

University of Denver

Digital Commons @ DU

---

Graduate School of Professional Psychology:  
Faculty Scholarship

Graduate School of Professional Psychology

---

10-4-2024

## The 21st Century Coach: A Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Resource for Youth Lacrosse Coaches

Maria D'Ugo  
*University of Denver*

Jillian Lowey  
*University of Denver*

Sean Mapoles  
*University of Denver*

Brian Gearity  
*University of Denver*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.du.edu/gspc\\_fac](https://digitalcommons.du.edu/gspc_fac)



Part of the [Child Psychology Commons](#), [Inequality and Stratification Commons](#), [Social Justice Commons](#), [Social Psychology Commons](#), and the [Sports Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

D'Ugo, Maria; Lowey, Jillian; Mapoles, Sean; and Gearity, Brian, "The 21st Century Coach: A Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Resource for Youth Lacrosse Coaches" (2024). *Graduate School of Professional Psychology: Faculty Scholarship*. 8.

[https://digitalcommons.du.edu/gspc\\_fac/8](https://digitalcommons.du.edu/gspc_fac/8) <https://doi.org/10.56902/FACSCH.2024.1>



All Rights Reserved.

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School of Professional Psychology at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate School of Professional Psychology: Faculty Scholarship by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact [jennifer.cox@du.edu](mailto:jennifer.cox@du.edu), [dig-commons@du.edu](mailto:dig-commons@du.edu).

---

## **The 21st Century Coach: A Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Resource for Youth Lacrosse Coaches**

### **Publication Statement**

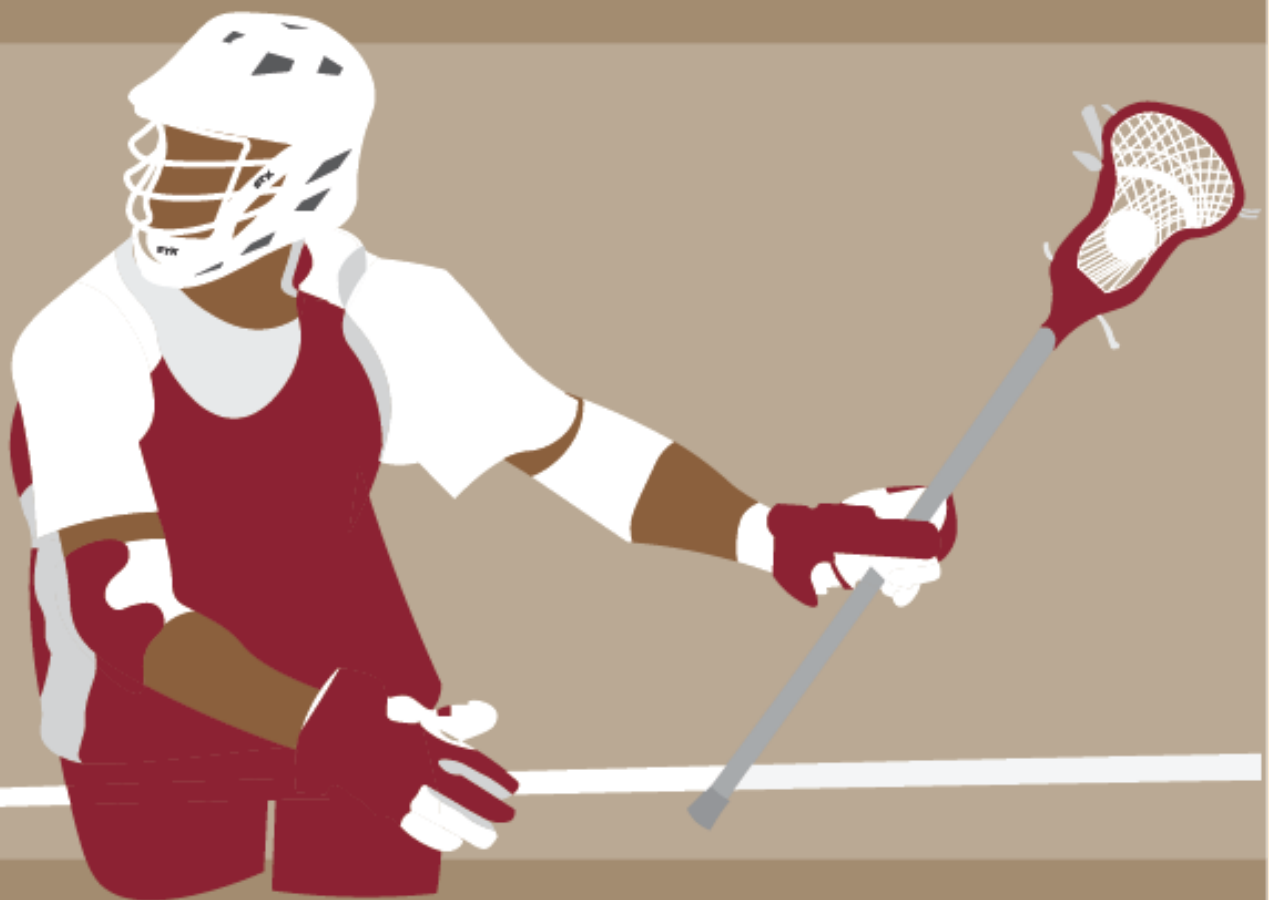
Copyright is held by the authors. User is responsible for all copyright compliance.

### **Publication Statement**

Copyright is held by the authors. User is responsible for all copyright compliance.

# The 21st Century Coach

A DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND  
INCLUSION RESOURCE FOR  
YOUTH LACROSSE COACHES



Maria D'ugo, M.A., Jillian Lowey, M.A.,  
Sean Mapoles, M.A., and Dr. Brian Gearity, Ph.D.

# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Resources for Youth Lacrosse Coaches

---

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
Authors' Acknowledgements.....	3
Purpose.....	4
Introduction .....	4
History of Lacrosse .....	5
Oppression (Historical & Social Harm) in Sport.....	12
Racism .....	12
Sexism, Misogyny, and Transphobia.....	15
Ableism .....	17
Religious Discrimination.....	19
Xenophobia.....	21
Class/Economic Discrimination .....	22
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Recommendations with Key Groups .....	24
Strategies to Facilitate Identity Dialogue with Individual Athletes.....	24
Strategies to Facilitate Identity Dialogue with Teams .....	24
Strategies to Facilitate Identity Dialogue with Parents.....	24
Multicultural Resources.....	25
Transitions out of Youth Sport.....	26
References.....	29

## **Authors' Acknowledgements**

Thank you to the Association for Applied Sport Psychology's Oglesby-Snyder Grant for Equity and Cultural Diversity and the grant committee for funding and supporting our research. Thank you to Dr. Brian Gearity (University of Denver) for providing us with guidance, support, help, and resources. We are grateful for the support of USA Lacrosse in providing us with the resources and connections necessary to engage in this research. Thank you to the local high school lacrosse teams, coaches, and administrators that we worked with to collect the data necessary to create this resource document. *This document was last updated June 2024.*

## Purpose

This document provides educational information, resources, and support to coaches and administrators with the goal of empowering and encouraging diversity, equity, and inclusion in daily sporting practices. This document may aid in efforts to increase inclusion and participation in youth sport, specifically lacrosse. Furthermore, it may help to increase coaches' and administrators' cultural awareness and competencies.

## Introduction

Negative outcomes in youth sport are often related to financial barriers, over emphasis on winning, pressure to perform while injured, racism (e.g., systemic discrimination, microaggressions), abusive behaviors (e.g., hitting, kicking), and lack of fun (Merkel, 2013). Some of these problems can be improved with evidence-informed practices on quality coaching, specifically culturally competent coaching and creating inclusive environments. Lacrosse is an expensive sport, predominately played by athletes who are White and of upper-class socioeconomic status. This document provides information about the evolution of lacrosse, the barriers that athletes face in accessing this sport, and how coaches and administrators can help to create more inclusive organizations.

## History of Lacrosse

Lacrosse is America's oldest organized sport, dating back to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century (Livingston, 2012; Vennum, 2007). The sport began as a Native American and Canadian Indian contest called Teewaarthan. The game was used to toughen young warriors, settle inter-tribal disputes, pay tribute to religious deities, and for recreation and festival (Fisher, 2002). By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, official rules were established by the White National Lacrosse Association of Canada to show superiority and distinguish the modern game of lacrosse from Teewaarthan. Men's lacrosse transformed into a game designed to exude White nationalism and masculinity (Fisher, 2002). According to historian Donald M. Fisher's book, *Lacrosse: A History of the Game* (Fisher, 2002), "Men's lacrosse's participants consisted either of the 'savages' themselves or those who were far superior and in no way in danger of slipping into savagery. Men's lacrosse was unabashedly a sport for the social elite." On the other hand, women's lacrosse was popularized in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in universities in Scotland and Great Britain. The rules were modified to display femininity, exhibiting less physical contact and skirts for uniforms (Wiser, 2014).

Lacrosse has increased in popularity, specifically for middle- to upper-class White Americans (Livingston, 2012). Based on the 2022 NCAA Lacrosse student-athlete demographic breakdown, only 17% of athletes on the men's team are People of Color and 17% of athletes on the Women's team are People of Color (NCAA Demographics Breakdown, 2019). The chart below outlines the demographic breakdown of lacrosse student-athletes from 2022:

### NCAA Student-Athlete Demographic Breakdown by Team

Team	# of White Athletes	# of Athletes of Color
Men's Lacrosse	13,194	2,745
Women's Lacrosse	11,041	2,221
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,235</b>	<b>4,966</b>

Source: [NCAA Demographics Database - NCAA.org](https://www.ncaa.org/sportscollection/2019-2020-ncaa-demographics-database)

Lacrosse presents multiple barriers for racialized minorities and others without wealth or higher socioeconomic status due to the lack of representation within the sport and cost. As a coach, it is important to understand the history and evolution of lacrosse, barriers that athletes face to access the sport, and actions that you can take to address these barriers and create an inclusive environment.



## Land Acknowledgement

“Land acknowledgements are used by Native Peoples and non-Natives to recognize Indigenous Peoples who are the original stewards of the lands on which we now live” (National Museum of the American Indian - Smithsonian). As a lacrosse coach, you may want to perform land acknowledgements prior to the start of practices and games. [Here](#) is a link to some information on why land acknowledgements are important. [Here](#) is a link to some steps and tips on creating an Indigenous land acknowledgement statement. We have listed some of these helpful steps below:

Self-reflection: Reflect on the value and purpose of doing a land acknowledgement

Research: Identify the traditional inhabitants of the land you are on

Craft your statement and use appropriate language (*There is no exact script for this*): Include use of past, present, and future tenses where applicable

Deliver your statement: Do this through an empowerment, not deficit, lens and make sure to have proper pronunciation of each name

**Additional Resources and Stories:**

**[Guide to Land Acknowledgements for Mainstream Sport](#)** – This is a guide that provides information on how to acknowledge land in mainstream sporting environments, why it's important to acknowledge land, and the importance of being open to feedback as you learn.

## Importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Despite a recent shift toward diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), discrimination based on gender, race and sexual orientation is still present within sports teams, organizations, businesses, academic institutions and other portions of society. As an advocate for DEI, you may find yourself thinking, “What can I do to create more inclusive environments for youth who otherwise may not have access to these environments?” See the points below to get some ideas on where to start and why DEI is important.

1. **What:** Use gender neutral pronouns (e.g., “you all”, “everyone”, etc.)
  - a. **Why:** Using gender neutral pronouns is perhaps the easiest way to demonstrate to an individual that their unique identity is welcome in your environment. Put simply, individuals who feel welcome tend to stick around. As you begin transitioning from using traditionally masculine pronouns (“guys”) to more inclusive pronouns (“you all”) it is important to recognize that you are taking a difficult and deliberate step in changing the way you show up for your athletes. Such a shift will not happen overnight, and there may be occasions where you inadvertently default to masculine pronouns out of habit. These are exceptional opportunities to address your intention to the group and acknowledge the difficulty of changing behavior.
2. **What:** Set team expectations at the start of the year that include the importance of using respectful language.
  - a. **Why:** Youth athletes look to their coaches and superiors for behavioral guidance. Specifying from the start the language that will and will not be used. You

modeling that behavior will help athletes commit to appropriate language use. For additional information, see the section below on microaggressions.

3. **What:** Understand your athlete's identities and intersections of those identities.
  - a. **Why:** Human beings are a complex amalgamation of racial, ethnic, gender, and other identities. The intersection of identities can create compounding societal marginalization and disadvantage. For example, an identifying gay Black woman may face different types of discrimination than a straight and cisgender Black man. Knowing the full spectrum of an individual's identities allows for proper sensitivity to their life experience and awareness of the factors that may influence feeling welcome, comfortable, and empowered within an environment.
4. **What:** Recognize, understand, and address your own biases.
  - a. **Why:** Bias is inherent to the human experience, and how we address our biases is controllable. Recognizing our own biases requires vulnerability. We must observe our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors objectively and consider whether our beliefs stem from assumptions and generalizations, or from facts. For example, we may assume, based on limited experiences and American cultural generalizations, that men are more proficient at math than women. We may recognize this bias by observing our thoughts (i.e., "I am having the thought that women don't perform well at math"), observing our beliefs (i.e., I believe that women are inferior in math-related fields) and finally checking our behaviors (i.e., I give preferential treatment to men). Recognizing and understanding our biases can help us communicate ways that maximize support and impact for our athletes.
5. **What:** Continue using resources to further your own knowledge.

- a. **Why:** We are all limited by exposure to knowledge. Only through continually seeking to address our deficiencies are we able to change who we are and how we support others. Through intentional study, we can learn how to improve our relationships with others. Reading this stakeholder journal is an excellent first step, but progress is not a one-time effort. Perpetual attention toward changes yields continuous results.
6. **What:** Be aware of the resources available to your athletes within their school/program and within the greater community.
    - a. **Why:** Through promoting DEI practices, it is our hope that your program attracts a diverse group of participants. In doing so, coaches and administrators are responsible for caring for these individuals' unique needs. Thus, it is paramount to be able to recognize the signs of an individual in crisis and match them with appropriate resources. Further, it is important to recognize that you may be ill-equipped to recognize the significance of an event for an individual with different identities than your own. Should this happen, you may benefit from pursuing additional resources.

## Oppression (Historical & Social Harm) in Sport

In this section, you will be introduced to different types of oppression an athlete may face based on their identity and action steps you can take to prevent unjust treatment. The circumstances that your athletes might face are not limited to the examples below. Each section includes various links to further your knowledge and tools to aid your athletes.

### Racism

**Title of article.** Black high school softball player who was forced to remove beads cuts hair: ‘It was humiliating.’

**Article.** <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/highschool/2021/05/13/black-high-school-softball-player-told-remove-hair-beads-umpires/5070734001/>

**Interview.** <https://abc7ny.com/black-softball-player-forced-to-cut-braids-hair-rules-high-school-haircut-athletes/10638829/>

**Synopsis.** "Nicole Pyles, a teenager at Hillside High School in Durham, North Carolina, was told by umpires in a softball game to either remove beads from her hair or that she wouldn't be able to participate." This is an example of racial discrimination because it unfairly targets people of color (Black people) who wear beads in their hair and the argument for "safety" is thin to non-existent. Black people have had their hair discriminated against in other areas (e.g., military, schools) and there is a rich history of fetishizing or degrading Black hair.

**Continuous Learning:** For a more positive view of Black hair, see "[Happy to be Nappy](#)" by bell hooks.

### What to Know:

Racism is a complex term that carries a variety of meanings. Racism refers to the belief that a specific race is superior to others. Laws, policies, and daily practices can increase and normalize

racial inequities, racial prejudice, and discrimination. Racism is engrained in our society at a variety of levels. It is not enough to say you are not racist. Rather, it is important to work every day to be antiracist by changing the way we think, act, further our education, and challenge others and our structural systems.

**What to Do:**

*Education:* Working to be antiracist and continuing to educate yourself about racial inequities are continuous tasks that will last a lifetime. To work towards being antiracist, it is crucial to further your knowledge on the history of racism and oppression, learn how to identify racism, what actions to take, and the different ways that racism may show up.

*Antiracist Work:* When working to be antiracist, it is important to 1) identify, understand, and confront your own biases; 2) identify racial inequities and disparities; 3) hold those around you accountable; 4) further your knowledge; 5) advocate for your athletes; 6) empower your athletes to engage in this work as with you; and 7) learn with humility.

*Racism in Sport:* Racism can show up in sport in a variety of ways. Some examples are racial slurs and taunts, racially fueled behavior, microaggressions, lack of equal access to sport, and more.

*Action Steps You Can Take:*

1. Understand the inequities present within your systems.
2. Set a good example of how to treat others with respect.
3. Reduce and eliminate racist behaviors, ideas, and policies within yourself, your team, and within your community.
4. Acknowledge the histories, struggles, and wisdom that exist within athletes from different backgrounds.

5. Speak up for your athletes and advocate for them.

### **Continuous Learning:**

- [Anti-Racist Coaching: Moving the Needle On and Off the Playing Field](#)** – This is a toolkit designed for coaches, intended to help them engage in anti-racist work to support their Black and non-Black athletes of color. There are a variety of resources here to help coaches with anti-racist coaching such as podcasts, videos, articles, and more.
- [Microaggressions and the Student Athlete](#)** – This article defines what microaggressions are, examples of microaggressions, and the negative impacts they have on the athlete; for example, decline in performance and well-being. The author provides ideas on what you can do as a coach to stop microaggressions occurring on your team.
- [10 Keys to Everyday Anti-Racism](#)** – This is a tool guide created by the founders of the AntiRacist Table on different actions that you can take and things that you can work on to be anti-racist such as furthering your education of the history of African Americans and the Black experience, acknowledging your intentions, cultivating empathy, and more.

### **Tools for your Athletes:**

#### **[Black Lives Matter: AASP's Statement & Resources Related to Recent Racialized Events](#)** –

This is a resource page provided by the Association for Applied Sport Psychology that includes racial justice resources such as mental health resources/ support for People of Color and movies, books, podcasts, online accounts, and articles to further your education and support of the Communities of Color.



## Sexism, Misogyny, and Transphobia

### What to Know:

Sexism is discrimination against someone based on their sex or gender. Sexism can exist in all areas of life and can result in feelings of worthlessness and cause a decline in health. Sexism affects mostly women and gender minorities; however, it can also have an impact on men who don't conform to stereotypical gender norms. Misogyny is defined as the hatred of women. Some examples of misogyny include abusing, belittling, violating, or attacking a woman because of their gender.

Transphobia is prejudice against someone who is transexual, transgender, or gender nonconforming. This may include negative attitudes or beliefs, derogatory language, name calling, bullying, or discounting/refusing to use preferred pronouns.

### What to Do:

*Educate Yourself:* Continue to educate yourself on gender and sexuality, along with what these athletes say that you can do to continue to support them. It is important to be aware of the resources available for athletes that may be struggling with their identity.

*Change Gendered Language:* Coaches, administrators, and other stakeholders who regularly interact with athletes should not make assumptions about their identities. Asking an athlete for their preferred pronouns and using gender inclusive language can help to create a safe space for individuals to feel that they can be themselves. Using terms such as 'team', 'folks', and 'everyone' are inclusive to all team members. Calling athletes by their given or preferred name is another option.

*Speak Up:* Advocate for equal opportunities and the well-being of each of your athletes.

### Continuous Learning:

- A. **Beyond the Checklist: Integrating LGBTQI+ Inclusivity Into Your Team and Department Culture** – This is a helpful document for coaches that highlights the roles that coaches play in supporting and advocating for athletes and staff who are LGBTQI+ and gender nonconforming. It touches on multiple topics, such as reflection prompts and recommendations for action, and a guide for inclusive recruiting questionnaires.
- B. **What's Transphobia?** – This website provides detailed information on transphobia and transmisia, what they are, their harmful effects, and ways to help stop these beliefs and how to fight transmic comments, behaviors, and practices.
- C. **Sexism in Sport** – This is an article that highlights sexism in sport and its impact.
- D. **Impact and Indicators of Sexism** – This is an article that highlights sexism in sport, indicators of sexism, and its impact.
- E. **Gender Equity in Athletics** – This website includes multiple articles/resources about Title IX resources and empowering women in sports.
- F. **Out for Sport** – This resource provides detailed information on tackling homophobia and transphobia in sport based on research findings.

**Tools for your Athletes:**

**Athlete Ally** – Also, a great resource for coaches and administrators, Athlete Ally is a leading organization focusing on gender and sexuality in sport contexts. Their website is updated regularly and contains numerous, real-world tools.

## Ableism

### **What to Know:**

Ableism is discrimination against individuals with disabilities based on the belief that those who are nondisabled (i.e., able-bodied) are superior. Disabilities may be visible (e.g., many physical disabilities) or invisible (e.g., neurological, social). Central to ableism is the idea that disabled people need fixing. In modern American society, this makes the conditions for ableism to thrive especially prevalent. In fact, few accommodations exist for those who are disabled. The American Disability Act does not require something as fundamental as push-to-open buttons on state, federal, or privately owned structures.

### **What to Do:**

*Believe:* When someone discloses a disability, believe them. Do not assume someone else's needs, identities, or life experiences.

*Listen and Accommodate:* Listen when individuals request accommodation and make sure to choose accessible venues for sporting events and practices.

*Incorporate and Educate:* Choose activities that allow for equal or appropriately accommodated participation and educate youth.

*Intervene:* If you see someone mistreating a person with a disability or talking about them instead of to them, take action.

*Preserve Right to Privacy:* Disabled persons have a right to privacy when it comes to their disability. It is their right to disclose their disability when they feel comfortable doing so, or not at all.

*Avoid Microaggression:* Ableist microaggressions should be addressed and reduced. The following are examples of ableist microaggressions: a) That is so lame b) You are so retarded c)

That guy is crazy d) Are you off your meds? e) Can I pray for you? f) I don't even think of you as disabled.

**Continuous Learning:**

[Anti-Oppression: Anti-Ableism Resources](#) – This resource provides information on (En)Able/Nondisabled privilege and fragility.

## Religious Discrimination

### What to Know:

Religious hatred observable within society is often present in sports as well. The religions that dominate in society often dominate in sports as well. For example, many teams, whether it be recreational, collegiate, or professional, engage in “prayer huddles” before games. These often-Christian team ceremonies can make athletes of different religions or with no religious affiliation feel excluded and unwelcomed. Additionally, many team uniforms deviate from garments deemed appropriate by various religions as they may not cover enough of an athlete’s body. Because of this, strict uniform policies may deny access to sport.

### What to Do:

*Embrace uniform modifications:* Welcome athletes’ decisions to wear more covered clothing under uniforms as well as Hijabs, Yamulkeh, or other religious garments.

*Provide dietary accommodation:* Just as you may accommodate a food allergy, provide athletes with necessary dietary accommodations both at home and on the road. This may include Kosher, Halal, or vegetarian meal options. This may also include providing meals at certain times to accommodate for fasting athletes, as is commonly done for Yom Kippur or during Ramadan.

*Open dialogue:* If interested in prayer circles at practice or games, talk to all athletes beforehand to make sure they feel comfortable participating.

*Recognize holidays:* Recognize religious holidays and allow athletes to skip practices or games when necessary.

### Continuous Learning:

- A. **Including people with diverse religious beliefs in your sport** – This article highlights different ways that sports can create a more encouraging and accommodating environment for athletes of varying religious beliefs.
- B. **Religious Inclusion** – This is an activity that provides information about modifications that sports can make to accommodate the religious practices of athletes, anti-discrimination, and how Islamic practices can possibly impact athletes' involvement in sport.

## Xenophobia

### What to Know:

Xenophobia is the fear and hatred of foreigners. As immigration continues expand worldwide, xenophobia is becoming a prevalent form of discrimination, especially in the United States.

### What to Do:

*Celebrate other Cultures:* Seek to develop connections with cultural identities dissimilar from your own. Learn by reading stories that celebrate different cultures and participate in culturally relevant holidays.

*Call out Bigotry and Hate Speech:* If you hear someone telling a culturally insensitive joke inform them that stereotyping is harmful. Allowing the normalization of hate speech perpetuates dangerous ideas and fallacious stereotypes.

*Talk about Differences:* Biases are not innate; they are learned. Xenophobic behavior can be counteracted through replacing negative stereotypes with positive representations. People, especially young people, should understand that humans have a right to feel safe.

*Intervene:* It is important to intervene if you witness someone being harassed or physically attacked. Do not escalate the situation. Do ask the person being attacked if they need help. All persons should be treated with dignity, respect, and humanity.

### Continuous Learning:

[Culturally Relevant Children's Books](#) – This link highlights 25 different children's books that teach kids to appreciate and celebrate diversity.

## Class/Economic Discrimination

### What to Know:

Classism is the discrimination or differential treatment of individuals or groups based on actual or perceived social class. Social class rankings can be derived from economic status, family history, job status, education status, race, ethnicity, and more. Classism is often internalized by people of all classes. Lower-class individuals may feel inferior or ashamed in comparison to wealthier individuals. Middle and upper-class individuals may use this internalization to justify their privilege. Youth of upper and middle-class families are more likely to participate in sport than youth of lower-class backgrounds. Schools in wealthier towns tend to have more sports teams, providing more opportunities for participation. Youth from families with higher incomes tend to participate in a wider variety of sport and go on to be more specialized in a particular sport. Children from high-income backgrounds participate in sports earlier in their lives than those of low-income backgrounds.

### What to Do:

*Work with the school:* Work with the school to see if there are any funds to help athletes cover fees to participate in sport, such as scholarships or reduced pay-to-play fee opportunities.

*Simplify logistics:* Providing transportation can alleviate the burden on parents and guardians to take their children to and from practices and games.

*Provide equipment:* Providing equipment limits the financial strain of participating in sport.

*Recognize privilege:* Athletes with more resources may have more time to commit to a sport.

They may also have additional coaches and facilities accessible to them.

### Continuous Learning:



- A. **A Tradition of Classism & Racism in “Elite” Sports** – This article provides information on classism in sport and the importance of equal access to sport.
- B. **Exploring the Minority-Majority Gap in Sport Participation** – This article highlights the impact that socio-economic resources have on boys’ and girls’ participation in youth sport.
- C. **Sports Participation Gap Exists Between Youth from Lower-Income and Middle-Income Families** – This article provides information on the likelihood of parents involving their children in youth sports based on their financial income and barriers.
- D. **Survey: Low-Income Kids Are 6 Times More Likely to Quit Sports Due to Costs** – This article highlights the participation and quitting rates of children ages 6-18 involved in youth sports based on their household income and barriers.
- E. **5 Ways Everyone Can Promote Youth Sports Equity** – This resource provides helpful steps about getting kids more involved in youth sports and how adults, organizations, communities, and policy leaders can improve youth sport participation.

## **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Recommendations with Key Groups**

### **Strategies to Facilitate Identity Dialogue with Individual Athletes**

1. Show your athletes that you care about each of them individually and that you are there to support them.
2. Understand the intersecting identities that each of your athletes acknowledges.
3. Ensure that athletes know they can share their concerns and struggles with you.
4. Create an open and welcoming space for all athletes.

### **Strategies to Facilitate Identity Dialogue with Teams**

1. Be aware of your own and the teams' pre-existing stereotypes and biases.
2. Meet the participants where they are by using appropriate language for the team's age and existing knowledge.
3. Create a safe environment for athletes to express their thoughts and emotions.

### **Strategies to Facilitate Identity Dialogue with Parents**

1. Understand that you may possess privileged or confidential information about an athlete's identity.
2. Consult with the athlete; ask if they would like to be present for the conversation.
3. Commit to being open to parents' perspectives, advice, and experiences.
4. Be aware that you may be the first coach to speak with a parent about their child's identity.

## Multicultural Resources

Below you will find additional resources and links to a variety of websites that highlight how to create inclusive teams, the importance of intersectionality, resource guides for coaches, and a list of authors that specialize in multicultural issues. These resources will further your cultural competency and provide additional inclusive coaching techniques.

### Articles:

[Creating an Inclusive University Athletic Team Through Systematic Alliance Building](#)

[How to diversify sport and create an inclusive environment](#)

### Videos:

[Intersectionality 101](#)

### Websites:

[Supporting the Athlete in Society](#)

[A Resource Guide on Diversity and Inclusion for Coach Trainers and Educators](#)

### Authors and Scholars:

Derrick Bell, Leslie G. Carr, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, Richard Delgado, Joe Feagin, Ibram X. Kendi, Educarado Bonilla-Silva, Daniel Solorzano, Derald Wing Sue

## Transitions out of Youth Sport

**Acknowledging the Function of Sport:** For many years, researchers have consistently shown that transitions out of sport often result in negative outcomes. For many young people, athletics functions as a hub of social, physical, and emotional identities. Removing athletics from an athlete's life, especially if they strongly identify with that identity, can result in confusion, anxiety, and grief from the loss of a closely held identity and way of relating to others.

**Voluntary Retirement:** Voluntary retirement can result due to an athlete's personal choice. This could be related to a loss of interest, career changes, and more. Most importantly, the athlete is deliberately choosing to spend their time elsewhere.

**Involuntary Retirement:** Involuntary retirement results because of circumstances external to the athlete. For example, a global pandemic, injury, family responsibilities, suspension, age, or performance level. Most importantly, the athlete is being forced to end their participation.

Because involuntary retirement is inherently forced, there is a greater degree of athlete trauma associated with this type of retirement. Remember, for some athletes, much-to-all of their sense of purpose, schedule, and friend group revolve around sport. Athletes who are "all-in" are at the greatest risk of developing negative symptoms when retiring from sport.

**What to Do:** Research suggests that the best way to accommodate the eventuality of retirement is to encourage athletes to explore other areas of interest outside of their sport. Exploration can and should occur while participating in sport and upon transitioning out of sport. This may seem counterintuitive to coaches who are deliberately trying to encourage full attention to their sport. Athletes are always people first and athletes second.

**Leveraging Sport:** At its core, athletics is a microcosm of individual behavior. The traits athletes show in sport can be assumed to appear with other areas outside of sport. Coaches have a

unique opportunity to use their knowledge of athlete behavior to recommend future outlets for analogous participation. Further, coaches can encourage their athletes to conduct their own exploration of why sport is meaningful. The following self-reflective questionnaire is a great place to start:

- What is it that I love about sports? Is it just this sport or other sports too?
- In addition to sports, what else do I like to spend time doing?
- What else am I looking forward to in the future?
- Where do I find validation and affirmation (externally and internally)?
- What skills have I learned from my sport and how can I use them off the field?

**Normalizing Feelings:** Going from full and frequent sport participation to athletic retirement can be jarring. Athletes should be made aware of the potential to encounter feelings of anxiety, remorse, purposelessness, and depression when concluding their participation in their sport. Here is a quick review of these feelings:

*Anxiety:* A form of stress that is typified by recurrent distressing and worried thoughts often about the future.

*Remorse:* Persistent feelings of sadness related to loss.

*Purposelessness:* Similar to apathy; a feeling that actions to do matter because personal impact in areas of meaning is negligible.

*Depression:* Persistent feelings of lethargy, often including loss of motivation, loss of appetite and feelings of purposelessness.

**Closing Ceremony or Ritual:** Players often look to coaches as a resource for processing (i.e., managing) complex emotions. At the end of the season when emotions are at their peak, coaches can help to normalize and validate their feelings by providing support through group and

individual discussions. These acts can have a tremendous impact on athletes' willingness to acknowledge, discuss, and process their emotions.

**Continuous Learning:**

**How to Support Athletes Who Transition Out of Sport** – This article provides information on the potential reasons that athletes transition out of sport, the mental health risks associated with this transition, and how counselors, coaches, family members, and teammates can help to support an athlete through this transition.

## References

- Fisher, D. M. (2002). *Lacrosse: A history of the game*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Human Rights Channel. (n.d.). *Sexism: See it. Name it. Stop it*.  
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-channel/stop-sexism>
- Knoester, C. & Rockhill, C. (2021). Multiculturalism and antiracism in sports? U.S. public Opinions about Native American team names and mascots and the use of hijabs in sports. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, 7.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/23780231211028681>
- Livingston, M. (2012). Lacrosse: A rich history hindered by racist attitudes in the United States.
- Merkel, D. L. (2013). Youth sport: Positive and negative impact on young athletes. *Open Access Journal of Sports Medicine*, 4, 151-160. <https://doi.org/10.2147/OAJSM.S33556>
- National Museum of the American Indian - Smithsonian. (n.d.) *Honoring Original Indigenous Inhabitants: Land Acknowledgement*.  
<https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/informational/land-acknowledgment>.
- NCAA Demographics Database. (2019). *Coach and Student-Athlete Demographics by Sport*.  
<http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/ncaa-demographics-database>
- Obear, K. (2007). Navigating triggering events: Critical skills for facilitating difficult dialogues. *The Diversity Factor*, 15(3), 23–29.
- Vennum, T. (2007). *Lacrosse legends of the first Americans*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Wiser, M. C. (2014). Lacrosse history, a history of one sport or two? A comparative analysis of men's lacrosse and women's lacrosse in the United States. *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 31(13), 1656–1676. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2014.930709>

World Lacrosse. (2020). Origin of Men's Lacrosse. <https://worldlacrosse.sport/about-world-lacrosse/origin-history/>.