

**EUROPEAN HANDBOOK FOR GENDER
EQUALITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION IN SPORT:
A PERSPECTIVE THROUGH THE ERASMUS
+ WOMEN-UP PROJECT**

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CHAPTER 7: INTERSECTIONALITY IN SPORTS: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF RACE, ETHNICITY, SEXUALITY, AND OTHER SOCIAL IDENTITIES ON PARTICIPATION AND EXPERIENCES IN SPORTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Human interest in sport and its promotion by media started in Western in the late 1900s, when working men had free time to play sports or watch sports events, and that's when a developing mass press began to report a lot of events (Dorer & Marschik, 2010). So, no non-male or working man could participate in sports events. In the early 1960s, there was increasing interest from the female race to participate in competitions at the national, regional and international levels and that was due to coincide of several global forces. Among the most well-known reason was the influence of the feminist movement in Europe and North America, which countries have stressed the urgent need for the development of women's participation in sports and have marked the gradual development of women's participation both in national and international levels.

In recent decades, however, sport has been characterized by intersectionality: strategies of inclusion (of Blacks and women), and strategies fighting marginalization (of women and certain ethnicities) has started over the past years. Intersectionality postulates that multiple patterns of identity such as racism, homophobia or sexism are mutually composed (Collins, 1993). Therefore, a more interdisciplinary approach will help us to understand why male participation in sports is higher than female participation.

The concept of intersectionality, initially introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the context of feminist theory, has gained significant traction across various disciplines and social justice movements (Davis, 2017). Intersectionality recognizes that social identities are not isolated categories but rather interlocking systems of power and oppression. In the realm of sports, intersectionality highlights the importance of understanding and analyzing how race, ethnicity, sexuality, and other social identities intersect with gender, shaping the experiences, opportunities, and challenges faced by athletes.

To develop a comprehensive understanding of intersectionality in sports, it is essential to establish a clear definition and scope. Intersectionality, in this context, refers to the ways in which multiple social identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and ability, intersect and interact within sporting contexts (Henderson & Gibson, 2013). By exploring these intersections, we can unravel the complex dynamics that influence athletic experiences, outcomes, and access to resources.

Intersectionality in sports has been the subject of extensive scholarly research, theoretical frameworks, and empirical studies. The existing body of knowledge encompasses a wide range of disciplines, including sociology, gender studies, critical race theory, and sport psychology, among others. Significant studies, influential researchers, and key publications have contributed to our understanding of how intersectionality shapes participation, experiences, and outcomes in sports. Summarizing and synthesizing this existing knowledge base provides a solid foundation for comprehending the complexities and implications of intersectionality in sports.

The study of intersectionality in sports is extremely important and relevant in today's society (Cunningham, 2017). Sports, which serve as a microcosm of society, offer a forum for debating social injustices, exposing prejudice, and advancing inclusivity and equity. We can uncover and address systemic prejudices, improve representation, and provide opportunities for athletes with overlapping marginalized identities by understanding how intersectionality functions within sports.

Recognizing the importance of intersectionality in sports also supports broader social movements for inclusivity and social justice. This chapter highlights the linkages between social identities, power structures, and athletic experiences as it examines the practical applications, consequences, and influence of intersectionality in sports. It aspires to add to ongoing debates and projects that support equality, diversity, and social change in the context of sports.

The changing socioeconomic landscape and shifting discourses do not exclude sports. Sports-related trends and problems are frequently reflections of broader social and cultural changes. By examining the current status of intersectionality in sports, we can spot new issues, potential areas for development, and chances for advocacy and change. This chapter offers a modern perspective on the intersectional dynamics at work in sports today by looking at current advancements, conflicts, and innovations.

This chapter lays the groundwork for succeeding sections that delve into the scientific context, technical details, and pedagogical advice around intersectionality in sports by providing a solid foundation of knowledge and expertise in this area. Through this investigation, we hope to encourage critical thinking, advance diversity, and motivate constructive change in the field of sports.

2. SCIENTIFIC BACKGROUND

Participation and opportunities in sport tend to differ between people from different social positions. However, the term intersectionality may help us to understand better the complex interplay of multiple interconnected systems of oppression and privilege shaped by intersections of individuals' social categories.

The participation of people in both sports activities and sports competitions is beneficial for both societies and individuals. Specifically, the regular participation of individuals in sports activities has positive benefits on their physical, mental, psychological and social well-being and also promotes social cohesion (Lim et al., 2021). Taking these benefits as an example, it is imperative that all people participate in quality sporting activity with equal rights. Despite this, for many years there has been observed an unequal participation of male-female individuals in sports with membership in different category-based groups. For example, it is suggested that women and girls, people with disabilities, people with lower income or educational background, older adults, and members of gender and sexual minority communities participate less as athletes than the modal (male, muscly bodies, high-socioeconomic status/degreed, heterosexual and/or cisgender) population in North American and European societies (Hosseinpoor et al., 2012).

Intersectionality as a term was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (Serrant, 2020), and is known as a very powerful theoretical framework for examining how connected systems of power manifest in people's experiences and studying how these systems produce inequalities based on individuals' social positions (Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw, a legal scholar and critical race theorist, first introduced the term "intersectionality" in 1989 as a way to examine how multiple dimensions of identity intersect and interact to shape individuals' experiences of oppression and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989). She initially developed the concept within the context of analyzing legal cases involving Black women who faced discrimination and marginalization that could not be adequately addressed by single-axis frameworks, such as those focusing solely on race or gender. Intersectionality proposes that diverse patterns identities-based inequality, such as sexism, discrimination against disabled people and nationalism are mutually formed (Collins, 1993). Because of the involvement of these inequalities, individuals' experience often displays at varying meeting-points of sex/gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation and other identity-based variables. Given these parameters, intersectionality will help us to understand why taking part in sports in multi-marginalized groups continue to lag compared to their counterparts who are dominantly situated. More specifically, in sports where being white and male are prevalent (Ray 2014), Black women's experience of inequality in sports can be clearly expressed better through an intersectional perspective rather than taking a single-identity approach (Crenshaw, 1989).

Recent advancements in intersectionality in sports include the adoption of inclusive policies and initiatives, the integration of intersectionality in performance analysis, and the examination of representation and media coverage through an intersectional lens. Ongoing research focuses on coaching practices, athlete activism, health and well-being, and the intersectionality of Paralympic and adaptive sports. These developments aim to create more inclusive and equitable environments while addressing the complex interplay of social identities and power dynamics within sports.

The changing socioeconomic landscape and shifting discourses do not exclude sports. Intersectionality provides a perspective through which to evaluate the intertwined systems of privilege and oppression that influence athletic participation and outcomes in the world of sports (McGannon et al.,

2017). It enables us to go beyond crude assessments that concentrate exclusively on gender discrepancies and instead take into account how race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other social identities interact with gender to produce specific benefits or drawbacks for athletes.

By examining the scientific background of intersectionality in sports through these specific topics, we gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and interconnections between race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, socioeconomic status, and ability within sporting contexts. This knowledge lays the groundwork for the subsequent sections of the chapter, which delve into technical information, case studies, and strategies for promoting inclusivity, equality, and positive change in the realm of sports.

3. TECHNICAL BACKGROUND

When examining how race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other social identities affect sports participation and experiences, quantitative research methodologies are essential. To gather and examine massive amounts of data, researchers use surveys, questionnaires, and statistical analyses. These techniques make it possible to quantify variables, identify trends, and establish links, enabling the analysis of discrepancies across many social identities in the world of sports.

Little information is known about gender-based violence (GBV) in sports in Europe Union. When we refer to violence we are referring to violence against people because of their gender (including gender identity/expression), or violence that affects people of a particular disadvantaged race (European Commission, 2014). There are also several forms of violence such as verbal, non-verbal, physical and sexual abuse. These forms of violence are not exclusive to each category alone as one form of violence can be found and identified with another.

There are some examples of gender-based violence in sport which unfortunately to this day still affect the sports area. Caster Semenya is an example of intersectionality as a South African track and field athlete. A number of studies have been conducted around this topic, most of them focused on her true sex of Semenya and the medical limitations of biological assignment instead on human rights and nationalism (Cooky et al., 2013). In addition, many studies referring to intersectionality and sports with individual examples, such as Kelly Holmes the Black Olympic champion, whose athletic potential had long been denied. Several articles examine the Black American tennis player Serena Williams. In Particular, Williams repeatedly attacked not only of her race but because of her gender as well. She was also accused of drugs and extremely abused as almost no other Black athlete, and not only being called a man but also a monkey. Unacceptable description in the field of sport, not only for a female athlete but for any human being (Litchfield et al., 2018).

More specifically, William's 2015 Wimbledon performance was examined in a net-nographic analysis (a type of study using ethno-graphic approaches to web communities). This showed the verbal attacks on Williams took place equally on the levels of race, gender and identity. While intersectionality has long since become an important issue in gender research and gaining importance in sports studies, it is rarely considered in studies on sports reporting. The same is also true with regard to a second significant exclusion, religion, which is surprising a serious problem (for example people from Islamic counties have no right to compete in Europe, etc.). Also, it is worth mentioning that most of the studies address individual sports events more often than team sports (Dorer, 2020).

There are strict ethical requirements for any study of intersectionality in sports. The safety and anonymity of participants must be given top priority by researchers because sensitive subjects like discrimination and personal experiences are involved. Obtaining informed consent, guaranteeing participant anonymity, and putting data protection procedures in place are all ethical considerations.

Researchers should communicate with stakeholders like athletes, coaches, administrators, and advocacy groups as well as think about how their study may have an influence outside of the academic setting. This participation verifies research results, increases the relevance of the research, and helps build evidence-based tactics for promoting equality and diversity in sports.

4. PEDAGOGICAL GUIDANCE

Incorporating the subject of intersectionality in sports into curricula requires educators to take an inclusive stance that honors the athletes' various social identities. A curriculum that considers the perspectives of athletes from various racial, ethnic, sexual, and other marginalized backgrounds contributes to the development of an environment in the classroom that encourages empathy, comprehension, and critical thinking.

To get students interested in understanding the complexity of intersectionality in sports, educators can incorporate case studies, real-world examples, and personal narratives. This strategy invites students to investigate how social identities affect participation, encounters, and results in various sporting contexts. Critical discussions on privilege, power relationships, and the structural challenges experienced by athletes with intersecting marginalized identities should all be included in inclusive curriculum design (Ireland et al., 2018).

By offering practical and immersive learning opportunities, collaborative learning and experiential activities can help students comprehend intersectionality in sports more thoroughly. Students have the opportunity to investigate the complexity of social identities and how they affect sports participation and experiences through group projects, simulations, and interactive workshops.

To examine case studies, create inclusive sports programs, or create policies that support equity and inclusion, educators might set up activities that require students to work in diverse groups. These exercises create a respect for the lived experiences of athletes with overlapping marginalized identities while also encouraging cooperation, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities (Lin, 2014).

Teachers should encourage students to interact with the larger community and promote inclusive sports policies in order to close the gap between theory and practice. This may entail collaborating with regional sports leagues, civic associations, or advocacy groups that promote equity and inclusivity. Students have the option of taking part in volunteer opportunities, campaigns for greater awareness, or programs that encourage acceptance of intersectionality in sports. Students who participate in community activities gain a sense of social responsibility and help to improve the sporting environment (Valdes-Vasquez & Cleverger, 2015).

These pedagogical techniques can be used to teach students about intersectionality in sports and guarantee that they gain a thorough grasp of the difficulties experienced by athletes who identify with many marginalized groups.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the field of sport and in particular the field that represents the sporting ideal has shown to constructed a bulwark to anything modern and innovative. Intersectionality, the concept of Intersectionality has occupied and will occupy this space for many years because of stereotypes that have been established and cannot be changed unless people's ideology changes. According to research that has been done on the concept of intersectionality the field of sport should argue that we are all different but at the same time we are all equal, without taking into account the colour of people, the nationality or race and the gender to which everyone belongs.

So, although there is a proven inequality between the two races in their participation in sport, in recent years' efforts have been made to eliminate it. More and more black athletes are participating in world and Olympic competitions and having equal rights with their fellow athletes. Even socials and media are promoting more women's sports, giving examples to younger female athletes and motivating them to continue taking part in sports. Even though equality between the two races has made tremendous progress in sports, there are still barriers in terms of ethnicity, gender, race and sexuality which affecting the participation in physical activity.

Barriers such as gender, race and sexuality in sports need to be addressed to achieve true equality in sports. In this process, education and training of the younger generation plays an important role in promoting gender equality in sports and regulations which will help in the future change these stereotypes and behaviors of inequity. Generally, there is an urgent need to promote equality within the field of sport as this will open the doors to young athletes and give equal opportunities to new talents in the field of sport science to study new data. Sport is an institution that unites people without judging colour, gender or sexuality.

The Women-Up project has a goal to address the lack of knowledge about intersectionality in sports and how we can overcome gender stereotypes. More specifically, this project aims to eliminate inequality and educate new generations of athletes and coaches on the issue of equality not only between races but also between nationalities. It is time for sports to become a connecting link in the planet without racial discrimination.

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7. ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Intersectionality, in the context of sports, refers to:

- a) The intersection of different sports disciplines within an athletic competition
- b) The inclusion of individuals from diverse social positions in sports activities
- c) The ways in which multiple social identities intersect and interact within sporting contexts**
- d) The impact of gender-based violence on sports participation

2. Why is it important to study intersectionality in sports?

- a) To emphasize the dominance of male athletes in sports competitions
- b) To promote inclusive sports programs for marginalized individuals**
- c) To establish statistical trends and links between social identities in sports
- d) To encourage community involvement in sports policies

3. Which research methodology is commonly used to examine the impact of social identities on sports participation?

- a) Case studies and immersive learning activities
- b) Surveys, questionnaires, and statistical analyses**
- c) Collaborative learning and experiential activities
- d) Interactive workshops and simulations

4. What does gender-based violence refer to in the context of sports?

- a) Violence against athletes based on their gender or gender identity/expression**
- b) Violence that affects people of a particular race or ethnicity
- c) Physical abuse within sports competitions
- d) Verbal and non-verbal abuse among athletes

5. How can teachers promote intersectionality in sports education?

- a) Encourage students to engage in immersive learning activities and group projects**
- b) Advocate for stricter regulations in sports competitions to ensure inclusivity
- c) Focus on statistical analyses to identify discrepancies in sports participation
- d) Discourage community involvement and focus solely on theoretical discussions