

has grown in popularity and contributed to the success of esports. Nordland (2021) suggests that with increased accessibility of smartphones, mobile gaming could help reduce barriers to participation in esports, especially considering the popularity of free-to-play games. Esports tournaments have historically required a significant financial investment for proper facilities and equipment (e.g., computers, monitors, keyboards, and more). With smartphones, tournament organizers would not necessarily have to make as significant a financial investment into facilities.

A final trend is streaming TV's response to the growth of esports (Saini, 2021). As esports become more accessible to the mainstream population, this opens up more opportunities for streaming TV to be a crucial part of the growth. Currently, most esports tournaments and shoutcasters are using Twitch as their media platform to share not only the content of the competition but also commentary on the games so viewers can feel invested in the material. But, thinking futuristically, the possibility of streaming esports tournaments across the Internet or holding esports tournaments using virtual reality (VR) technology to give participants a more intimate gaming experience could be an evolution of this industry. This approach to esports would only be achievable if streaming services see the usefulness

in increasing their infrastructure to accommodate the player base. Time will tell how this area evolves over the next 5 to 10 years.

SUMMARY

When we consider the rich history of esports, there are many components to consider. Esports have been part of our society since the 1970s; yet, when COVID-19 dominated our society, esports asserted their benefits not only to a society confined to their homes but to the sports industry as a whole. The pandemic boosted the profile of esports as a competitive and athletic market. As we move forward, the popularity of esports has an opportunity to grow and attract new spectators, players, and business sponsors. This growth will require emerging recreation and sport professionals to be prepared to engage with esports.

COVID-19 has forced leisure professionals to reconsider how we offer, participate in, and enjoy our leisure experiences. Esports are leisure activities that benefited greatly from the shift toward socially distant pastimes during the pandemic. Esports will not overtake other traditional sports, but as a society we must conduct serious dialogue about esports within our culture.

Faith-Based Recreation

John Byl and David Kahan

“ The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there.

Zechariah 8:5 (New International Version Bible, 2011)

People of faith often engage in recreational activities through their religious institutions. These activities are often designed to enhance internal community cohesion and used as recruiting tools to engage community outsiders (Baykara et al., 2021; Bynum, 2003; Karlis et al., 2014). In the United States in 2014, 76.5 percent of those 18 and older identified with a religious group (Pew Research Center, 2015). At 76.5 percent of the U.S. population, religious organizations should be recognized as legitimate providers of recreation activities in the leisure service delivery system.

In Canada, a 2015 Angus Reid Institute poll analyzed four broad segments in their survey: “The

Non-Believers (19% of the total population), the Spiritually Uncertain (30%), the Privately Faithful (30%), and the Religiously Committed (21%)” (2017). Religion in Canada plays a lesser role than it does in the United States. However, Canadian recreation providers may find themselves more quickly reaching out to the religiously committed since it is reported that those with “higher levels of belief are correlated with higher levels of personal happiness, charitable giving, volunteerism, and overall community engagement” (Angus Reid Institute, 2017). While those born in Canada have lessened their commitment to religion, immigrants have kept the number of committed religious folks

somewhat constant. For example, 400,000 people identifying as Muslim came to Canada from 2001 to 2011. The median age for this group was only 29 (Angus Reid Institute, 2017). For those working with religious groups in Canada and the United States, collaborating with immigrants with strong religious affiliations is an important part of the task. Religious institutions play an important role in providing satisfying recreational opportunities within their communities. Next, we examine differences within and between faith traditions and then explore employment in faith-based recreation.

DIFFERENCES WITHIN FAITH TRADITIONS

Religious groups may emphasize differences from other religions and sameness within their own religious group, but not all religious groups are homogeneous units. Some of the differences are fostered because of alternate ways of thinking about beliefs, and some are fostered because of varying ethnic roots. For example, in one study, a Mennonite cookbook was used as a metaphor for the themes of Canadian Mennonites. The author explains, “Two of my favourite cookbooks—*More-With-Less* and *Mennonite Girls Can Cook*—are perhaps metaphors for increasingly divergent ideological tones amongst Mennonites that we see during this era: one might describe it as left-wing versus right-wing thinking” (Epp, 2019).

The cookbook study demonstrates that Christians within a denomination can hold significantly different views about the purpose of cooking. The same is true in other faith traditions. Within Judaism there is a whole range of different beliefs between liberal Jewish believers and ultra-Orthodox Jewish believers (My Jewish Learning, n.d.; Sheskin & Hartman, 2019). The same is true in defining Islam. Gholam Khiabany wrote,

Operating on the assumption of a monolithic Islamic totality suppresses the internal diversity, division and political, social, cultural and ideological rifts in a religion that encompasses one billion people from North Africa to Indonesia as well as a variety of minority communities (increasingly under attack) throughout the Western world. (2007, p. 111)

Some of the differences between religious groups relate to individual commitments and ethnic backgrounds. Some people’s religious beliefs intentionally and fully shape their recreation choices, whereas others express beliefs that unintention-

ally and partially shape their recreation choices. Nationality also shapes unique differences between religious groups. The intersection of nationality and religious beliefs encourages some people to recreate with others with similar interests, backgrounds, religious affiliations, and languages. Being in this comfort zone within a subculture and being shaped by the subcultural values are examples of **selective acculturation** in leisure (Taylor & Toohey, 2001; Ambrosini, 2016).

DIFFERENCES AMONG FAITH TRADITIONS

North America is home to many religious groups, but we discuss the three largest faith groups—Christians (70.6% of the U.S. population in 2014), Jews (1.9%), and Muslims (0.9%)—to provide insight into how various traditions value and engage in recreation (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Christianity

The largest and most popular, but quickly declining, religion in the United States and Canada is Christianity (Clarke, 2021; Cornelissen, 2021).

- In the United States, 70 to 76.9 percent of the population declares Christianity as their faith (PEW Research Center, 2015; Jeff Diamant, 2019).
- In Canada, 59 to 71 percent of the population declared Christianity as their faith in 2012, depending on the polling method used (Bibby & Grenville, 2016; Cornelissen, 2021).

Since the beginning of the Christian church, living in community with fellow believers has been valued. Togetherness as a congregation has been enjoyed in church fellowship halls through coffee socials, youth clubs, annual church picnics, dances, and competitive leagues with teams from similar congregations since the early 1900s. The purpose of this recreation is to enhance a sense of community between people of the same faith and to be a place of connection for immigrants.

Typically, church programs, particularly those for kids, include a refreshment break that provides an opportunity for leaders to speak briefly about Christian principles or to share personal testimonies and invite participants to accept Jesus as their savior. Special kids’ programs such as KidsGames are modeled after the Olympics and take place during church summer camps during the years

when the Summer Olympics and the World Cup occur. Competitions are held in various sport events, Bible knowledge, poster design, and essay questions. KidsGames began in Barcelona in 1985 as an evangelical Christian program in preparation for the Olympic Games in that city, and it is now used worldwide (Bynum, 2003).

Besides offering programs for kids, many Christian churches organize adult church sport leagues. These leagues generally do not permit alcohol use at games, and they include time for prayer, fellowship, and talking with others about their relationship with God. Many churches in the United States have built large fitness centers to serve their members and to serve and reach out to others in the community. Christian music is often played in the fitness centers, and during breaks in the activity people can share personal testimonies and pray. However, according to Shoemaker,

there often exists a tension between sport and religious commitments in the South. On the one hand, sport is understood as an opportunity for discipline, evangelism, and further social interactions of the religious community. On the other hand, sport can interfere with religious participation and practice. (2019)

Several examples of Christian organizations that use sport in a positive way in the United States are Germantown Baptist in Tennessee, Kroc Salvation Army in Memphis, Red Rocks Sports in Colorado, and Southeast Christian Church in various locations. For Canada, check out Don Christian Recreation Centre in British Columbia, and Upper Canada Camp in Ontario.

Several for-profit companies have organized to fill a niche in the fitness market for Christian fitness centers that train both the body and soul. Many of these centers offer classes in yoga, Pilates, KickFit, stretching, and self-defense, and other amenities such as personal training and cafés.

Some churches have turned to organizations like Upwards to assist them in rolling out sport programs by “leveraging the power of sports to achieve and increase the impact of their mission” (Upward Sports, n.d.). Another organization that helps churches use sports and recreation programs to reach out to their communities is the Association of Church Sports and Recreation Ministries (CSRSM). CSRSM provides support by “working with local church leaders to use sports, recreation, and fitness as evangelistic and discipleship tools” (Association of Church Sports & Recreation Ministries, Inc., n.d.). CSRSM’s motto is “Equipping Local Churches.

Changing Lives Through Sports, Recreation & Fitness Outreach Ministries.”

To help churches, other organizations, and individuals, *Faith & Fitness Magazine* launched in 2003 and has been producing bimonthly online issues since 2007.

Judaism

Those who identify as Jewish form the second largest religious group in the United States, representing 2.4 percent of the U.S. adult population (Pew Research Center, 2021). Although Christians and Muslims see all of life as affected by their religious commitments, Jews distinguish between sacred and secular activities, thereby providing an interesting and alternative perspective on faithful living in one’s recreation.

For Jews, religion affects what happens in the synagogue and in personal and family devotional life but has less impact on what happens on the soccer pitch or in the boxing ring. The nation of Israel binds many Jews together; therefore, some recreation activities are based more on national commitments than on Jewish faith commitments. For example, the quadrennial Maccabiah Games are held in Israel the year following the Olympic Games. The Maccabiah Games are meant “to promote the physical strength of Jews while fostering a sense of nationalism among Jewish athletes” (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, n.d.).

The Maccabi World Union developed the idea of holding a sort of Jewish Olympiad every four years in Israel, and the first Maccabiah Games were held in 1932. In addition, the Pan American Maccabi Games are held every four years in various South American cities. The JCC Maccabi Games, sponsored by the Jewish Community Centers, are held each summer in the United States and are the largest organized sports program in the world for Jewish teenagers (Jewish Community Center Maccabi Games, n.d.).

Another important influence on the recreation habits of Jews in the United States and Canada was the establishment of organizations to help recent immigrants adapt to their new surroundings. During the late 1800s and the early- to mid-1900s, Jewish settlement houses, immigrant aid institutions, and Young Men’s and Young Women’s Hebrew Associations were established in cities such as Boston, New York, and Chicago. The Young Women’s Hebrew Association offered programs in calisthenics, basketball, baseball, track and field, tennis, physical culture, domestic education, aquatics, “religious work, gymnastics, social work, and educational work to promote social and physical

welfare for Jewish families" (Borish, 1999, p. 248). These centers were concerned with the Americanization of Eastern European immigrants (Borish, 1999). They provided places where Jews could participate in new activities and learn about North American culture without losing their Jewish culture. These organizations merged with the Jewish Community Center (JCC) Association of North America in 1990.

The JCC Association of North America guides the Jewish community centers across North America, serving over one million American Jews annually. This organization is a movement that uses community camps and community centers to promote Jewish culture and community (Jewish Community Centers Maccabi Games, n.d.). These centers, like the Maccabiah Games, are concerned with "Jewish living" rather than **Judaism** as a religion.

Islam

Islam, which has its roots in present-day Saudi Arabia, was spread by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) beginning in approximately 610 AD. (Prac-

ticing Muslims say "Peace be upon him" upon the mention of Muhammad and write the abbreviation "PBUH" with his name.) In Canada, the estimated Muslim population numbers roughly 1.78 million persons (Statistics Canada, 2022). Meanwhile, the Pew Research Center (2018) estimates that there were about "3.45 million Muslims of all ages living in the U.S. in 2017, and that Muslims made up about 1.1% of the total U.S. population." The expectation is that these numbers will double by 2050 to 2.1 percent of the population, due largely to higher fertility rates among Muslims and higher immigration rates. About as many people are converted to the Muslim faith as leave the Muslim faith (Mohamed, 2018).

According to the Muslim American Survey (Pew Research Center, 2011), 78 percent of American Muslims are first-generation immigrants or second-generation Americans. Immigrants hail from 77 different countries, with most from Pakistan. The same survey reported that a plurality of American Muslims expresses a medium level of religious commitment, which takes into account frequency of mosque attendance and daily prayer, and the importance of religion in one's life. Additionally, 60



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Camps are a popular activity for faith-based organizations.

percent of women reported wearing a hijab all, most, or some of the time (Pew Research Center, 2011).

The diverse cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs and attitudes of American Muslims pose unique opportunities and responsibilities for recreation researchers and practitioners. In a recent study, it was deemed that "sports according to Islam are emphasized. Because recreation, which is a part of community life, can increase the quality of life of people," and quality of life is valued by Islam (Baykara et al., 2021).

Awareness of observant Muslims' behaviors is an important step toward accommodating recreation schedules, facilities, and programs. For example, *sawm* (fasting) may be practiced daily during daylight hours during the month of Ramadan. Thus, many adherents may not be able to engage in regular recreational or leisure activities during this time, and program options that are available after sunset would be preferable. The *hijab*, which is worn for modesty and privacy in conformance with verses in the Quran (Surah 24:30-31), and which was originally intended for the Prophet's wives, presents a more complex issue for recreation specialists. Given that the second caliph (Umar/Omar) specifically enjoined adherents to teach their children archery, horseback riding, and swimming as well as the many modern-day ethnic games and national sports ascribed to Muslim countries, every effort should be made to offer egalitarian access to leisure and recreation services. Keep in mind that for more observant females, gender-segregated activity spaces, where females cannot be seen by males, may be required to allow for full participation in dance, exercise, and sports.

Much of the research conducted in Muslims' physical activity beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors has originated outside North America. Early research frequently used a deficit lens in identifying what Muslim girls and women could *not* do. Contemporary international literature shows empowered Muslim women who are frequently supported in their physical activity habits by parents, immediate and extended family, and changes in community expectations and standards (e.g., Bhatnagar & Foster, 2021; Aggergaard, 2016; Knez et al., 2012; Miles & Benn, 2014; Soltani et al., 2021; Stride, 2016). These women negotiate their degree of participation by finding a balance point between their religious, cultural, and personal identities.

In the United States, Hamzeh and Oliver (2012) proposed the *hijab discourse* as a means by which Muslim girls could discover the types and circumstances of physical activity in which they felt com-

fortable participating. Girls in their study overcame visual, spatial, and ethical hijabs (i.e., hijabs used as metaphors for distinctiveness) when participating in swimming, basketball, and indoor rock climbing. This unveiling required them to cross religious, cultural, and self-imposed boundaries that dictated what (visual), where (spatial), and how (ethical) they could do physical activity. In light of these findings, recreation specialists should at least understand that Muslim girls want to participate in activities of their choosing, and they engage in a complex process of relativism in which they judge the ways and means by which they can be comfortable participating. In Canada, Shia Muslim young women were found to encounter and engage in similar internalized struggles while figuring out their place within and their positionality toward physical activity (Jiwani & Rail, 2010). To these women, physical activity was viewed as a way to enhance one's health and self-esteem but subservient to the importance attached to religion. They specifically recommended creating affordable and accessible activity venues within and outside the Muslim community and educating recreation providers about the needs and alternative representations of hijab-wearing women.

Muslim children need quality physical activity experiences that meet U.S. guidelines of 60 minutes per day of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. However, family dynamics and cultural or religious norms may pose barriers to achieving this goal. In Minnesota, Somali parents expressed (1) need for community-based indoor programming that respected a requirement for gender-segregated activity; (2) reliance on schools to provide adequate physical activity during the school day; and (3) adaptations for engaging in home physical activity in limited indoor spaces during winter months (Arcan et al., 2017). Also in Minnesota, Somali and Sudanese adolescents identified several culture-specific facilitators (e.g., family and community members available as role models, motivators, and coparticipants) and barriers (e.g., gender-role expectations for girls to assist in household chores and child care, which limits time available for physical activity) that affected physical activity engagement (Wieland et al., 2015).

Rules are helpful in understanding what is and is not permissible. One scholar argued that "as long as sports protect the basic principles and elements of Islam and do not lead to the neglect of worship and ethical duties, it is considered permissible" (Baykara, 2021). An exhaustive how-to guide for creating environments conducive to Muslim Americans' recreation needs, and specifically for the

religiously observant, is beyond the scope of this section. Generally, some guidelines include surveying clients' interests and participation requirements, which may include

- alleviating time-specific conflicts associated with prayers, holidays, and fasting;
- relaxing dress codes, especially for aquatic activities;
- conducting physical activity programming within the mosque space;
- ensuring that changing areas offer complete privacy and that performance venues restrict physical and visual access to the same sex; and
- staffing aquatic, dance, exercise, and sport classes and sports programs with same-sex personnel (e.g., lifeguards, referees).

The following programs have implemented the preceding five guidelines:

- Muslim Youth of North America camps (MYNA, n.d.)
- An independent summer day camp for Muslim youth in Irvine, California (American Camping Association, 2010)
- Requested swimming programs that conform to Islamic propriety (Brown, 2009; Burks, 2012; Moore et al., 2010)
- A six-month exercise intervention for adult women held at a Toronto mosque
- A basketball league for East African male teens located in metropolitan Seattle, Washington (Stutteville, 2015)
- Karate and soccer programs for Muslim girls in Columbus, Ohio (Gordon, 2014)

JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM AND THE NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION PILLARS

Our view of the world is shaped by what we believe in. What we believe in often blends with our cultural norms, other significant events in our lives, and the times and place we live in. Every faith tradition has distinct views on the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) pillars of conservation, health and wellness, and social equality. However, it is important to realize that how individuals or specific groups understand and practice these views can vary greatly.

Judaism

In terms of conservation, the Torah begins with the words that God created the "heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). What God created was "very good" (Genesis 1:31), and people were instructed to work and protect the earth (Genesis 1:28). There are many examples in the Torah in which the environment was protected (e.g., not cutting down fruit trees [Deuteronomy 20:19] and allowing land to lie fallow every seven years [Leviticus 25]). Related to conservation is a positive view of health and wellness. People were made in the "image of God" (Genesis 1:27) and therefore ought to care for themselves and each other. If anyone causes injury to another, helping that person heal is that person's legal responsibility (Exodus 21:19). It also follows that if all people are created in the image of God and come from the same parentage (Genesis 3:20), all people should be viewed equally. The Torah instructs that when a foreign person lives among them, they are to be treated as "Native-born" (Leviticus 19:34). Different cultural expectations were placed on men and women, but both are viewed as created in the image of God and therefore socially equal (Genesis 1:27).

Christianity

Christianity is also based on the Torah, but it significantly includes the lives of Jesus as Messiah and the writings found in the New Testament. The New Testament reminds its readers that "all things were created: things in heaven and on earth . . . all things have been created through him and for him" (Colossians 1:16), and therefore all things need to be cared for (Colossians 1:16-20). Jesus himself tells his followers to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15). Physical health was also still important, as readers are reminded in the welcome from one of the apostles: "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you" (3 John 1:2). Furthermore, one of the New Testament writers argues that people want to bring God a holy and pleasing worship by exhorting, "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1-2). In terms of social equality, the New Testament states that "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). In addition to viewing all people as one, the New Testament also encourages a respect for diversity among people (1 Corinthians 12:12).

Islam

Islam is based on the Quran, which was divinely revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by the angel Gabriel in the month of Ramadan 610 AD. Muslims also follow the Sunnah, which details Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) application of the Quran's principles in his daily life. Both sources provide codified guidance for a life that upholds Christian and Jewish traditions. Support for the NRPA pillars is clearly stated within these two sources. Environmental stewardship is referred to in the Quran verse 6:165 as translated by Yusuf Ali: "It is He Who hath made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth." Muslims are enjoined to take personal responsibility for their health and wellness, which in the Quran is alluded to in verse 4:79 as translated by Muhammad Sarwar: "Whatever good you may receive is certainly from God and whatever you suffer is from yourselves. We have sent you, (Muhammad [PBUH]), as a Messenger to people. God is a Sufficient witness to your truthfulness." Though the Quran does not specifically mention physical activity, the hadith (oral tradition about Prophet Muhammad's [PBUH] words and behavior) states that parents are to teach their children swimming, archery, and horseback riding. Regular practice of these specific activities would have resulted in military fitness, which was important at the time. In modern times, recreational pursuit of these activities would be valued as a means to emulate the Prophet. Islam's followers are likely the most ethnically heterogeneous among the three Abrahamic religions because Islam's spread over seven centuries reached into Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Central and South Asia, and other regions.

In his final sermon in 630 AD, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) preordains Islam's egalitarian stance toward gender and race:

O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have right over you. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers.

All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab;

also, a white has no superiority over a black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action. You know that every Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. Remember, one day you will appear before Allah and answer for your deeds. So beware, do not stray from the path of righteousness after I am gone.

EMPLOYMENT IN FAITH-BASED RECREATION

Professionals in faith-based recreation must meet three requirements. First, a passionate commitment to the faith is central and is the first entry point into any position. For Jewish leaders, faith is not critical, but a positive disposition to Jewish culture is important. Second, although some people with ecclesiastical training are hired, most of those hired have training in recreation and leadership. Academic training might consist of a recreation diploma from a college, or a recreation, physical education, or leadership degree from a university. Third, a faith-based recreation leader must nurture the faith (or the culture, in the case of Jewish leaders) through recreation with people of various backgrounds. Although some of this nurturing involves specific spiritual instruction, the nurturing may also be primarily focused on encouraging friendships within the group.

LGBTQIA+ people are both accepted and prohibited from employment in various religious places of work. In Canada and the United States, the United Church of Canada, the Anglican denomination, some Presbyterian congregations, various Lutheran traditions, and Unitarians affirm LGBTQIA+ identifications and support employment of LGBTQIA+ people.

SUMMARY

Most North Americans identify with some form of religion. Each ideology presents clear and unique ramifications on the ways followers engage in recreation. Religious institutions play important roles in advising their members on the importance of recreation and, in many cases, in providing opportunities for their members and those from the broader community to take advantage of recreational activities.