that seem well supported by meta-beliefs, as in the case of sex segregation, And, there are predictive and explanatory features of this model which count in its favour. In particular, this Neo-Foucauldian model would seem to predict the development of feminism in the Western world during the modern period in two ways.

First, the model would predict that given a sufficient range of basic elements, *people's beliefs*, and relevant interactions, *interlocution*, then changes will likely occur to the overall political state of affairs – i.e. the *strategical situation* will change. And this is what seems to have occurred in the development of feminism in the Western world. That development can be summarised by listing distinguishable feminist theories: liberal, radical, Marxist, psychoanalytic, postcolonial, postmodern (among others, for a useful summary see: Tong 2009: 1-9). An apparent feature of this theoretical development is how responsive it was to the wider political climate of the relevant periods. The feminisms that arose appeared to be responses to the contemporary political situation and perceived inadequacies with prior approaches to addressing that contemporary political situation. And this is precisely what would be expected on this Neo-Foucauldian model–with *interlocution* clearly playing an essential role. The freer the 'marketplace of belief', i.e. the greater the possibility for, and

varieties of idea exchange, the more there will be opportunities for change and theoretical development.

Second, with the basic micro-strategical elements–beliefs and related psychological entities– existing as part of a unified system we call 'society', the model predicts that there will be degrees of in/out-group interlocution. Applied to this thesis, the most basic definition of the in-group of beliefs are those held by Islamic women (or, better: Islamic women in Saudi society and similar such societies) and the 'out' group of beliefs are those held by people who are not Islamic or not women, or both. The degree of in/out-group interlocution appears determined in part by 'meta-beliefs' concerning which beliefs are open to interlocutionary change and which aren't. This would explain, for example, why the Saudi women who completed the survey and questionnaire seem strongly in favour of women being able to participate in sport, but quite strongly opposed to ending sex segregation. For the former, it is less clear that there are meta-beliefs which rule out women's participating in sport–in the interviews, for example, it was taken to be obvious by the vast majority of interviewees that women should be able to participate in sport. For the latter, this was also taken as obvious–'of course', most seemed to think, 'there should be sex segregation'.

To give another example, the instructive experiences of gender–that unique epistemic standpoint, or situated knowledge in something like Haraway's sense (1988)–has effects which are difficult to predict cross-culturally. One might expect that being a woman would be more likely to give one experiences that influence one to have more liberal views about women's sport. And this might be so, up to a point, but it may also be that being a woman in Saudi Arabia can also give one experiences which may influence one to have fewer liberal views about women's sport. If so, then this could explain the mixed, even somewhat 'muted', relationship between being a woman and views on sport that have been revealed in the sample in this and other sub-themes.

6.1 Policy proposals

Regarding policy proposals, therefore, it seems probable that any suggested changes to policy, or suggestions for directions that political activism might take, should pay significant heed to what meta beliefs are in play. And there is a lesson from Saudi history in this regard. As was discussed in Chapter 3, the successful establishment of formal education for women in Saudi Arabia was achieved as the result of a movement which successfully argued that such a system would result in women better being able to fulfil the role of wife and mother (Alsuwaida 2016: 112). Call this the 'education argument'. Whatever the merits, or demerits, of the intentions behind the education argument, the ultimate result is difficult to disdain: as I have highlighted in Chapter 3, women now constitute around at least 50% of learners at all levels in the Saudi education system, and can always in principle, and often in practice, access the same subject areas as men. For example, as was discussed above (Section 3.5), in the Kingdom, currently, more women than men graduate in biology, physics, and mathematics. Compared to the 1970s when only 8% of those pursuing a higher degree were women (Jawad 1998), this is a dramatic change in a relatively short period of time. Moreover: a dramatic change that seems to have been precipitated by the education argument, followed by the more general liberalising effects of education that were discussed in Section 3.5 alongside, plausibly, the increasing normalisation of women in formal education.

Hence, if the apparent success of the argument that better educating women would help them better fulfil their roles as wives and mothers is taken to be instructive, then perhaps an analogous argument can be put today in relation to women's participation in sport. It could be argued that healthier women better perform, first, their role as wives, mothers, and grandmothers (the easier argument to win, in my view), and then as citizens, students, colleagues, and leaders, and thus should be given every opportunity to be healthier. Moreover, access to opportunities for sport and other forms of PA can, with clear justification, be given prominence in any such health argument. The overwhelming evidence that we saw in Chapter 2 of the many health benefits of sport and other kinds of PA is testament to that. Indeed, the argument may best be framed in terms of wives, mothers, *and grandmothers*, given the clear effect on life expectancy that PA has, not to mention its role in primary and secondary

prevention of musculo-skeletal disorders, such as osteoarthritis. Also, Saudi Arabia has a relatively high average household size and still broadly leans towards the extended rather than nuclear-family model of family life and social support (UN Household Size and Composition Database 2017).

Interestingly, a key feature of the health argument, that was also shared by the education argument, is how it might appeal to what is apparently a central meta-belief held by many Saudis: that women should be supported as far as possible in conducting their roles as wife, mother, grandmother and such like. Call these women's 'pro-social gender roles'. This would explain why any argument which invokes such a belief has significant power and would help to explain the startling success of the education argument in 1960s Saudi Arabia. For instrumental reasons alone, therefore, there are good grounds for pursing a similar argumentative strategy by appealing to women's pro-social gender and other roles in the case of women's participation in sport.

And a key context in which this health argument might have particular force is in the formation of governmental and institutional policy. As has been highlighted already above, the Kingdom has pre-existing commitments to achieving a range of improvements in the health outcomes for women, some of which are explicitly linked to maternal health. It is difficult to see how such outcomes can be achieved without also achieving significant increases in the PA opportunities for Saudi women. And sport is perhaps the central example of a type of PA for which there is massive scope for participatory growth in the Kingdom, and thus massive scope for associated health improvements.

Specific policy proposals could include broadening the physical education curriculum towards being more inclusive and encouraging girls to take part in more 'intensive' sports which are often viewed as non-feminine but which are likely to have greater health benefits. This kind of policy proposal would also seem to require a commitment to providing adequate facilities and opportunities for women to continue with these sports post-secondary education. Moreover, if sport is really to play a significant role in improving women's health, then 'nudging' policies that encourage participation across the population as a whole should be seriously considered. I

will discuss this further below when I discuss the role that Saudi Arabia's international commitments, such as to the Strategic Development Goals, might play in driving forward such policy changes.

Returning to the data, the issue of sporting facilities appeared clearly to be a significant hindering factor in the way of increasing women's participation in sport. In both the interviews and survey data, participants cited the issue with at least some frequency, and a moments reflection should reveal that accessible facilities are going to be particularly significant in a country where public participation in sport (in such places as public parks) is not a viable option for women.

The restriction on women participating in sport publicly, both in terms of Saudi law and widespread cultural assumptions held by most men and women, seemed to be at least partly underpinned by an apparent concern with the relationship between womens' supposed sexual virtue and sport. Bound up with this seemed to be religious beliefs about what is required for women to remain sexually virtuous. One possible conclusion that might be drawn from this is that progress on women's participation in sport is bound up with socio-cultural progress in the attitudes that are prevalent in society towards sexual morality in general and women's sexual morality in particular. Therefore, I think a politically prudent approach on behalf of the Islamic feminist movement is best advised–the health argument puts the movement in reach of a lot of 'low hanging fruit', such as increasing physical-education curriculum breadth or improving facilities, but a complete end to all exclusionary practices is a greater reach which may take more time to achieve.

In relation to this, the government's role in limiting or liberalising women's sport in Saudi Arabia figured prominently in interviewees' responses. This would typically occur in one of two ways. First, the government would be called upon, or expected, to lead changes. Second, those arguing for less change would cite government regulations or laws as reasons for not pursuing change. This highlighted how the government appears to act as both a brake and potential accelerator of change with regards to women's sport.

And, at both the government and individual level, the potential role of religious belief seems difficult to ignore. If the goal is change some of those religious beliefs, then this invites consideration of the process of interlocution discussed above, and the forms that such interlocution might take. Recall that interlocution is here defined as the process of members of an in-group and members of an out-group bringing their belief systems into contact through the exchange of ideas. As was discussed previously, an important point to consider in the process of interlocution is the role that meta-beliefs might play. Here, we can begin to consider what role theological meta-beliefs might play and, thus, the role that theological interlocution might play in fostering the Islamic feminist movement.

For example, as was highlighted when Islamic feminism was first discussed in Chapter 3, two distinctive features of the movement are, first, to reinterpret holy texts in a manner that demonstrates that the problems faced by women in the Islamic world are not due to any essential features of Islam, but rather are due to misguided interpretations of Islam. Second, to establish the rights that women have under Islam and ensure that they are properly understood by both men and women, as well as enforced.

In the context of health policy, with one eye on my proposed health argument, I think that these broader religious and theological considerations at the heart of the Islamic feminist project form part of the issue of cultural sensitivity in global public health. As was discussed in Section 2.8, the WHOs recent guide for recommended interventions for tackling non-communicable diseases describes a number of key 'background conditions' that are likely to be required in any successful global, regional, or national policy approach. Key among these was ensuring *cultural sensitivity* in any interventions to avoid resistance (Armstrong et al. 2007). Clearly, deeply held religious beliefs should form part of any cultural sensitivity assessment for any proposed intervention. In my view, such cultural sensitivity assessments should form part of the kind of direct policy intervention that the WHO provides guidelines for, as well as the kind of ideological interventions that pursuing the feminist project typically involves.

For example, when addressing the issue of sex segregation, which as we have seen appears to be deeply embedded, it may be best advised to, in the first instance at least, devise more

inclusionary policies which work around the sex segregation requirement rather than directly try to overturn it. As I said above, there is lower hanging fruit, such as improving facilities and curricular, which should be picked first. But most of all, I think simply accepting that feminist progress in Saudi Arabia will best occur within an Islamic feminist framework should be the central pillar of any approach. Islamic feminists have the best epistemic standpoint and best mix of feminist and Islamic moral authority to pursue greater gender-inclusion in sport and all other areas of Saudi life.

6.2 The health argument

A key piece of evidence which seemed to emerge from the data was how frequently health considerations were cited in supporting women's participation in sport. As we saw in the Twitter and interview data, individuals repeatedly cited the possibility of improving health in their own thoughts on women's sports, and in the survey data too, improvements in women's health was the most commonly identified effect. It does not seem entirely unreasonable to surmise that this may be reflective of a wider state of opinion in Saudi society. If this is reflective of the wider state of opinion then, combined with the strong evidence of health benefits of PA that was discussed in Chapter 2, this suggests that those wishing to promote women's greater participation in sport in Saudi Arabia would be wise to use appeals to health improvements as a central plank of their arguments.

Indeed, as we have seen, this would fit well with Saudi Arabia's commitments to such international frameworks as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As was discussed in Chapter 2, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to which Saudi Arabia is a signatory, included two especially relevant goals: Goal 3 'Good Health and Well-Being', and Goal 5 'Gender Equality'. The former goal is to 'Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages', and the latter goal is to 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'. All 2030 goals have received explicit endorsement from the highest echelons of the Saudi government. For example, in the first 'Voluntary National Review' of Saudi Arabia's

progress towards achieving these goals (known as 'Vision 2030' in the Kingdom), Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman stated:

> Women's work is very important. Women make up half of society and we want it to be a productive half (Voluntary National Review KSA 2018: 61).

And in the review, the section related to Goal 3 explicitly mentions strengthening 'prevention against health threats' and promoting 'sports activities in society' (Voluntary National Review KSA 2018: 46). But the review does not give any details about how the promoting of sport (or PA more broadly) is being used as a preventative health measure, or about how promoting sports activities is playing a role in improving gender equality. In the section on Goal 5, indeed, there is no mention whatsoever of the relationship between PA and health, or of the role that sport can play in promoting health-benefitting PA (see: Voluntary National Review KSA 2018: 45-48, 61-64). This suggest that the extent to which PA is important for primary and secondary prevention of both physical and mental health has not been recognised. Given the overwhelming strength of the evidence for the importance of PA for this, as we saw in Chapter 2, combined with the Kingdom's explicit commitments to improving health for women and girls, the lack of explicit recognition of the role of PA would appear to be a significant policy oversight–*from the government's own perspective*.

Thus, there would appear to be the makings of a potentially forceful argument for policy *implementation* which would improve the access to opportunities for PA for women. And, given the central role sport plays in providing opportunities for PA–as recognised in the Kingdom's own pre-existing policy commitments–then the potential implications for sport seem clear.

It will be worthwhile to spell out more fully the force of this point. Consider: given that such policy documents as the Voluntary National Review make clear the Saudi government's explicit commitment to both: (i) improving women's health; and (ii) the reliability of the overwhelming evidence for the very important role that PA plays in health outcomes; then any argument that government policy should increase women's physical activity *but not include increasing women's access to sporting opportunities and PA* seems doomed to fail (at least on

265

rational grounds–if not in practice!). Consider: how would such a contention be put? That women should be able to run, but not with a ball at their feet, or a racket in their hands? That women should be able to regularly engage in bodily movements caused by skeletal muscle contractions such that energy expenditure exceeds the basal level, but that they should not be allowed to do so enjoyably? Or not in a team? Or not in any activity where participants are expected to adhere to agreed norms which govern how an expected, defined goal is to be achieved–but where that goal is not the achievement of physical fitness per se, but rather an arbitrary goal set by the relevant norms? And where typically (or perhaps ideally), the attempt to achieve the relevant defined goal is pursued primarily for pleasure? That these questions are so clearly rhetorical, and that to treat them as non-rhetorical would be so clearly absurd–*particularly given the role of PA in improving women's health*–demonstrates that the government's pre-existing explicit commitments entail that it cannot, rationally (i.e. consistently), maintain many (perhaps even any) of the current restrictions on women's participation in sport. Moreover, it demonstrates that *by the government's own lights* not only should current restrictions not be maintained, but that very significant policy steps should be taken to positively replace those restrictions with opportunities.

In short, once it is recognised that PA is just as important for women's health as for men's, then the recognition of the importance of women's sport should follow.

And importantly, Islamic feminists are particularly well-placed to both push back against the scriptural interpretations that might still stand in the way of the above health-centred argument, as well as to pursue the argument itself. And, in terms of the Neo-Foucauldian model of power the health argument, in my view, has the potential to have widespread force: given both the government's commitments and widespread popular concern with health. Thus there are significant opportunities for positive, change-inducing interlocution on this point.

Consequently, this invites reflection on what the prospects are for recognition of this point in more precise policy terms. In broad terms, the policy principles have already been settled–the remaining issues are of detail and *implementation* of existing policy rather than an argument about *new* policy. Clearly, pursuing the former is, all else being equal, likely to be a more

realistic goal than pursing the latter–particularly in a Saudi context. This suggests that there are not insignificant grounds for hope in this regard.

Indeed, there are at least some indications that tentative steps are being taken towards implementing what, as we have just highlighted, is government policy. The details of this policy (some of which, as we will see, is merely 'aspirational') are spelled out in the Quality of Life Program (QoL) 2020, which is one major strand of Saudi Arabia's broader Vision 2030 development goals (based on the UN's Strategic Development Goals). The basic aim of the program is to improve the quality of life of citizens in the Kingdom according to the extent to which those citizens (see QoL Program Delivery Plan 2017: 10):

> 1. Can maintain basic living standards for leading satisfactory lives.

> 2. Have options for living pleasant and comfortable lives.

These two broad conditions on what constitutes 'quality of life' are explicitly based on an analysis of a range of widely used international 'quality of life' indices:

i.   The Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) Global liveability Ranking

ii.   The Mercer Quality of Living Survey

iii. The Monocle Magazine's Annual Lifestyle List

iv.   The World Happiness Index

v.   The OECD Better Life Index

vi.   The ARRP Liveability Index

The QoL program's second broader quality of life condition has five sub-components, one of which is (QoL Program Delivery Plan 2017: 8-11):

> 2. (Sports): The participation of citizens and residents in diverse sports activities has a direct impact on health and wellness.

A key feature of the program is that its goals are framed as 'aspirations' (and, sometimes, 'ambitions'), a term which is not explained in the program documents but implies goals which are not legally binding or, more generally, backed by institutional penalties or similar enforcement mechanisms (see, for example, QoL Program 2017: 30). Given that Saudi Arabia operates with a monarchical government system where institutional power is concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of individuals, this is perhaps not surprising. Even in European democracies governments can be hesitant to commit themselves to goals in way that might entail strict forms of legal accountability.

That these are 'mere' aspirations is perhaps grounds for reduced optimism, but on the other hand that they are aspirations at all–particularly formally adopted and spelled out in high-level policy documents–certainly provides grounds for some degree of positive expectation. Moreover, many of the specific targets suggest that, in essence, the broader debate about sporting equality for women has largely been won at the policy level, and significant improvements should follow a series of implementational efforts which appear, in principle, within reach.

This is the general issue, but questions then immediately arise about the particulars. What improvements in implementation, exactly? How should those improvements be sought? Here, reference to specific Sustainable Development Goals may prove useful. Recall, for instance, the following Goal-3 targets (see UN 2015: 16-17):

1. Reduction of maternal mortality to less than 70,000 per 100,000 live births.

2. Reduction of neonatal mortality to no more than 12 per 100,000 live births and under-5 mortality to no more than 25 per 1,000 live births.

3. Reduction of premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by one third (through prevention, treatment and promotion of health and wellbeing).

4. Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.

The most relevant Goal-5 targets for the purposes of this research are to achieve the following by 2030 (see UN 2015: 18):

1.   Ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls.

2.   Ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

3.   Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Thus, if pursuit of the Goal 3 and Goal 5 targets, among others, can be successfully linked to increasing gender inclusivity in sport, then questions will need to be answered about how the relevant policies will be implemented. Working within a sex-segregation model, for instance, clearly requires a very significant increase in the provision of facilities for girls and women, both within institutional contexts such as schools and universities, as well as in wider society. Moreover, given the QoL program's quality of life condition's second sub-component (that the participation in diverse sports activities has a direct impact on health and wellness), the facilities will need to be able to accommodate a diverse range of sports, including team games and outdoor sports – so cannot just be a few exercise machines in a room. In some cases, it may be possible to have a degree of shared facilities if, say, there are separate days for use by each gender – such as a football field or running track. But in general gender-specific facilities should be preferred so as not to limit usage.

In relation to this, there are questions of attire, but if the facilities are gender-specific and properly-designed so as to be spaces not open to public view, then there should not be any major problems with requirements for overly restrictive attire as the rules are generally more relaxed in women-only spaces (a further immediate benefit of gender-specific facilities).

Physical education is one particular case where both of these issues come together in important ways. The physical education experiences that girls have in school will likely play an important role in forming their habits and expectations going forward, so special attention ought to be given to ensuring that those experiences are positive and encouraging. This should include as

wide a range of sports as possible being made available to cater to (and encourage the development of) as many interests as possible. In addition, there should be attention given to the messages and role models that girls are exposed to. For example, a school-based campaign which emphasises girls' abilities and the benefits of sport could form part of a wider push to increase engagement with and opportunities for physical education in school. A lot could be gained just by increasing the extent to which girls playing sport is seen as 'normal' by everyone including the girls themselves, and this is largely a matter of making that a reality.

Finally, there is the issue of male of authority and its potential role in both limiting and expanding the scope for female participation in sport. One way forward with this issue is to push the health argument here to emphasise that being able to take part in sport is a matter of good versus bad health (even, in some cases, life versus death), something that should not be limited by anyone. One way in which this might be addressed would be to explore the issue via storylines in popular soap opera or dramas, such as Al Assouf. The storyline could concern the role of sport in health and the family dynamics around that (including, of course, issues of male authority). This could be a useful spur towards national conversations of the issue and the foregrounding of any other efforts to progress attitudes.

6.3 Looking forward, recommendations, and future research

I will draw this chapter to a close by offering a few further reflections on how further progress on these issues might be achieved and summarising my overall recommendations.

For any society, its education system is one of the major forces for social change. And here, I think, there are some grounds for a degree of measured optimism in the Saudi case. For example, as was discussed in Chapter 3, there is a high degree of gender equality in the Saudi education system in terms of the percentages of males and females at each level. Up to the end of secondary education, there is near parity (48.4% female versus 51.6% male), and in higher education overall there are more women than men (57.2% women versus 42.8% men). Consequently, it would appear that simply producing a highly educated populace is not in itself sufficient to produce the kind of belief-liberalisation that the feminist project requires.

Indeed, this state of affairs in the Kingdom would seem to demand explanation. Saudi Arabia has very high levels of education across both genders, high degrees of gender parity in access to education at all levels, and a generally high degree of economic development (in 2017, Saudi Arabia was ranked 19th in the world for GDP). And yet, according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2017, Saudi Arabia ranks 138 out of 144 countries worldwide, and even across the Middle East and North Africa region, Saudi Arabia is 14th out of 17 (Schwab et al. 2017: 16). Why, then, do there remain such apparently deeply embedded social practices as very strict gender segregation and extremely limited opportunities for women to practice sport even when such strict gender segregation practices are adhered to?

Perhaps, with the analyses offered above, combined with the exploratory data collected and presented in this thesis, and the summation of key parts of the wider literature that was conducted in Chapters 2 and 3, the outline of a potential answer to this question can be given.

First, the role of meta-beliefs seems significant. Consider how Saudi formal educational mechanisms appear, on the one hand, to produce gender parity in women graduates for such stereotypically 'male-dominated' disciplines as mathematics and physics, but on the other hand fail to more frequently produce graduates who do not believe that strict gender segregation should still be upheld. This invites reflection on which beliefs those educational processes are affecting. Most obviously, learning mathematics or physics would directly affect beliefs about mathematical or physical matters. Thus, a higher education in physics or mathematics, compared to other subject-types, might be less likely to impact meta-beliefs about which beliefs are open to change. In short, changing a person's beliefs about special relativity or algebra might not be the most direct route towards changing their beliefs about gender equality, or changing their beliefs about how to change other people's beliefs about gender equality.

Indeed, when examining the large body of data which appears to show that increasing levels of education has causal relevance for increases in liberal beliefs, the *type* of education is of clear significance. And given that so much of the data is drawn from North America and Europe, the nature of higher education there is worth reflecting on. In North America and many parts of Europe undergraduate education is often relatively general in nature–and this was even more

the case historically. For example, in the USA vocational specialisation does not occur until the post-graduate stage, with even those majoring in a STEM subject at undergraduate level being required to take a significant proportion of non-STEM courses, most typically arts and humanities, social science, or 'General Education' subjects (see Ross 2017). This could partly explain the liberalising effect of education in the USA–particularly for the first major studies which appeared to reveal such an effect (e.g. Newcomb 1943/1957), as this was in the age before the internet and other forms of mass communication began to muddy the causal waters very significantly. While exposure to the theory of special relativity or algebra alone might be expected to have a limited effect in itself on a person's political outlook, exposure to Mill, Orwell, Butler, or Bourdieu might be expected to have a greater effect. In particular, educational subject matter which directly targets the relevant meta-beliefs, or the foundations of those beliefs, would appear to be the most obvious mechanism by which educational *subject matter* could liberalise beliefs.

Of course, the overall reality of belief-change process via education is likely to be exceptionally complex, with many competing, causally relevant factors, but the relative *narrowness* of education as one of those factors seems to be a plausible hypothesis for further inquiry. And in a Saudi context especially, the hypothesis has explanatory force: the kind of subject matter that is widely available for study in European and North American institutions (and elsewhere) which encourages the questioning of meta-beliefs, and the foundations of meta-beliefs, is simply not taught to the same degree, or in the same manner, in Saudi Arabian universities.

So, return to the question of why there remain such apparently deeply embedded social practices as very strict gender segregation and extremely limited opportunities for women to practice sport even when such strict gender segregation practices are adhered to, despite Saudi Arabia being a wealthy, highly educated country. The outline answer then is: because the meta-beliefs which underpin the relevant practices are relatively insulated from change–at least in so far as the formal education system does not include widespread access to subject matter which might affect those beliefs or their foundations.

And yet, there is perhaps some grounds for optimism here. As Schwab et al. note, Saudi Arabia:

> has recorded the region's largest improvement on the overall Index over the past decade, as well as the second-largest relative improvement globally on the Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex. On Educational Attainment, it is the fifth-most improved country in the world (2017: 22).[36]

Moreover, this seemed to be consistent with some of the data that I collected. For example, largely regardless of their location, gender, or level of education, the interviewees responses suggested that there have been notable changes in the beliefs of many people regarding the actuality and possibility of further changes. Indeed, many of the respondents expressed optimism that the Kingdom's perception of women's sport was changing, and, relatedly, that Saudi Arabia was becoming less strict regarding scriptural interpretation. Additionally, looking forward, many interviewees believed that once women were allowed to participate more in sport and PA this would hasten greater gender equity across the board.

However, as we saw above, there is also evidence from the interview data that there is resistance to this kind of social progress involving a blunt adoption of Western-style sporting practices. Moreover, this resistance seemed widespread: across the genders, education levels, and geographic locales. The explicit reasons given for this included appeal to different concerns which might be grouped as: cultural-nationalist, gender-based, and religious.

These socio-cultural tensions need to be properly understood and navigated by any political project. Indeed, this would make an excellent issue for further research: both the precise nature of the competing tensions and routes around them. But, on an initial assessment, my view is that these tensions seem to fall into two broad competing forces: first a desire for degrees of liberal progress; second a strong preference for preserving Arabic and Islamic norms. And, as I have repeatedly stressed, the political movement best placed to understand and navigate this

---

[36] Nevertheless, as was discussed in Chapter 3, despite these overall figures, significant inequalities continue to exist below the surface. For example, even though there are more women than men graduating in biology, physics, and mathematics, there are significantly more men than women graduating in engineering and architecture (Rachidi 2017).

terrain is the Islamic feminist movement, particularly for the goal of increasing gender-inclusivity in sport or women's condition in the Kingdom more generally.

Another key question that arises out of the above statistics showing how women's education in Saudi Arabia has made relative progress is: what effect might this be having on attitudes in the country? One possible answer is that the closer the Saudi education system gets to achieving gender parity, the more liberal attitudes about gender in general will become, including attitudes about women's participation in sport.

My research is consistent with there being a positive relationship between increase in the level of education an individual has, and how liberal their attitudes are about women's participation in sport, which, as was discussed in Chapter 3, is a well-established connection. As Weil states:

> The positive relationship between higher levels of educational attainment and social and political liberalism (especially tolerance) has been one of the most stable and consistent findings in empirical social research of contemporary American society (1985: 458)

However, as was also discussed in Chapter 3, one issue which this raises is the possibility that processes of socialisation may be in play, whereby students' attitudes are changed by one of two key mechanisms: either people's attitudes changing to correspond to their peers', or as the result of specific ideas communicated through the subjects they come into contact with. Research which seems to support both of these hypotheses is that differences in level of liberalisation seem to positively correlate with what academic discipline individual's study, the idea being that student's peer groups and the subject ideas they become most familiar with will both positively correlate with their choice of subject (Baer and Lambert 1982, 1990; Guimond and Palmer 1990, 1996).[37]

Finally, I will summarise my policy recommendations and proposed directions for future research. My central contention has been that there are recent social and policy changes which

---

[37] Of course, as I also discussed in Chapter 3, it is possible that there may be self-selected group effect here, with those who are already disposed towards liberality more likely to pursue education in the first place. Nevertheless, even on that model, education could be having a kind of 'teasing out' effect: nurturing the pre-existing tendency towards liberality.

align with central goals of Islamic feminism, and that further changes are possible, particularly via the pursuit of a health-centred movement promoting sport and PA for girls and women.

Throughout, I have supported this contention via appeal to a broader Neo-Foucauldian theoretical framework which emphasises the role of gender in structuring the challenges such a movement would face, and the deep, distributed nature of the power that both resists and can promote such a movement. This is a power which resides in the embedded, widespread beliefs of the populace. I have discussed the approaches that might best be taken in this context, emphasizing the political complexities, which encompass cultural nationalism, gender, geography, education, and historic imperialism, which, in my view, require careful interlocution on the part of those who are in the out-group.

With regards to policy, I noted the major pre-existing policy commitments to promoting women's health and wellbeing, and how those commitments can be utilised in order to further the cause of gender-inclusivity. In particular, the Kingdom's international commitments to the SDGs and their internal reification in the form of the Vision 2030 proposals provide a golden opportunity to push for the proper implementation of these policies. This could be achieved, I suggested, via an explicit appeal to the commitments to improve women's health, which are embodied in the SDGs and Vision 2030 proposals. In particular, via pursing a 'health argument' which emphasises the importance of sport and PA for making good on those commitments.

I also suggested specific ways to implement those policies, which included: (1) initially working within a sex-segregation model on political prudence grounds; (2) employing the expectation of sex segregation to improve facilities for girls and women; (3) using health considerations to increase the diversity of sports on offer for women and girls; (4) ensuring that (2) and (3) are pursued with particular urgency with regards to physical education in schools; (5) using mass media to promote the normalisation of girls and women participating in sport, such as via storylines in soap operas or other popular dramas.

With regards to future research, I have two key proposals. First, for a quantitative, representational survey of the Saudi populace on their views on gender-inclusivity in sport.

Indeed, I view my own, exploratory study, as one step towards that. Second, for a qualitative analysis of how Islamic feminism may best navigate the socio-cultural tensions between the desire for progress versus the desire to defend Arabic and Islamic norms. Upon the completion of my thesis, my aim is to pursue this research if at all possible.

Bibliography

Abu-Odeh, L. 2004. Egyptian feminism: Trapped in the identity debate. Yale Journal of Law and Feminism, 16(2), 145-192.

Adams, C.J. ed., 1987. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (Vol. 16, pp. 277-8). New York: Macmillan.

Adams, A., Anderson, E. and McCormack, M., 2010. Establishing and challenging masculinity: The influence of gendered discourses in organized sport. *Journal of language and social psychology*, 29(3), pp.278-300

Adelman, M. and Knijnik, J., 2013. *Gender and equestrian sport*. New York: Springer

Agence France-Press, 2019. Women's Gym Shut Down over 'Indecent' Video.

AFP, 2015. Female footballer leaves Iran, husband overruled. *The Express Tribune.*

Ahmad, A., 2015. *Islamic feminism-a contradiction in terms?*

Al-Ali, N. and Pratt, N., 2010. *What Kind of Liberation? Women and the occupation of Iraq*. University of California Press.

Al-Bukhari, M.I., 1996. The English Translation of Sahih Al Bukhari With the Arabic Text (9 Volume Set). *Translated by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Al-Saadawi Publications*.

Alessa, A.S., 2010. *Women's Movement in: Kuwait, Egypt, Iran and the UK*. AuthorHouse.

Al-Haidar, A.O. and Mohammad, G., 2004. Struggling for a right: Islam and the participation in sports and physical recreation of girls and women in Kuwait (Doctoral dissertation, Brunel University School of Sport and Education PhD Theses).

Al-Kayed, L., 2015. Leadership challenges for women managers in public universities in Saudi Arabia. Global Journal of Human-Social Science Research, 15(4).

Allan, J.G., 1995. *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology*.

Allen, A., 2016. Feminist perspectives on power. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.*

Al-Rasheed, M., 1998. The Shi'a of Saudi Arabia: a minority in search of cultural authenticity. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 25(1), pp.121-138.

Al-Rasheed, M. 2010. *A history of Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge University Press.Al-Rasheed, M., 2013. *A most masculine state: Gender, politics and religion in Saudi Arabia (Vol. 43)*. Cambridge University Press.

Alshamsi, M.J., 2012. *Islam and political reform in Saudi Arabia: the quest for political change and reform (Vol. 4)*. Routledge.

Al-Shuabi, A, 2016. Challenges facing Kuwaiti female athletes. *Kuwaiti Times*.

Alsuwaida, N., 2016. Women's Education in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of International Education Research*, 12(4), p.111

Ali, S.R., Mahmood, A., Moel, J., Hudson, C. and Leathers, L., 2008. A qualitative investigation of Muslim and Christian women's views of religion and feminism in their lives. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 14(1), p.38.

Alwin, D.F., Cohen, R.L. and Newcomb, T.M., 1991. *Political attitudes over the life span: The Bennington women after fifty years*. University of Wisconsin Press.

Amara, M., 2011. *Sport, politics and society in the Arab world*. Springer.

Armstrong. T. et al. 2007. A Guide for Population-Based Approaches to Increasing Levels of Physical Activity: Implementation of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet Physical Activity and Health

Anderson, E., 2008, June. "I used to think women were weak": Orthodox masculinity, gender segregation, and sport. In *Sociological Forum* (Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 257-280). Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Anderson, E., 2014. *21st century jocks: Sporting men and contemporary heterosexuality*. Springer.

Anderson, P., 2017. *The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci*. Verso Books.

APA, 2009. *Report of the Task Force on Gender Identity and Gender Variance*. American Psychological Association.

Aquil, R., 2011. Change and Muslim women. *International journal of humanities and social science*, *1*(21), pp.21-30.

Assembly Staff, 2010. Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (No. 36). *United Nations Publications*.

ATUS User Guide, 2017. American Time Use Survey User Guide. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Aune, D., Norat, T., Leitzmann, M., Tonstad, S. and Vatten, L.J., 2015. Physical activity and the risk of type 2 diabetes: a systematic review and dose–response meta-analysis.

Badran, M., 1996. *Feminists, Islam, and nation: Gender and the making of modern Egypt*. Princeton University Press.

Baer, D.E. and Lambert, R.D., 1982. Education and support for dominant ideology. *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie*, *19*(2), pp.173-195.

Baker, K. R., Xu, L., Zhang, Y., Nevitt, M., Niu, J., Aliabadi, P., et al. 2004. Quadriceps weakness and its relationship to tibiofemoral and patellofemoral knee osteoarthritis in Chinese: the Beijing osteoarthritis study. *Arthritis and Rheumatology 51*, pp.1815–21.

Banks, O., 1981. *Faces of Feminism a Study of Feminism as a Social Movement*.

Barlas, A., 2008. Engaging Islamic Feminism: Provincializing Feminism as a Master Narrative. In Kynsilehto (ed.), *Islamic feminism: current perspectives*.

Barnes, B. (1995) *The Elements of Social Theory*. London: UCL Press.

Bautch, J. C., Malone, D. G., Vailas, A. C. 1997. Effects of exercise on knee joints with osteoarthritis: a pilot study of biologic markers. Arthritis Care and Research 1997;10:48–55.

Beamish, R., 1982. Sport and the logic of capitalism. *Sport, culture and the modern state*, pp.141-197.

de Beauvoir, S. and Parshley, H.M., 1952. The Second Sex.

Behrens, G. and Leitzmann, M.F., 2013. The association between physical activity and renal cancer: systematic review and meta-analysis. *British journal of cancer*, *108*(4), p.798.

Berlin, J.A. and Colditz, G.A., 1990. A meta-analysis of physical activity in the prevention of coronary heart disease. *American journal of epidemiology*, *132*(4), pp.612-628.

Bennell, K. L., Hunt, M. A., Wrigley, T. V., et al. 2008. Role of muscle in the genesis and management of knee osteoarthritis. *Rheumatic Disease Clinics of North America 34*, pp.731–54.

Benn, T., Pfister, G. and Jawad, H. eds., 2010. *Muslim women and sport*. Routledge.

Best JR. 2010. Effects of physical activity on children's executive function: contributions of experimental research on aerobic exercise. *Dev Review*, 30:331–51.

Bihnen, F. C., Caspersen C. J., and Mosterd, W. L. Physical inactivity as a risk factor for coronary heart disease: a WHO and International Society and Federation of Cardiology position statement. Bull. W. H. O. 72:1–4.

Biswas, A., Oh, P.I., Faulkner, G.E., Bajaj, R.R., Silver, M.A., Mitchell, M.S. and Alter, D.A., 2015. Sedentary time and its association with risk for disease incidence, mortality, and hospitalization in adults: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Annals of internal medicine*, *162*(2), pp.123-132.

Blasius, J. and Thiessen, V., 2006. Assessing Data Quality and Construct Comparability in Cross-National Surveys. *European Sociological Review*, 22(3), pp.229-242.

Bonora E, Kiechl S, Willeit J, Oberhollenzer F, Egger G, Meigs JB, Bonadonna RC, Muggeo M. 2004. Population-based incidence rates and risk factors for type 2 diabetes in white individuals: the Bruneck study. *Diabetes, 53*(7), pp.1782–9.

Borjesson, M., Robertson, E., Weidenhielm, L., Mattsson, E., Olsson, E. 1996. Physiotherapy in knee osteoarthrosis: effect on pain and walking. Physiotherapy Research International 1, pp.89–97.

Bourdieu, P., 1980. *The aristocracy of culture*.

Bourdieu, P., 1993. *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature*. Columbia University Press.

Brackenridge, C., 1999. Managing myself: Investigator survival in sensitive research. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 34(4), pp.399-410.

Bramham, P. and Wagg, S., 2009. *Sport, leisure and culture in postmodern cities*.

Braswell, G.W., 2000. *What you need to know about Islam & Muslims*. B&H Publishing Group.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V., 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), pp.77-101.

Brennan, A., 2017. Necessary and Sufficient Conditions. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/necessary-sufficient/>.

Brohm, J., 1978. *Sport: A prison of measured time*. Inks Links.

Burchfiel, C.M., Curb, J.D., Rodriguez, B.L., Yano, K., Hwang, L.J., Fong, K.O. and Marcus, E.B., 1995. Incidence and predictors of diabetes in Japanese-American men the Honolulu Heart Program. *Annals of epidemiology*, *5*(1), pp.33-43.

Burns, N. and Grove, S.K., 1993. The practice of nursing research. *Conduct, critique & utilization*, *4*.

Bush, B., 2001. Radio address by Mrs Bush. *The Whitehouse Archives*<https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011117.html>.

Butler, J., 1998. Athletic genders: Hyperbolic instance and/or the overcoming of sexual binarism. *Stanford Humanities Review*, *6*(2), pp.103-111.

Butler, J., 1999. *Gender Trouble*.

Butler, J., 2004. *Undoing gender*. Psychology Press.

Brennan, A., 2017. Necessary and sufficient conditions. In Zalta (ed.), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/necessary-sufficient/>.

Brown, J., 2007. *The Canonization of Al-Bukhari and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunni Hadith Canon*. Leiden.

Bryman, A., 2015. *Social research methods*. Oxford university press.

Bryson, L., 1987, January. Sport and the maintenance of masculine hegemony. In *Women's studies international forum* (Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 349-360). Pergamon

Calhoun, C., 2002. *Dictionary of the social sciences*. Oxford University Press.

Callaghan M. J., Oldham J. A. 1995. An evaluation of exercise regimes for patients with osteoarthritis of the knee: a single-blind randomized controlled trial. *Clinical Rehabilitation 9*, pp.213–8.

Calfas KJ, Taylor WC., 1994. Effects of physical activity on psychological variables inadolescents. *Pediat Exer Sci* 6:406–23.

Cargan, L., 2007. *Doing social research*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Carter, I. 2019. Positive and Negative Liberty. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/liberty-positive-negative/>.

Cat, J. 2017. The Unity of Science. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.*

Caudwell, J., 2011. Sport feminism (s): Narratives of linearity? *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, *35*(2), pp.111-125.

Caudwell, J., 2013. *Women's football in the UK: continuing with gender analyses*. Routledge.

Chawansky, M., 2012. Good girls play sports: International inspiration and the construction of girlhood. *Feminist Media Studies*, 12(3), pp.473-476.

Centre for Disease Control, 2017.Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General <https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/women.htm>.

Chandler, T. J., 1996. The structuring of manliness and the development of rugby football at the public schools and Oxbridge, 1830-1880. *Making men: Rugby and masculine identity*, pp.13-31.

Chandler, T. and Magdalinski, T. eds., 2005. *With God on their side: Sport in the service of religion*. Routledge.

Clapham, C. and Nicholson, J., 2014. *The concise Oxford dictionary of mathematics*. OUP Oxford.

Cheing, G.L., Hui-Chan, C.W. and Chan, K.M., 2002. Does four weeks of TENS and/or isometric exercise produce cumulative reduction of osteoarthritic knee pain?. *Clinical rehabilitation*, *16*(7), pp.749-760.Clarke, J. and Critcher, C., 1985. *The devil makes work: Leisure in capitalist Britain*. Macmillan.

Coakley, J. and Dunning, E. eds., 2000. *Handbook of sports studies*. Sage.

Cohen, P.S., 1968. *Modern social theory*.

Cohen, C., 2015. Saudi Arabia wants to host a men-only Olympics. *The Telegraph*. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/11376583/Olympics-Saudi-Arabia-proposes-to-host-men-only-games.html>.

Coleman, I., 2012. The Symbolic Victories of Saudi Arabia's Female Olympians. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/08/the-symbolic-victories-of-saudi-arabias-female-olympians/260998/>.

Council of Europe, 1980. *The European Sport for All Charter*. Council of Europe.

Craft LL, Landers DM. 1998. The effect of exercise on clinical depressionand depression resulting from mental illness: a meta-analysis. *J Sport Exercise Psy,* 20:339–57.

Crawford, N.C., 2016. Update on the Human Costs of War for Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2001 to mid–2016. *Costs of War*. Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs, Brown University.

Crawford, N. C., 2017. A Summary of the $5.6 Trillion in Costs for the US Wars in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Post-9/11 Veterans Care and Homeland Security. *Costs of War.* Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs, Brown University.

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. 2010. The Association Between Schoolbased Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance.Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010.

Cronin, C., 1996. Bourdieu and Foucault on power and modernity. *Philosophy & social criticism*, *22*(6), pp.55-85.

Cresswell, J. W., 2002. *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative approaches to research.*

Crosset, T., 1990. Masculinity, sexuality, and the development of early modern sport. *Sport, men and the gender order: Critical feminist perspectives*, pp.45-54.

Crosset, T., 2000. Athletic affiliation and violence against women: Toward a structural prevention project. *Research on men and masculinities Series*, 13, pp.147-161.

Dagkas, S., Benn, T. and Jawad, H., 2011. Multiple voices: improving participation of Muslim girls in physical education and school sport. *Sport, Education and Society*, *16*(2), pp.223-239.

Daniels, S.R., 2006. Inactivity and risk of overweight. *The Journal of Pediatrics*, *149*(1), p.A1.

Dashper, K.L., 2013. Beyond the binary: Gender integration in British equestrian sport. In *Gender and Equestrian Sport* (pp. 37-53). Springer Netherlands.

Davis, L. (1997). *The swimsuit issue and sport: Hegemonic masculinity and*

Sports Illustrated. State University of New York Press.

Dennett, D.C., 2006. *Breaking the spell: Religion as a natural phenomenon*. Penguin.

Denscombe, M., 2008. Communities of practice: A research paradigm for the mixed methods approach. *Journal of mixed methods research*, 2(3), pp.270-283.

Deyle, G. D., Henderson, N. E., Matekel, R. L., et al. 2000. Effectiveness of manual physical therapy and exercise in osteoarthritis of the knee. *Annals of Internal Medicine 132*, pp.173–81.

Djelloul, G., 2018. Islamic feminism: A contradiction in terms? *Eurozine*. < https://www.eurozine.com/islamic-feminism-contradiction-terms/>.

Dorsey, J.M., 2013. Wahhabism vs. Wahhabism: Qatar Challenges Saudi Arabia. *SSRN*.

Dorsey, J.M., 2014. The 2022 World Cup: a potential monkey wrench for change. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, *31*(14), pp.1739-1754.

Dworkin, R.M., 2000. *Sovereign Virtue*.

Dworkin, S.L. and Messner, M.A., 2002. Just do… what? Sport, bodies, gender. *Gender and sport: A reader*, pp.17-29.

Eaton, C.B., 1992. Relation of physical activity and cardiovascular fitness to coronary heart disease, part I: a meta-analysis of the independent relation of physical activity and coronary heart disease. *The Journal of the American Board of Family Practice*, *5*(1), pp.31-42.

Ekeland E, Heian F, Hagen KB, et al. 2004. Exercise to improve self-esteem in children and young people. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*, 1:CD003683.

Else, H., 2013. Gender breakdown by subject area. *Times Higher Education*<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/gender-breakdown-by-subject-area/2009177.article>.

Engberg S, Glumer C, Witte DR, Jorgensen T, Borch-Johnsen K. 2010. Differential relationship between physical activity and progression to diabetes by glucose tolerance status: the Inter99 Study. *Diabetologia 53*(1), pp.70–8.

Esposito. J., 2003. *Oxford Dictionary of Islam*.

Ettinger, W. H., Jr, Burns, R., Messier, S. P., Applegate, W., Rejeski, W. J., Morgan, T., et al. 1997. A randomized trial comparing aerobic exercise and resistance exercise with a health education program in older adults with knee osteoarthritis: the Fitness Arthritis and Seniors Trial (FAST). *Journal of the American Medical Association 277*, pp.25–31.

European Commission, 2014. Special Eurobarometer 412. Sport and physical activity.

Ewald, K. and Jiobu, R.M., 1985. Explaining positive deviance: Becker's model and the case of runners and bodybuilders. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 2(2), pp.144-156

Eyadat, Z., 2013. Islamic Feminism: Roots, Development and Policies. *Global Policy*, *4*(4), pp.359-368.

Farrar, M. ed., 2012. *Islam in the west: Key issues in multiculturalism*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Fatta, A., 2013. *History of sport in Saudi Arabia and current situation*. Michigan State University.

Feldman, K.A. and Newcomb, T.M., 1969. *The impact of college on students. Vol. 1. An analysis of four decades of research. Vol. 2. Summary tables.*

Foley, A., Halbert, J., Hewitt, T., Crotty, M. 2003. Does hydrotherapy improve strength and physical function in patients with osteoarthritis: a randomised controlled trial comparing a gym based and a hydrotherapy based strengthening programme. *Annals of Rheumatic Diseases* 62, pp.1162–7.

Folsom AR, Kushi LH, Hong CP. 2000. Physical activity and incident diabetes mellitus in postmenopausal women. *American Journal of Public Health, 90*(1), pp.134–8.

Foucault, M., 1977. *Truth and Power*.

Foucault, M., 1978. *The history of sexuality, volume I. New York: Vintage*.

Foucault, M., 1980. *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*. Pantheon.

Foucault, M., 1990. *The history of sexuality: An introduction, volume I*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage.

Fransen, M., McConnell, S., Harmer, A.R., Van der Esch, M., Simic, M. and Bennell, K.L., 2015. Exercise for osteoarthritis of the knee. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, (1).

Friedenreich, C.M., et. al., 2011. Associations of objectively assessed physical activity and sedentary time with biomarkers of breast cancer risk in postmenopausal women: findings from NHANES (2003–2006). Breast cancer research and treatment, 130(1), pp.183-194.

Freedman, E., 2007. *No turning back: The history of feminism and the future of women*. Ballantine Books.

Fretts AM, Howard BV, Kriska AM, Smith NL, Lumley T, Lee ET, Russell M, Siscovick D. 2009. Physical activity and incident diabetes in American Indians: the Strong Heart Study. *Am J Epidemiol. 170*(5), pp.632–9.

Fry, J. M., 2011. *Muslim women and sport*.

Garcia-Palmieri, M.R., Costas Jr, R., Cruz-Vidal, M., Sorlie, P.D. and Havlik, R.J., 1982. Increased physical activity: a protective factor against heart attacks in Puerto Rico. *The American journal of cardiology*, *50*(4), pp.749-755.

Gardner, A., 2003. The new calculus of Bedouin pastoralism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *Human Organization*, *62*(3), pp.267-276.

GBD, 2016: Vos, T., Abajobir, A.A., Abate, K.H., Abbafati, C., Abbas, K.M., Abd-Allah, F., Abdulkader, R.S., Abdulle, A.M., Abebo, T.A., Abera, S.F. and Aboyans, V., 2017. Global, regional, and national incidence, prevalence, and years lived with disability for 328 diseases and injuries for 195 countries, 1990–2016: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016. *The Lancet*, *390*(10100), pp.1211-1259.

GBGSR, 2016. *Gender Balance in Global Sport Report*. Women on Boards.

General Authority for Statistics, KSA, 2016. *Education and Training Survey*<https://www.stats.gov.sa/en>.

General Social Survey, 2005. The University of Chicago.

Gordon, J-S., 2019. Abortion. In Fieser and Dowden (eds.), *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://www.iep.utm.edu/abortion/>.

GPLSA, 2014. Fasting, K., Huffman, D. and Sand, T.S. Gender, Participation, and Leadership in Sport in Southern Africa: A Baseline Study. *The Norwegian Olympic & Paralympic Committee and Confederation Sport (NIF)*.

Goldblatt, D., 2008. *The ball is round: A global history of soccer*. Penguin.

Golden, M., 2004. *Sport in the Ancient World from A to Z*. Routledge.

Gorton, W. 2017. Philosophy of social science. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Gosepath, S. 2011. Equality. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.*

Graham, L. & McCoy, I. 2008. *A new trip around the world*. New York: Carson-Dellosa Publishing.

Gramsci, A., 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci: Ed. and Transl. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith*. International Publishers.

Gregg, E. A., & Gregg V. H., 2017. Women in Sport: Historical Perspectives. *Clinics in Sports Medicine*, Volume 36, Issue 4, pp. 603 – 610.

Griffin, L.L., Mitchell, S.A. and Oslin, J.L., 1997. *Teaching sports concepts and skills: A tactical games approach*. Human Kinetics Publishers (UK) Ltd.

Griffiths, P., 2008. Philosophy of biology. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Gruber JJ. Physical activity and self-esteem development in children: a metaanalysis. 1986. In: Stull GA, Eckert HM, eds. Effects of Physical Activity on Children. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics: 30–48.

GSHS, 2012. *Global School-based Student Health Survey*. World Health Organization & The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.

Gur, H., Cakin, N., Akova, B., Okay, E., Kucukoglu, S., 2002. Concentric versus combined concentric-eccentric isokinetic training: effects on functional capacity and symptoms in patients with osteoarthrosis of the knee. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation 83*, pp.308–16.

Guimond, S. and Palmer, D.L., 1990. Type of academic training and causal attributions for social problems. *European Journal of social psychology*, *20*(1), pp.61-75.

Guimond, S. and Palmer, D.L., 1996. The political socialization of commerce and social science students: Epistemic authority and attitude change. *Journal of applied social psychology*, *26*(22), pp.1985-2013.

Gür, H,, Cakin, N., Akova, B., Okay, E., Kucukoglu, S. 2003. Concentric versus combined concentric-eccentric isokinetic training: effects on functional capacity and symptoms in

patients with osteoarthrosis of the knee. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation 83*, pp.308–16.

Haapanen N, Miilunpalo S, Vuori I, Oja P, Pasanen M. 1997. Association of leisure time physical activity with the risk of coronary heart disease, hypertension and diabetes in middle-aged men and women. *International Journal of Epidemiology, 26*(4), pp.739–47.

Hall, M.A., 1996. *Feminism and sporting bodies: Essays on theory and practice*. Human Kinetics Publishers.

Hall, M.A., 2002. The discourse of gender and sport: From femininity to feminism. *Gender and sport: A reader*, pp.6-16.

Hall, S., 1981. Cultural studies: two paradigms in Bennett, T. Martin, G. Mercer, C. Woollacott, J (eds) *Culture, Ideology and Social Process*.

Hallal, P.C., Andersen, L.B., Bull, F.C., Guthold, R., Haskell, W., Ekelund, U. and Lancet Physical Activity Series Working Group, 2012. Global physical activity levels: surveillance progress, pitfalls, and prospects. *The lancet*, *380*(9838), pp.247-257.

Hamer M, Stamatakis E, Mishra G. 2009. Psychological distress, television viewing, and physical activity in children aged 4 to 12 years. *Pediatrics*,123:1263–8.

Hamdan, A., 2012. The role of authentic Islam: The way forward for women in Saudi Arabia. *Hawwa*, *10*(3), pp.200-220.

Hankinson, A.L., Daviglus, M.L., Bouchard, C., Carnethon, M., Lewis, C.E., Schreiner, P.J., Liu, K. and Sidney, S., 2010. Maintaining a high physical activity level over 20 years and weight gain. *Jama*, *304*(23), pp.2603-2610.

Haraway, D., 1988. Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist studies*, 14(3), pp.575-599.

Hargreaves, J.A., 1986. Where's the virtue? Where's the grace? A discussion of the social production of gender relations in and through sport. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 3(1), pp.109-121.

Hargreaves, J., 1994. *Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sports*.

Hargreaves, J.E. and Vertinsky, P.E., 2007. *Physical culture, power, and the body*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Hargreaves, J., 2013. *Heroines of Sport: The Politics of Difference and Identity*. Routledge

Hargreaves, J. 1994 *Sporting females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sport*. Routledge.

Harkness, J.A., 2006. Conducting cross-national and cross-cultural surveys. *Mannheim: ZUMA Nachrichten Spezial*, 12.

Harkness, G., 2012. *Out of bounds: Cultural barriers to female sports participation in Qatar*. The international journal of the history of sport, 29(15), pp.2162-2183.

Hartmann-Tews, I. and Pfister, G. eds., 2003. *Sport and women: Social issues in international perspective*. Psychology Press.

Haslanger, S., 2000. Feminism in Metaphysics: Negotiating the Natural. *Feminism in Philosophy.* M. Fricker, and J. Hornsby (eds.). Cambridge University Press.

Hastie, B., 2007. Higher education and sociopolitical orientation: The role of social influence in the liberalisation of students. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, *22*(3), pp.259-274.

Hay, E. M., Foster, N. E., Thomas, E., et al. 2006. Effectiveness of community physiotherapy and enhanced pharmacy review for knee pain in people aged over 55 presenting to primary care: pragmatic randomised trial. *BMJ 333*, pp.995

Helmrich, S.P., Ragland, D.R., Leung, R.W. and Paffenbarger Jr, R.S., 1991. Physical activity and reduced occurrence of non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus. *New England journal of medicine*, *325*(3), pp.147-152.

Hernández-Molina, G., Reichenbach, S., Zhang, B., Lavalley, M. and Felson, D.T., 2008. Effect of therapeutic exercise for hip osteoarthritis pain: Results of a meta-analysis. *Arthritis Care & Research: Official Journal of the American College of Rheumatology*, *59*(9), pp.1221-1228.

Heyd, D., 2016. Supererogation. In Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Hines, S., 2018. *Is Gender Fluid? A Primer for the 21ˢᵗ Century*. Thames & Hudson.

Hinkley, T., Crawford, D., Salmon, J., Okely, A.D. and Hesketh, K., 2008. Preschool children and physical activity: a review of correlates. *American journal of preventive medicine*, *34*(5), pp.435-441.

Hoch, P., 1972. *Rip off the big game (Vol. 864)*. Anchor Books, Doubleday.

Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik, J.H. and Harkness, J., 2005. *Methodological aspects in cross-national research* (Vol. 11, p. 299). DEU.

Holder MD, Coleman B, Sehn ZL. 2009. The contribution of active and passive leisure to children's well-being. *J Health Psychol*, 14:378–86.

Holmes, M.D., Chen, W.Y., Feskanich, D., Kroenke, C.H. and Colditz, G.A., 2005. Physical activity and survival after breast cancer diagnosis. *Jama*, *293*(20), pp.2479-2486.

Home, J. and Jary, D., 2004. Anthony Giddens: structuration theory, and sport and leisure. *In Sport and modern social theorists* (pp. 129-144). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Hoover Institution, 2017. Ayaan Hirsi Ali. *Stanford University* < https://www.hoover.org/profiles/ayaan-hirsi-ali>.

Hopman-Rock, M., Westhoff, M. 2000. The effects of a health educational and exercise program for older adults with osteoarthritis of the hip or knee. *Journal of Rheumatology 27*, pp.1947–54

Howe, K.R., 1988. Against the quantitative-qualitative incompatibility thesis or dogmas die hard. *Educational researcher*, *17*(8), pp.10-16.

Huang, M. H., Lin, Y. S., Lee, C. L., Yang, R. C. 2005. Use of ultrasound to increase effectiveness of isokinetic exercise for knee osteoarthritis. *Archive of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation 86*, pp.1545–51.

Huang, M. H., Lin, Y. S., Yang, R. C., Lee, C. L. 2003. A comparison of various therapeutic exercises on the functional status of patients with knee osteoarthritis. *Seminars in Arthritis and Rheumatism 32*, pp. 398–406.

Houlihan, B. and Green, M. eds., 2010. *Routledge handbook of sports development*. Routledge.

HRW, 2012. *"Steps of the devil". Denial of women and girl's right to sport in Saudi Arabia*. Human Rights Watch.

HRW, 2017. *World Report*. Human Rights Watch.

Hu, F.B., Willett, W.C., Li, T., Stampfer, M.J., Colditz, G.A. and Manson, J.E., 2004. Adiposity as compared with physical activity in predicting mortality among women. *New England Journal of Medicine*, *351*(26), pp.2694-2703.

Hughes, S. L., Seymour, R. B., Campbell, R., et al. 2004. Impact of the Fit and Strong intervention on older adults with osteoarthritis. *Gerontologist 44*, pp.217–28.

Hunt, K. and Rygiel, K. eds., 2006. *(En)gendering the war on terror: war stories and camouflaged politics*. Rodopi.

Hurst, M., 2009. Who participates in active leisure. *Canadian Social Trends*, *87*, pp.25-32.

InterAct Consortium. 2012. Physical activity reduces the risk of incident type 2 diabetes in general and in abdominally lean and obese men and women: the EPIC-InterAct Study. *Diabetologia. 55*(7), pp.1944–52.

IARC Handbooks of Cancer Prevention. 2002.

Iannotti RJ, Janssen I, Haug E, et al. 2009. Interrelationships of adolescent physical activity, screen-based sedentary behaviour, and social and psychological health. *Int J Public Health*, 54(Suppl 2):191–8.

Iannotti RJ, Kogan MD, Janssen I, et al. 2009. Patterns of adolescent physical activity,screen-based media use, and positive and negative health indicators in the U.S. and Canada*. J Adolesc Health,* 44:493–9.

Ismail, H.A., 2001. Islam and sport. *New Delhi: Islamic Book Service*.

Jarvie, G., 2006. *Sport, Culture and Society: An Introduction*. Psychology Press.

Jawad, H., 1998. *The rights of women in Islam: An authentic approach*. Springer.

Jennifer, H., 1994. *Sporting females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sports*.

Jeon, C.Y., Lokken, R.P., Hu, F.B. and Van Dam, R.M., 2007. Physical activity of moderate intensity and risk of type 2 diabetes: a systematic review. *Diabetes care*, *30*(3), pp.744-752.

Johnson, R.B. and Onwuegbuzie, A.J., 2004. Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational researcher*, *33*(7), pp.14-26.

Jones, I., 2014. *Research methods for sports studies*. Routledge.

Jonker JT, De Laet C, Franco OH, Peeters A, Mackenbach J, Nusselder WJ. 2006. Physical activity and life expectancy with and without diabetes: life table analysis of the Framingham Heart Study. *Diabetes Care, 29*(1), pp.38–43.

Juhl, C., Christensen, R., Roos, E.M., Zhang, W. and Lund, H., 2014. Impact of exercise type and dose on pain and disability in knee osteoarthritis: a systematic review and meta-regression analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Arthritis & rheumatology*, *66*(3), pp.622-636.

Kannel, W.B. and Sorlie, P., 1979. Some health benefits of physical activity: the Framingham Study. *Archives of internal medicine*, *139*(8), pp.857-861.

Kannel, W.B., Belanger, A., D'Agostino, R., Israel, I. Physical activity and physical demand on the job risk of cardiovascular disease and death: the Framingham Study. Am. Heart J. 112:820–825, 1986.

Kannel, W.B., Belanger, A., D'Agostino, R. and Israel, I., 1986. Physical activity and physical demand on the job and risk of cardiovascular disease and death: the Framingham Study. *American heart journal*, *112*(4), pp.820-825.

Katzmarzyk, P.T., Church, T.S. and Blair, S.N., 2004. Cardiorespiratory fitness attenuates the effects of the metabolic syndrome on all-cause and cardiovascular disease mortality in men. *Archives of internal medicine*, *164*(10), pp.1092-1097.

Kawakami N, Takatsuka N, Shimizu H, Ishibashi H. 1997. Effects of smoking on the incidence of non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus. Replication and extension in a Japanese cohort of male employees. *American Journal of Epidemiology, 145*(2), pp.103–9.

Kay, T., 2006. Daughters of Islam: family influences on Muslim young women's participation in sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 41(3-4), pp.357-373.

Kelly, P., Kahlmeier, S., Götschi, T., Orsini, N., Richards, J., Roberts, N., Scarborough, P. and Foster, C., 2014. Systematic review and meta-analysis of reduction in all-cause mortality from

walking and cycling and shape of dose response relationship. *International journal of behavioral nutrition and physical activity*, *11*(1), p.132.

Keeley TJH, Fox KR. 2009. The impact of physical activity and fitness on academic achievement and cognitive performance in children. *Int Rev Sport Exerc Psych*, 2:198–214.

Keefe, F. J., Blumenthal, J., Baucom, D., et al. 2004. Effects of spouse-assisted coping skills training and exercise training in patients with osteoarthritic knee pain: a randomized controlled study. *Pain 110*, pp.539–49.

Khan, H., 1997. *Women. A booklet on Sexual Health from an Islamic Perspective.* An-Nisa Society Publications.

King, K., 1987. *Canons without Innocence*. Ph.D. diss., University of Santa Cruz.

Koloverou E, Panagiotakos DB, Pitsavos C, Chrysohoou C, Georgousopoulou EN, Pitaraki E, Metaxa V, Stefanadis C. 2014. 10-year incidence of diabetes and associated risk factors in Greece: the ATTICA study (2002–2012). *Rev Diabet Stud. 11*(2), pp.181–9.

Kohl, H., 2001. Physical activity and cardiovascular disease: evidence for a dose response. *Medicine and science in sports and exercise*, *33*(6).

Kohl, H, 2014. Sedentary behavior, cardiorespiratory fitness, physical activity, and cardiometabolic risk in men: the cooper center longitudinal study. In *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* (Vol. 89, No. 8, pp. 1052-1062). Elsevier.

Kovar, P. A., Allegrante, J. P., MacKenzie, C. R., et al. 1992. Supervised fitness walking in patients with osteoarthritis of the knee. *Annals of Internal Medicine 116*, pp.529–34.

Knuth, A. G., & Hallal, P. C. (2009). Temporal trends in physical activity: a systematic review. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, *6*(5), 548-559.

Knowler, W.C., Barrett-Connor, E., Fowler, S.E., Hamman, R.F., Lachin, J.M., Walker, E.A. and Nathan, D.M., 2002. Reduction in the incidence of type 2 diabetes with lifestyle intervention or metformin. *The New England journal of medicine*, *346*(6), pp.393-403.

Kriska AM, Saremi A, Hanson RL, Bennett PH, Kobes S, Williams DE, Knowler WC. 2003. Physical activity, obesity, and the incidence of type 2 diabetes in a high-risk population. *Am J Epidemiol*, 158(7), pp.669–75.

Kushi, L.H., Doyle, C., McCullough, M., Rock, C.L., Demark-Wahnefried, W., Bandera, E.V., Gapstur, S., Patel, A.V., Andrews, K., Gansler, T. and American Cancer Society 2010 Nutrition and Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2012. American Cancer Society Guidelines on nutrition and physical activity for cancer prevention: reducing the risk of cancer with healthy food choices and physical activity. *CA: a cancer journal for clinicians*, *62*(1), pp.30-67.

Ladino, C., 2002. 'You Make Yourself Sound So Important' Fieldwork Experiences, Identity Construction, and Non-Western Researchers Abroad. *Sociological Research Online*, 7(4).

Lange, A.K., Vanwanseele, B. and Fiatarone singh, M.A., 2008. Strength training for treatment of osteoarthritis of the knee: a systematic review. *Arthritis Care & Research: Official Journal of the American College of Rheumatology*, *59*(10), pp.1488-1494.

Larun L, Nordheim LV, Ekeland E, et al. 2006. Exercise in prevention and treatment of anxiety and depression among children and young people. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2006;3:CD004691.

Law, J. and Smullen, J. 2014. *A Dictionary of Finance and Banking (4 rev. ed.)*. Oxford University Press.

Lecomte P, Vol S, Caces E, Born C, Chabrolle C, Lasfargues G, Halimi JM, Tichet J. Five-year predictive factors of type 2 diabetes in men with impaired fasting glucose. 2007. *Diabetes Metab. 33*(2), pp.140–7.

Leisure Time and Sports Survey, 2017. International Social Survey Program.

Le Clair, J.M., 2013. *Disability in the global sport arena: A sporting chance*. Routledge.

Lee, I.M., 2003. Physical activity and cancer prevention--data from epidemiologic studies. *Medicine and science in sports and exercise*, *35*(11), pp.1823-1827.

Lee, R.M., 1993. *Doing research on sensitive topics*. Sage.

Lenskyj, H., 1986. *Out of bounds: Women, sport, and sexuality*. Women's Press.

Lin, D. H., Lin, Y. F., Chai, H. M., Han, Y. C., Jan, M. H. 2007. Comparison of proprioceptive functions between computerized proprioception facilitation exercise and closed kinetic chain exercise in patients with knee osteoarthritis. *Clinical Rheumatology 26*, pp.520–8.

Lin, X., Zhang, X., Guo, J., Roberts, C.K., McKenzie, S., Wu, W.C., Liu, S. and Song, Y., 2015. Effects of exercise training on cardiorespiratory fitness and biomarkers of cardiometabolic health: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Journal of the American Heart Association*, *4*(7), p.e002014.

Lindsted, K.D., Tonstad, S. and Kuzma, J.W., 1991. Self-report of physical activity and patterns of mortality in Seventh-Day Adventist men. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, *44*(4-5), pp.355-364.

Liu-Ambrose, T.Y., Khan, K.M., Eng, J.J., Heinonen, A. and McKay, H.A., 2004. Both resistance and agility training increase cortical bone density in 75-to 85-year-old women with low bone mass: a 6-month randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Clinical Densitometry*, *7*(4), pp.390-398.

Long, D.E., 2005. *Culture and customs of Saudi Arabia*. Penn State Press.

Longo-Mbenza B, On'kin JB, Okwe AN, Kabangu NK, Fuele SM. 2010. Metabolic syndrome, aging, physical inactivity, and incidence of type 2 diabetes in general African population. *Diabetes Vasc Dis Res. 7*(1), pp.28–39.

Loy, J. and Booth, D., 2004. Social Structure and Social Theory: The Intellectual Insights of Robert K. Merton. *Sport and modern social theorists*, pp.33-47.

MacAloon*The business of professional sports*, pp.264-297.

Macera, C.A., Hootman, J.M. and Sniezek, J.E., 2003. Major public health benefits of physical activity. *Arthritis Care & Research: Official Journal of the American College of Rheumatology*, *49*(1), pp.122-128.

MacNeill, M., 1988. Active women, media representations, and ideology. *Active women, media representations, and ideology*, pp.195-211.

Magdalinski, T., and Chandler, T.J., 2002. With God on their side: An introduction. *With God on their side*.

Mahfoud A., 2011. *Sport, Politics and Society in the Arab World (Global Culture and Sport Series)*. Macmillan.

Majid, A., 1998. The politics of feminism in Islam. Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 23(2), pp.321-361.

Marcus, B.H., Forsyth, L.H., Stone, E.J., Dubbert, P.M., McKenzie, T.L., Dunn, A.L. and Blair, S.N., 2000. Physical activity behavior change: issues in adoption and maintenance. *Health Psychology*, *19*(1S), p.32.

Markula, P., 1995. Firm but shapely, fit but sexy, strong but thin: The postmodern aerobicizing female bodies. *Sociology of sport journal*, *12*(4), pp.424-453.

Martin, W. H. and Mason, S., 2004. Leisure in an Islamic context. *World Leisure Journal*, *46*(1), pp.4-13.

Martin, W.H. and Mason, S., 2003. Leisure in three Middle Eastern countries. *World Leisure Journal*, 45(1), pp.35-44.

Martin, E. A., and McFerran, T. A., 2017. *A Dictionary of Nursing* (7th edition). Oxford University Press.

Marwat, M.K., Syed, Z.U.I., Muhammad, W., Hazratullah, K. and Safeena, B., 2014. Sport performance of Muslim women and different constraints in their way to participation in sport. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, *4*(10 (1)), pp.208-214.

Marzorati, G., 1989. Salman Rushdie: Fiction's Embattled Infidel. *The New York Times Magazine*.

Mathers M, Canterford L, Olds T, et al. 2009. Electronic media use and adolescent health and well-being: cross-sectional community study. *Acad Pediatr*, 9:307–14.

Maurer, B. T., Stern, A. G., Kinossian, B., Cook, K. D., Schumacher, H. R. Jr. 1999. Osteoarthritis of the knee: isokinetic quadriceps exercise versus an educational intervention. *Archive of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, 80*, pp.1293–9.

McAloon, J., 1991. Are Olympic athletes professionals? Cultural categories and social control in US sport. In Staudohar and Mangan (eds), *The Business of Professional Sports.* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press. pp. 264–97.

McDonagh, E. and Pappano, L., 2008. *Playing With the Boys: Why Separate is Not Equal in Sports*. OUP USA.

Mensink, G. B. M., Deketh, M., Mul, M. D. M., Schuit, A. J., and Hoffmeister, H. 1996. Physical activity and its association with cardiovascular risk factors and mortality. *Epidemiology* 7:391–397.

Mernissi, F., 1987. *Beyond the veil: Male-female dynamics in modern Muslim society* (Vol. 423). Indiana University Press.

Mernissi, F., 1991. *The veil and the male elite: A feminist interpretation of women's rights in Islam* (p. 116). Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books.

Messner, M.A., 1988. Sports and male domination: The female athlete as contested ideological terrain. *Sociology of sport journal*, *5*(3), pp.197-211.

Messner, M.A., 1990. When bodies are weapons: Masculinity and violence in sport. *International review for the sociology of sport*, 25(3), pp.203-220.

Messier, S. P., Loeser, R. F., Miller G. D., et al. 2004. Exercise and dietary weight loss in overweight and obese older adults with knee osteoarthritis. *Arthritis and Rheumatology 50*, pp. 1501–10

Mikesky, A. E., Meyer, A., Thompson, K. L. 2000. Relationship between quadriceps strength and rate of loading during gait in women. *Journal of Orthopaedic Research 18*, pp.171–5.

Mikesky, A. E., Mazzuca, S. A., Brandt, K. D., et al. 2006. Effects of strength training on the incidence and progression of knee osteoarthritis. *Arthritis Care and Research 55*, pp.690–9.

Mikkola, M. 2017. Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Mill, J.S., 1869. *The subjection of women* (Vol. 1). mil

Mill, J.S. 1873. *Autobiography*.

Mills, C.W., 2000. *The sociological imagination*.

Minor, M. A., Hewett, J. E., Webel, R. R., et al. 1989. Efficacy of physical conditioning exercise in patients with rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. Arthritis and Rheumatology 32, pp.1396–405.

Morgan, W. J., 2000. Conventionalism and sport. In Morgan & McNamee (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Sport*.

Morgan, W. JThe philosophy of sport: A historical and conceptual overview and a conjecture regarding its future. In Coakley and Dunning (eds.), *Handbook of Sports Studies*.

Moore, S. C., Mathews, C. E., Keadle, S., Patel, A. V., and Lee, I.Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviours, and Risk of Cancer. In Thun et al. (eds.), *Cancer Epidemiology and Prevention*. Oxford University Press.

Morris, J.N. and Crawford, M.D., 1958. Coronary heart disease and physical activity of work. *British medical journal*, *2*(5111), p.1485.

Murdey ID, Cameron N, Biddle SJ, et al. 2005. Short-term changes in sedentary behaviour during adolescence: Project STIL (Sedentary Teenagers and Inactive Lifestyles). *Ann Hum Biol*, 32:283–96.

Myers, J., Kaykha, A., George, S., Abella, J., Zaheer, N., Lear, S., Yamazaki, T. and Froelicher, V., 2004. Fitness versus physical activity patterns in predicting mortality in men. *The American journal of medicine*, *117*(12), pp.912-918.

Nakanishi N, Takatorige T, Suzuki K. 2004. Daily life activity and risk of developing impaired fasting glucose or type 2 diabetes in middle-aged Japanese men. *Diabetologia 47*(10), pp.1768–75.

National Secular Society, 2015. <www.secularism.org.uk/news/2015/12/muslim-reform-movement-embraces-secularism-and-universal-human-rights>.

Nauright, J. and Chandler, T.J.L. eds., 1996. *Making men: Rugby and masculine identity (Vol. 10)*. Psychology Press.

Nauright, J. and Parrish, C., 2012. *Sports around the World: History. Culture, and Practice*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1.

Njolstad I, Arnesen E, Lund-Larsen PG. 1999. Sex differences in risk factors for clinical diabetes mellitus in a general population: a 12-year follow-up of the Finnmark Study. *American Journal of Epidemiology*. 147(1), pp.49–58.

Nocon, M., Hiemann, T., Müller-Riemenschneider, F., Thalau, F., Roll, S. and Willich, S.N., 2008. Association of physical activity with all-cause and cardiovascular mortality: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *European Journal of Cardiovascular Prevention & Rehabilitation*, *15*(3), pp.239-246.

North TC, McCullagh P, Tran ZV. 1990. Effect of exercise on depression. *Exerc Sport Sci Rev,* 18:379–415.

NHIS Survey Description, 2016. National Health Interview Survey. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

NHIS Table A-14a, 2016. National Health Interview Survey. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

O'Reilly, S. C., Muir, K. R., Doherty, M. 1999. Effectiveness of home exercise on pain and disability from osteoarthritis of the knee: a randomised controlled trial. *Annals of Rheumatic Diseases 58*, pp.15–9.

Oguma, Y. and Shinoda-Tagawa, T., 2004. Physical activity decreases cardiovascular disease risk in women: review and meta-analysis. *American journal of preventive medicine*, *26*(5), pp.407-418.

Pedersen, B.K. and Saltin, B., 2015. Exercise as medicine–evidence for prescribing exercise as therapy in 26 different chronic diseases. *Scandinavian journal of medicine & science in sports*, *25*, pp.1-72.

Petruzzello SJ, Landers DM, Hatfi eld BD, et al. 1991. A meta-analysis on the anxietyreducing effects of acute and chronic exercise. Outcomes and mechanisms. *Sports Med*, 11:143–82.

Picchi, M. 2018. Egypt in Transition: What future for Islamic Feminism. Unpublished Manuscript.

de Oliveira, R.G. and Guedes, D.P., 2016. Physical activity, sedentary behavior, cardiorespiratory fitness and metabolic syndrome in adolescents: systematic review and meta-analysis of observational evidence. *PloS one*, *11*(12), p.e0168503.

Okada K, Hayashi T, Tsumura K, Suematsu C, Endo G, Fujii S. 2000. Leisure-time physical activity at weekends and the risk of Type 2 diabetes mellitus in Japanese men: the Osaka Health Survey. *Diabetic Medicine, 17*(1), pp.53–8

Onat A, Hergenc G, Kucukdurmaz Z, Bulur S, Kaya Z, Can G. 2007. Prospective evidence for physical activity protecting Turkish adults from metabolic disorders. *Arch Turk Soc Cardiol. 35*(8), pp.467–74.

Paffenbarger Jr., R. S., Hale, W.E., Brand, R.J., and Hyde, R.T., 1977. Work-energy level, personal characteristics, and fatal heart attack: a birth-cohort effect. *American journal of epidemiology*, *105*(3), pp.200-213.

Paffenbarger, R. S., JR, Hyde, R. T., Wing, A. L., and C. H. Steinmetz. 1984. A natural history of athleticism and cardiovascular health. JAMA 252:491–495.

Paffenbarger Jr., R.S., Wing, A.L. and Hyde, R.T., 1978. Physical activity as an index of heart attack risk in college alumni. *American Journal of epidemiology*, *108*(3), pp.161-175.

Page AS, Cooper AR, Griew P, et al. 2010. Is children's screen viewing related to psychological diffi culties irrespective of physical activity and sedentary time? *Pediatrics*, 126:e1–7.

Patja K, Jousilahti P, Hu G, Valle T, Qiao Q, Tuomilehto J. 2005. Effects of smoking, obesity and physical activity on the risk of type 2 diabetes in middle-aged Finnish men and women. *J Intern Med. 258*(4), pp.356–62.

Payne, M. 2015. Iran women's football captain to miss tournament after husband 'refuses to let her go'. *The Independent*.

Parratt, C.M., 1994. From the history of women in sport to women's sport history: A research agenda. *Women and sport: Interdisciplinary perspectives*, pp.5-14.

Pedersen, B.K. and Saltin, B., 2015. Exercise as medicine–evidence for prescribing exercise as therapy in 26 different chronic diseases. *Scandinavian journal of medicine & science in sports*, *25*, pp.1-72.

Péloquin, L., Bravo, G., Gauthier, P., et al. 1999. Effects of a cross-training exercise program in persons with osteoarthritis of the knee a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Clinical Rheumatology 5*, pp.126–36.

Petrella, R. J., Barth, C. 2000. Home based exercise therapy for older patients with knee osteoarthritis: a randomized clinical trial. *Journal of Rheumatology 27*, pp. 2215–21.

Pfister, G., 2009. Islam and women's sports. *Patheos*, pp.1-4.

Pfister, G., 2010. Outsiders: Muslim women and Olympic Games–barriers and opportunities. *The international journal of the history of sport*, 27(16-18), pp.2925-2957.

Pilger, J., 2011. One again war is prime-time and journalism's role is taboo. *Johnpilger.com* <http://johnpilger.com/articles/once-again-war-is-prime-time-and-journalism-s-role-is-taboo>.

Polit, D.F. and Hungler, B.P., 1993. Study Guide for Essentials of Nursing Research: Methods, Appraisal, and Utilization. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Poynter, R., 2010. *The handbook of online and social media research: Tools and techniques for market researchers*. John Wiley & Sons.

QoL Program Document, 2017. Delivery Plan. *Council of Economic Affairs and Development.* Saudi Arabia. Quine, W.V., 1948. On what there is. *The Review of Metaphysics*, pp.21-38.

Quilty, B., Tucker, M., Campbell, R., et al. 2003. Physiotherapy, including quadriceps exercises and patellar taping, for knee osteoarthritis with predominant patello-femoral joint involvement: randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Rheumatology 30*, pp.1311–17.

Rachels, J. 2003. *The elements of moral philosophy*. Palgrave-Macmillan.

Rachidi, S., 2017. How many STEM graduates from local universities do Saudi Arabia and UAE produce? *Saalamgateway.com* <https://www.salaamgateway.com/en/story/how_many_stem_graduates_from_local_universities_do_saudi_arabia_and_uae_produce-SALAAM04072017005257/>.

Rajkhan, S., 2014. *Women in Saudi Arabia: Status, rights, and limitations*.

Ramadan, T., 2004. *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Reid, C., 2000. *The health benefits of physical activity for girls and women: literature review and recommendations for future research and policy*. Vancouver, BC, Canada: British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health.

Reilly, J.J., 2005. Physical activity and obesity in childhood and adolescence. *The lancet*, *366*(9482), pp.268-269.

Ridgeway, C.L. and Correll, S.J., 2004. Unpacking the gender system: A theoretical perspective on gender beliefs and social relations. *Gender & society*, 18(4), pp.510-531.

Ritzer, G. and Stepnisky, J., 2017. *Contemporary sociological theory and its classical roots: The basics*. SAGE Publications.

Røgind, H., Bibow-Nielsen, B., Jensen, B., et al. 1998. The effects of a physical training program on patients with osteoarthritis of the knees. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation 79*, pp.1421–7.

Rosenbaum, S., Tiedemann, A. and Ward, P.B., 2014. Meta-analysis physical activity interventions for people with mental illness: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *J Clin Psychiatry*, *75*(0), pp.1-11.

Rosenman, R.H., Bawol, R.D. and Oscherwitz, M., 1977. A 4-year prospective study of the relationship of different habitual vocational physical activity to risk and incidence of ischemic heart disease in volunteer male federal employees. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, *301*, pp.627-641.

Ross, K. M., 2017. Compare U.S., European Bachelor's Degree Programs. *USA News*.

Russ SA, Larson K, Franke TM, et al. 2009. Associations between media use and healthin US children. *Acad Pediatr*, 9:300–6.

Sabbagh, S., 1996. *Arab women between defiance and restraint*.

Ṣābir Ā., 2004. In Jasion (ed.) Táhirih in History: Perspectives on Qurratu'l-'Ayn from East and West (Vol. 16). Kalimat Press.

Sabo, D. and Panepinto, J., 1990. Football ritual and the social reproduction of masculinity. *Sport, men, and the gender order: Critical feminist perspectives*, pp.115-126.

Sadat-Ali, M., Al-Habdan, I.M., Al-Turki, H.A. and Azam, M.Q., 2012. An epidemiological analysis of the incidence of osteoporosis and osteoporosis-related fractures among the Saudi Arabian population. *Annals of Saudi medicine*, *32*(6), pp.637-641.

El Saadawi, N. and Saʿdāwī, N., 2007. *The hidden face of Eve: Women in the Arab world*. Zed Books.

Sajeed, K.P., 2015. Women and sports in*International Journal of Social Science and Interdisciplinary Research*, 4(8), pp.24-27.

Saldaña, J., 2009. An introduction to codes and coding. *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*, *3*.

Schacht, S.P., 1996. Misogyny on and off the 'pitch': The Gendered World of Male Rugby Players. *Gender & Society*, 10(5), pp.550-565.

Schilke, J. M., Johnson, G. O., Housh, T. J., O'Dell, J. R. 1996. Effects of muscle-strength training on the functional status of patients with osteoarthritis of the knee joint. *Nursing Research 45*, pp.68–72.

Schippers, M., 2007. Recovering the feminine other: Masculinity, femininity, and gender hegemony. *Theory and society*, 36(1), pp.85-102.

Schmid, D., Behrens, G., Keimling, M., Jochem, C., Ricci, C. and Leitzmann, M., 2015. A systematic review and meta-analysis of physical activity and endometrial cancer risk. *European Journal of Epidemiology*, *30*(5), pp.397-412.

Schlosser, J.A., 2013. Bourdieu and Foucault: A conceptual integration toward an empirical sociology of prisons. *Critical Criminology*, *21*(1), pp.31-46.

Schoonenboom, J. and Johnson, R.B., 2017. How to construct a mixed methods research design. *KZfSS Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, *69*(2), pp.107-131.

Scholz, E., and Heller, M., 2007. ISSP Study Monitoring 2007. Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften.

Schwab *et al.*, 2017. *Global Gender Gap Report 2017*. World Economic Forum.

Scott, J., 2004. Family, gender, and educational attainment in Britain: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, pp.565-589.

Scotland, J., 2012. Exploring the philosophical underpinnings of research: Relating ontology and epistemology to the methodology and methods of the scientific, interpretive, and critical research paradigms. *English Language Teaching*, 5(9), p.9.

Seale, C., 2012. Sampling. *Researching society and culture*.

Sesso, H. D., Paffenbarger jnr., R. S., Ha, T., and Lee, I-M. 1999. Physical activity and cardiovascular disease risk in middle-aged and older women. *Am. J. Epidemiol.* 150:408–416.

Shephard, R.J. and Futcher, R., 1997. Physical activity and cancer: How may protection be maximized? *Critical Reviews™ in Oncogenesis*, *8*(2-3).

Shephard RJ. 1997. Curricular physical activity and academic performance. *Ped Exerc Sci*, 9:113–26.

Sherman, S.E., D'Agostino, R.B., Cobb, J.L. and Kannel, W.B., 1994. Physical activity and mortality in women in the Framingham Heart Study. *American heart journal*, *128*(5), pp.879-884.

Sibley BA, Etnier JL. 2003. The relationship between physical activity and cognition in children: a meta-analysis. *Ped Exerc Sci*, 15:243–56.

Simonsick EM, Lafferty ME, Phillips CL, Mendes de Leon CF, Kasl SV, Seeman TE, Fillenbaum G, Hebert P, Lemke JH. 1993. Risk due to inactivity in physically capable older adults. *American Journal of Public Health, 83*(10), pp.1443–50.

Snyder-Hall, R.C., 2010. Third-wave feminism and the defense of "choice". *Perspectives on Politics*, 8(1), pp.255-261.

Sofian, M., Omar-Fauzee, U.P.M. and Abd-Latif, R., 2010. The perspective of Arabic Muslim women toward sport participation. *J Asia Pacific Studies*, *1*, pp.364-377.

Sorensen, R., 2018. Vagueness. In Zalta (ed.) *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/vagueness/>.

Spelman, E.V., 1988. Inessential woman: Problems of exclusion in feminist thought. Beacon Press.

Spratt, C., Walker, R. and Robinson, B., 2004. Mixed research methods. *Practitioner Research and Evaluation Skills Training in Open and Distance Learning. Commonwealth of Learning*.

Smith, J.J., Eather, N., Morgan, P.J., Plotnikoff, R.C., Faigenbaum, A.D. and Lubans, D.R., 2014. The health benefits of muscular fitness for children and adolescents: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Sports medicine*, *44*(9), pp.1209-1223.

Steinbrecher A, Erber E, Grandinetti A, Nigg C, Kolonel LN, Maskarinec G. 2012. Physical activity and risk of type 2 diabetes among Native Hawaiians, Japanese Americans, and Caucasians: the Multiethnic Cohort. *J Phys Act Health. 9*(5), pp.634–41.

Steup, M. 2017. Epistemology. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Stevenson, C.L., 1974. Sport as a contemporary social phenomenon: A functional explanation. *International Journal of Physical Education*, 11(1), pp.8-14.

Stevenson, D., 2002. Women, sport, and globalization: Competing discourses of sexuality and nation. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, *26*(2), pp.209-225.

Stevenson, D., 2004. Women, sport and globalisation: competing discourses of sexuality and nation. *Critical Readings: Sport, Culture and the Media*.

Stodolska, M. and Livengood, J.S., 2006. The influence of religion on the leisure behavior of immigrant Muslims in the United States. *Journal of Leisure Research*, *38*(3), p.293.

Stoljar, N., 2011. Different Women. Gender and the Realism-Nominalism Debates. *Feminist Metaphysics*, C. Witt (ed.). Springer.

Stoller, R.J., 1968. *Sex and gender: The development of masculinity and femininity*. Karnac books.

Strong, W.B., Malina, R.M., Blimkie, C.J., Daniels, S.R., Dishman, R.K., Gutin, B., Hergenroeder, A.C., Must, A., Nixon, P.A., Pivarnik, J.M. and Rowland, T., 2005. Evidence based physical activity for school-age youth. *The Journal of pediatrics*, *146*(6), pp.732-737.

Sturm, R., 2005. Childhood Obesity. *Preventing Chronic Disease*, *2*(2), pp.1-9.

Suits, B.1973. The Elements of Sport. In Osterhoudt (ed.), *The Philosophy of Sport: A Collection of Original Essays*, pp.48-64.

Talbot, L. A., Gaines, J. M., Huynh, T. N., et al. 2003. A homebased pedometer-driven walking program to increase physical activity in older adults with osteoarthritis of the knee: a preliminary study. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society 51*, pp.387–92.

Taliaferro, C., 2014. Philosophy of Religion. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.*

Taylor, H.L., Klepetar, E., Keys, A., Parlin, W., Blackburn, H. and Puchner, T., 1962. Death rates among physically active and sedentary employees of the railroad industry. *American Journal of Public Health and the Nations Health*, *52*(10), pp.1697-1707.

Taylor, H., 1851. Enfranchisement of women. *Westminster Review:* 55(2), pp. 289-31

Terenzini, P.T. and Pascarella, E.T., 1991. Twenty years of research on college students: Lessons for future research. *Research in Higher Education*, *32*(1), pp.83-92.

Theberge, N., 1985. Toward a feminist alternative to sport as a male preserve. *Quest*, 37(2), pp.193-202.

Thomas, K. S., Miller, P., Doherty, M., Muir, K. R., Jones, A. C., O'Reilly, S. C. 2005. Cost effectiveness of a two-year home exercise program for the treatment of knee pain. *Arthritis and Rheumatology 53*, pp. 388–94.

Thomas, K. S., Muir, K. R., Doherty M., Jones, A. C., O'Reilly, S. C., Bassey, E. J., 2002. Home based exercise programme for knee pain and knee osteoarthritis: randomised controlled trial. *BMJ*, pp. 325:752.

Thorstensson, C. A., Roos, E. M., Petersson, I. F., et al. 2005. Sixweek high-intensity exercise program for middle-aged patients with knee osteoarthritis: a randomized controlled trial. *BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders 6*, pp.27.

Thune, I.N.G.E.R. and Furberg, A.S., 2001. Physical activity and cancer risk: dose-response and cancer, all sites and site-specific. *Medicine and science in sports and exercise*, *33*(6 Suppl), pp.S530-50.

Time Magazine, 2010. Cover page. <http://content.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20100809,00.html>.

Tomlinson, A., 2005. Sport and leisure cultures (Vol. 6). U of Minnesota Press.

Tomporowski PD, Davis CL, Miller PH, et al. 2008. Exercise and Children's Intelligence, Cognition, and Academic Achievement. *Educ Psychol Rev*, 20:111–31.

Topp, R., Woolley, S., Hornyak, J., 3rd, Khuder, S., Kahaleh, B., 2002. The effect of dynamic versus isometric resistance training on pain and functioning among adults with osteoarthritis of the knee. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation 83*, pp.1187–95.

Tremblay, M.S., Warburton, D.E., Janssen, I., Paterson, D.H., Latimer, A.E., Rhodes, R.E., Kho, M.E., Hicks, A., LeBlanc, A.G., Zehr, L. and Murumets, K., 2011. New Canadian physical activity guidelines. *Applied physiology, nutrition, and metabolism*, *36*(1), pp.36-46.

Tong, R., 2009. *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*.

Trudeau F, Shephard RJ. 2008. Physical education, school physical activity, school sports and academic performance. *Int J of Behav Nutr Phy*, 5:10.

Trujillo, N., 1995. Machines, missiles, and men: Images of the male body on ABC's Monday Night Football. Sociology of Sport Journal, 12(4), pp.403-423.

van Baar, M. E., Dekker, J., Oostendorp, R. A. B., et al. 1998. The effectiveness of exercise therapy in patients with osteoarthritis of the hip or knee: a randomized clinical trial. *Journal of Rheumatology 25*, pp.2432–9.

Van Tuyckom, C., Bracke, P. and Scheerder, J., 2011. Sports–idrott–esporte–deporte–sportovní The problem of equivalence of meaning in comparative sports research. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, *8*(1-2), pp.85-97.

United Nations (UN), 2015. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015*.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division 2018. *Household size and composition*.

Vakil, S., 2011. *Women and politics in the Islamic republic of Iran: Action and reaction*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Vasfi, K., Bayram, U., Zeliha, G., Ayse, S., Izge, G. 2006. Intra-articular hyaluronic acid compared with progressive knee exercises in osteoarthritis of the knee: a prospective randomized trial with long-term follow-up. *Rheumatology International 26*, pp.277–84.

Vitkus, D.J., 1999. Early modern orientalism: representations of Islam in sixteenth-and seventeenth-century Europe. *Western views of Islam in medieval and early modern Europe* pp. 207-230. Palgrave Macmillan US.

Vogel, F.E., 1999. *Islamic law in the modern world: the legal system of Saudi Arabia*. Brill.

Voluntary National Review KSA, 2018. *Towards Saudi Arabia's Sustainable Tomorrow: First Voluntary National Review 2018*. United Nations.

Walseth, K. and Fasting, K., 2003. Islam's view on physical activity and sport: Egyptian women interpreting Islam. *International review for the sociology of sport*, 38(1), pp.45-60.

Walseth, K. and Fasting, K., 2004. Sport as a means of integrating minority women. *Sport in Society*, 7(1), pp.109-129.

Wannamethee SG, Shaper AG, Alberti KG. 2000. Physical activity, metabolic factors, and the incidence of coronary heart disease and type 2 diabetes. *Archives of Internal Medicine, 160*(14), pp.2108–16.

Warby, D. 2014. Sex sells sex, not women in Australian sport. *The Guardian*.

Warburton, D.E., Gledhill, N. and Quinney, A., 2001. Musculoskeletal fitness and health. *Canadian journal of applied physiology*, *26*(2), pp.217-237.

Warburton, D.E., Nicol, C.W. and Bredin, S.S., 2006. *Health benefits of physical activity: the evidence*. Canadian medical association journal, 174(6), pp.801-809.

Ward, L. 2013. Cherie Blair pleads for Afghan women. *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2001/nov/20/uk.september11>.

World Cancer Research Fund and American Institute for Cancer Research, 2007. *Food, nutrition, physical activity, and the prevention of cancer: a global perspective* (Vol. 1). Amer Inst for Cancer Research.

Weil, F.D., 1985. The variable effects of education on liberal attitudes: A comparative-historical analysis of anti-Semitism using public opinion survey data. *American Sociological Review*, pp.458-474.

Western Ontario and McMaster Universities Arthritis Index score (WOMAC), <womac.org/womac/index.htm>.

Whiting, D.R., Guariguata, L., Weil, C. and Shaw, J., 2011. IDF diabetes atlas: global estimates of the prevalence of diabetes for 2011 and 2030. *Diabetes research and clinical practice*, *94*(3), pp.311-321.

WHO, 1986. Ottawa charter for health promotion. Health promotion, 1, pp.iii-v.

WHO, Health Promotion Glossary, 1998. *World Health Organization*.

WHO, 2010. *World Health Organization Global Physical Activity Survey*. WHO's Global Health Observatory Data Repository.

WHO, GHE, 2016. Global Health Estimates. *World Health Organization*. WHO's Global Health Observatory Data Repository.

WHO, SAHP, 2016. Saudi Arabia Health Program. *World Health Organisation.* WHO's Global Health Observatory Data Repository.

WHO, 2018. Fact sheet on physical activity. *World Health Organization*. < https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity>.

WHO, 2018a. Global Action Plan on PA. *World Health Organisation*.

WHO GHE, 2016. *World Health Organization Global Health Estimates*. WHO's Global Health Observatory Data Repository.

WHO SAHP, 2016. *World Health Organization Saudi Arabia Country Report*. World Health Organization. Regional Ofce for the Eastern Mediterranean.

Williamson, D.F., Vinicor, F., Bowman, B.A. and Primary Prevention Working Group, 2004. Primary prevention of type 2 diabetes mellitus by lifestyle intervention: implications for health policy. *Annals of internal medicine*, *140*(11), p.951.

Wipfl, BM, Rethorst CD, Landers DM. 2008. The anxiolytic effects of exercise: a meta-analysis of randomized trials and dose-response analysis. *J Sport Exerc Psychol* 2008, 30:392–410.

Wollstencraft, M. 1792. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*.

Women, U.N., 2015. *Progress of the World' s Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* (No. id: 7688).

Wolf, N., 1991. The beauty myth: How images of beauty are used against women. New York: William Morrow and Company. *Inc*, *348*, p.5.

World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), 2012. *Standards of Care* (7th version). WPATH.

Woodward, K., 2012. Sex power and the games. Palgrave Macmillan

Woods, R.B., 2011. Social issues in sport. Social issues in sport., (Ed. 2).

Yamani, M. and Allen, A. eds., 1996. *Feminism and Islam: legal and literary perspectives*. NYU Press.

Zeitlin, M.I., 2004. Rethinking Sociology A Critique Of Contemporary Theory.

Zhang, Y. and Jordan, J.M., 2010. Epidemiology of osteoarthritis. *Clinics in geriatric medicine*, *26*(3), pp.355-369.

Zipp, S. and Nauright, J., 2018. Levelling the playing field: Human capability approach and lived realities for sport and gender in the West Indies. *Journal of Sport for Development*, 6(10), pp.38-50.