



Volume 5: Supporting the Athlete in Society Issue 1: Diversity and Inclusion in Sport

Published April 2017
Volume 5, Issue 1

Diversity and Inclusion in Sport

Participation in sport can provide psychosocial benefits, but only within an intentionally created environment (Petitpas, Cornelius, Raalte, & Jones, 2005).

Psychosocial benefits do not extend to those who experience limited access to sport, and/or who experience additional social stressors within unsafe and unwelcoming sport environments (Symons, O’Sullivan, Borkoles, Anderson, & Polman, 2014).

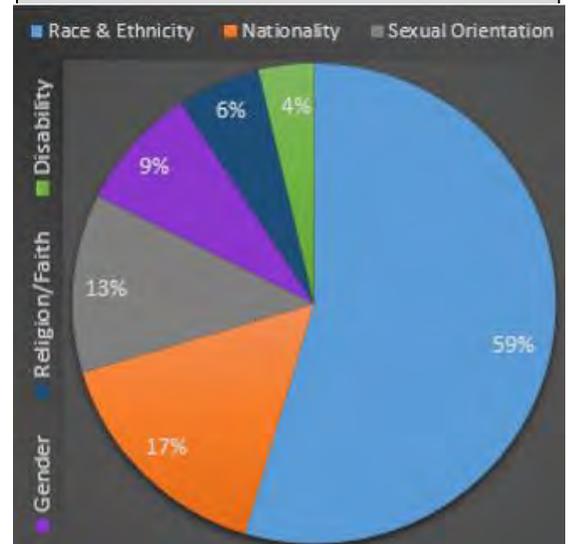
Systemic discrimination has known detrimental impacts on mental health (London, Ahlqvist, Gonzalez, Glanton, & Thompson, 2014), and negative social climates directly influence athletes who identify among oppressed and underrepresented groups about race, ethnicity, gender identity, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, religion, age, and socioeconomic status. The complexity of intersectionality of identities extends to athletic identity, and the necessary unpacking of perceived role and worth as internalized from dominant culture messaging.

It is critical for researchers, coaches, parents, and other athletic personnel to understand diversity and inclusivity to support all athletes. This helps to create an inclusive and connection-based sport environment.

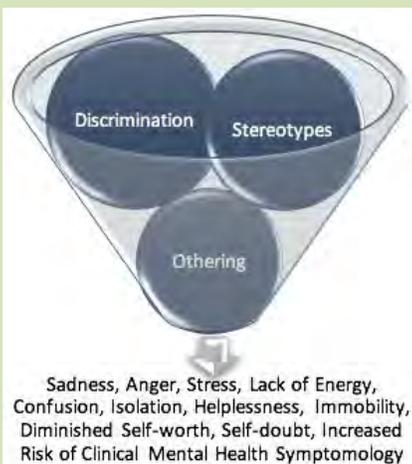
Frequency of Discrimination Incidents

Reported discrimination in Soccer, 2015/2016:

(Retrieved from: <http://www.kickitout.org/news/kick-it-out-reveal-reporting-statistics-for-201516-season/#.WKogJ9rLcs>)



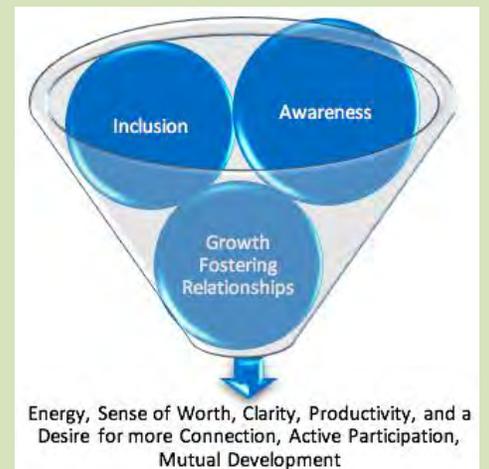
Disconnection



Hardwired for connection

The Relational Cultural Theory (Jordan, 2008) highlights the power of “growth -fostering relationships” to bridge toward *connection* rather than the detrimental mental health effects of *disconnection*.

Connection



Cultivating an Inclusive Environment

Creating an intentionally inclusive framework is crucial to create a safe and open sport environment. Awareness of social justice issues can help to create change by increasing social consciousness within the interconnected web of sport and society.

1. Start Before You Start

- **Focus on creating an environment that fosters inclusion from the very beginning:**
- Encourage coaches and players to learn about each other's cultural backgrounds, lives, and interests outside of athletics.
- Organize collective meals where everyone can learn about one another's cultures by sharing food.

2. Open Communication

- **Open, effective communication optimizes the opportunity for discussion of issues related to inclusion and discrimination:**
- Ensure all athletes have the opportunity to take part in decision-making and planning for diverse social activities.
- Model inclusive language and communication between athletic staff, parents, peers, and athletes.

3. Develop/Implement Effective Management Strategies

- **Implement strategies to deal with inappropriate behavior, and effective procedures for managing conflict, so that a positive, welcoming and safe environment is promoted and maintained:**
- Have a plan for dealing with prejudicial or discriminatory language/behavior.
- Be aware of, or develop, policies and procedures for creating an inclusive environment for various specific cultural identities.

4. Educate and Train Your Staff

- **An educational approach can help to negate many fears that people have when it comes to addressing diversity:**
- Prioritize educational sessions, perhaps with outside speakers, about diversity issues and cultural awareness.
- Recognize, acknowledge, and educate about special days and events such as International Day of Persons with Disabilities, International Day to End Racism, Gay Pride celebrations, etc.

Where can I learn more about Diversity & Inclusion in Sport?

Eitzen, S. D. (2011). Sport in contemporary society: An anthology. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Jordan, J. V. (2008). Recent Developments in Relational-Cultural Theory. *Women & Therapy*, 31(2-4), 1-4. doi:10.1080/02703140802145540

London, B., Ahlqvist, S., Gonzalez, A., Glanton, K. V., & Thompson, G. A. (2014). The social and educational consequences of identity-based rejection. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 8(1), 131-166. doi:10.1111/sipr.12004

Petitpas, A. J., Cornelius, A. E., Raalte, J. L. V., & Jones, T. (2005). A framework for planning youth sport programs that foster psychosocial development. *The Sport Psychologist*, 19(1), 63.

Symons, C., O'Sullivan, G., Borkoles, E., Anderson, M. B., & Polman, R. C. J. (2014). The impact of homophobic bullying during sport and physical education participation on same-sex attracted and gender diverse young Australians' depression and anxiety levels. *Beyond Blue*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/docs/default-source/research-project-files/bw0236.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

<http://www.kickitout.org/news/kick-it-out-reveal-reporting-statistics-for-201516-season/#.WKogJ9rLcs>

<http://pushingtheedge.org/>

This fact sheet is an initiative of the American Psychological Association Division 47's Cornerstone Committee and has been prepared by Hayley Hughes, MEd, Department of Educational Studies, Purdue University; Taryn Brandt, M.A., Clare Devine, M.S.A., and Jaimie Rubin, M.Ed., Department of Psychology, Springfield College; Dr. Kimberlee Bethany Bonura, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Walden University; and Dr. Nick Galli, Department of Health Promotion and Education, The University of Utah.