



*Original Research*

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## **Are You Welcomed? A Racial and Ethnic Comparison of Perceived Welcomeness in Sport Participation**

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### ABSTRACT

*International Journal of Exercise Science 10(6): 833-844, 2017.* Sport has become racialized such that minority youth accrue limited health and academic benefits from participation, compared to their White counterparts. Understanding the welcomeness that minorities feel in sport, leisure and physical activities plays an important role in breaking down barriers to participation. Thus, the overall aim of this study is to further examine the determinants of sport participation, particularly as it relates to race, socialization and perceived welcomeness. College students (N = 451) scored their perceived level of welcomeness for Whites, African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos in 14 sports. Results reveal significant differences in the perceived welcomeness felt by Whites, African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos in most of the sports analyzed. The discussion focuses on the socialization agents that facilitate such racialized perceptions and hinder access and opportunities for racial and ethnic minority youth to experience the health, academic and social benefits of sport participation.

**KEY WORDS:** Physical activity, inclusiveness, youth

### INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends youth under the age of 18 be physically active for a minimum of 60 minutes each day to help maintain a healthy weight, promote physiological and psychological well-being, and enhance cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness (7, 8). Additionally, participating in physical activity for at least 60 minutes a day has been found to result in better attendance and improved academic performance among school-aged youth (1). However, as children age, on average they begin to participate less and less in daily physical activity (6). As troubling as this decrease in physical activity may be, even more alarming is the activity gap that exists between racially and economically disparate youth. African American youth participate in physical activity at a significantly lower level

than their White counterparts, and “sport participation among youth living in households with the lowest incomes is about half that of youth from wealthier homes” (1, p. 5). Given the importance of physical activity on health, academic outcomes, and physical and emotional well-being, it is critical that all youth, regardless of race or socioeconomic status, have access and opportunities to participate in sport and regular activity. However, such is not the case.

The 2010 census indicated African Americans constitute nearly 13% of the U.S. population, and that Hispanic/Latinos are among the minority groups demonstrating the most growth (37). Moreover, current growth rates place White individuals as a minority within the next 40 years (37). The U.S. population is becoming more diverse, which means that it is imperative that those in leadership positions within sport understand all the people they serve (20). Sport managers should be cognizant of, and prepared to accommodate, these changes in demographics. Since “prejudice is often over-looked in discussions of leisure behavior” (28), research aimed at identifying how prejudice impacts participation in sport-based activities is needed to aide sport managers in preparing to accommodate future changes in demographics.

As the sport and recreation industry has grown, shifts in participation and consumption have manifested along racial and ethnic lines such that African Americans vary significantly in their access, participation and experiences in sport (22). Philipp (29) suggested that the appeal of many leisure activities, and the welcomeness racial minorities feel participating in those activities, might be lessened by perceptions of prejudice or discrimination. His research revealed that “racial groups understood where African Americans would be welcome and ‘fit’, and where they would be less welcome and not ‘fit’” (31). This suggests that minority perceptions of different activities being unwelcome are not them “seeing prejudice where it does not exist” (9), and that Whites who attempt to rationalize the current racial disparities as the result of nonracial dynamics are using a color-blind ideology (2).

Socialization patterns and peer group influences may also help explain why differences in leisure and sport preferences exist (5, 11, 19, 30). Additionally, the perception of certain activities as “White” or “Black” may also influence participation choices (15, 17, 38). Goldsmith (16) found that different sports have been labeled as “Black” sports (e.g. basketball and football) or “White” sports (e.g. baseball and soccer) based on the participation rates of racial groups in those sports. This separation of races by sport should be obvious to practitioners, but often goes unnoticed due to the dominance of associating participation behavior with cultural identity rather than as the result of potential discrimination (28).

Understanding the appeal and welcomeness that minorities feel in sport, leisure and physical activities plays an important role in breaking down barriers to participation. The acknowledgement that barriers exist, and subsequent efforts to work towards solutions, has the potential to improve race relations in America (31). Thus, the overall aim of this study is to further examine the determinants of sport participation, particularly as it relates to race, socialization and perceived welcomeness. To this end, the following research questions were posed:

*Research Question 1 (RQ1):* Among the racially diverse study participants, are there significant differences in perceived welcomeness for Whites, African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos?

*Research Question 2 (RQ2):* What, if any, differences exist regarding perceived welcomeness for Whites, African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos in the selected sports?

*Research Question 3 (RQ3):* Are there any racial differences among participants as to their own feeling of welcomeness in each of the selected sports?

## **METHODS**

### *Participants*

Online questionnaires were sent to several classes of sport management undergraduate students at four institutions of higher learning located in different regions of the United States. A total of 572 students agreed to participate. However, surveys completed in their entirety yielded only a total of 451 participants to examine potential racial and ethnic differences in the perception of sport welcomeness.

Participants were asked to racially/ethnically identify themselves. Of the 451 participants, 76.9% were Caucasians (n = 347), 9.8% were Hispanic/Latinos (n = 44), 5.5% were Asian Americans (n = 25), 4.7% were African Americans (n = 21), 2.4% identified as "Others" (n = 11), and 0.7% of the participants were Pacific Islanders (n = 3). Given the small percentages of participants in several racial/ethnic identifiers, participants were grouped into Caucasian (n = 347) and racial/ethnic minorities (n = 104). The authors recognize that classifying individuals into presupposed racial categories presents issues and is a limitation rife with erroneous assumptions (19, 35), however, this was done to examine results from the perspectives of participants who were non-White and potentially share racialized sport experiences (20).

The responses from these participants were utilized to answer Research Questions 1 and 2.

To address Research Question 3, a second administration of the survey was given, in which 225 students participated. Of the 225 participants, 83.1% were Caucasians (n = 187), 7.1% were African Americans (n = 16), 4.9% were Hispanic/Latinos (n = 11), 2.7% identified as "Others" (n = 6), and 2.2% were Asian Americans (n = 5). As with the first administration of the survey, the small percentages of participants in several racial/ethnic identifiers led the researchers to group participants into the racial categories of Caucasian (n = 187) and Racial/Ethnic minorities (n = 38).

### *Protocol*

An online survey was developed to measure perceived welcomeness among Whites, African Americans, and Hispanic/Latinos in the following 14 sports: baseball, basketball, cross country, field hockey, football, golf, gymnastics, lacrosse, soccer, swimming/diving, tennis, track and field, volleyball, and wrestling. According to the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHSA), the selected sports had the highest participation numbers for

high school boys and girls (27). Using an 8-point Likert-type sliding scale (0 = Very Unwelcome, 7 = Very Welcome), participants were asked to rate how welcome each of the three races/ethnicities would feel participating in each of the above listed sports. This methodology was adapted from Philipps' (31) study in which he measured perceived welcomeness in leisure activities. A sliding scale was used, as opposed to a traditional Likert Scale, to allow participants more finite ratings of their perceptions.

The survey asked participants to rate the welcomeness of a particular race/ethnicity (Whites, African Americans, and Hispanic/Latinos, respectively) in each of the 14 sports. Prior to each scale, was the following instruction: "We define welcome as how comfortable an individual would feel while participating in the activity. According to the following scale, please rate how welcome you think most WHITES, AFRICAN AMERICANS, or LATINOS (one scale for each race/ethnicity) feel in participating in the following sports." The final page asked participants for the following demographic information: sex, education level, major, age, household income, race/ethnicity, and whether they had participated in competitive sports.

The second, follow-up study was the same except for the additional question of "We define welcome as how comfortable an individual would feel while participating in the activity. According to the following scale, please rate how welcome **YOU** feel participating in the following sports." was asked regarding the following 12 sports, chosen in accordance with the NFSHSA (27) boys and girls participation numbers: baseball/softball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, lacrosse, soccer, swimming/diving, tennis, track and field, volleyball, and wrestling. Field hockey and gymnastics were removed from the second study. The same demographic information was asked.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Given the focus of several researchers (17, 30) on welcomeness at the high school level of sport, the current study analyzed perceptions of welcomeness in the top 10 high school sports, by participation numbers, for both boys and girls (27). The top 10 sports for boys in 2015-2016 were baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, soccer, swimming/diving, tennis, track and field, and wrestling. The top 10 high school sports for girls were basketball, competitive cheering squads, cross country, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming/diving, tennis, track and field, and volleyball. Since data was not collected on perceived welcomeness in competitive cheering squads and softball, the two sports were replaced with field hockey and gymnastics. Thus, the total number of sports analyzed in this study totaled 14 (baseball, basketball, cross country, field hockey, football, golf, gymnastics, lacrosse, soccer, swimming/diving, tennis, track and field, volleyball and wrestling).

To answer Research Question 1, data were analyzed through a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) testing for potential differences in the perceived welcomeness of Whites, African Americans, and Hispanic/Latinos in the 14 aforementioned sports by the race/ethnicity of the study's participants. Data were then analyzed through a series of paired samples t-tests to address Research Question 2. Three paired samples t-tests were run for each sport: Whites and African Americans, Whites and Hispanic/Latinos, as well as African

Americans and Hispanic/Latinos. The result was 42 paired t-tests for perceived welcomeness, three for each sport. Due to the large number of multiple comparisons, the Bonferroni adjusted alpha level was applied. Effect size was then calculated to further determine the magnitude of the possible differences. Results were used to determine potential differences in the perceived welcomeness of each of the 14 sports for Whites, African Americans, and Hispanic/Latinos. Furthermore, the grouping of participants into Caucasian and racial/ethnic minority allowed researchers to analyze which races were perceived to be significantly more and/or less welcome in each of the 14 sports. Research Question 3 was analyzed via a MANOVA in which participants were asked how welcome they feel in 12 sports.

## RESULTS

The resultant tally of participants analyzed in this study was 451 for the analysis of perceived welcomeness in each of the aforementioned 14 sports for Whites, African Americans, and Hispanic/Latinos. Of the 451 participants, 347 self-identified as Caucasian and 104 self-identified in one of the racial/ethnic minority categories.

In response to RQ1, a significant difference was found between Whites and racial/ethnic minorities,  $F(42, 408) = 2.29, p < .001, \Lambda = 0.81, \eta^2 = 0.19$ . When using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of 0.001 a significant difference in the perceived welcomeness of Whites was found only in soccer  $F(1,449) = 12.65, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.03$ . Caucasians ( $M = 5.53, SD = 1.45$ ) perceived Whites to be more welcome in soccer than did racial/ethnic minorities ( $M = 4.93, SD = 1.73$ ). Similarly, a significant difference was found in the perceived welcomeness of African Americans in the sport of lacrosse  $F(1,449) = 12.31, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.03$ . Caucasians ( $M = 3.26, SD = 2.00$ ) perceived African Americans to be more welcome in lacrosse than did racial/ethnic minorities ( $M = 2.48, SD = 1.90$ ).

Regarding RQ2, overall mean scores of the perceived welcomeness of Whites, African Americans, and Hispanic/Latinos by sport are displayed in Table 1. The results of the paired samples t-tests revealed significant differences in the perceived welcomeness between Whites and African Americans in each of the 14 sports: baseball,  $t(450) = 18.06, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.42$ ; basketball  $t(450) = -33.95, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.72$ ; cross country,  $t(450) = 7.92, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.12$ ; field hockey,  $t(450) = 27.67, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.63$ ; football,  $t(450) = -19.38, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.45$ ; golf,  $t(450) = 26.89, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.62$ ; gymnastics,  $t(450) = 26.31, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.61$ ; lacrosse,  $t(450) = 28.94, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.65$ ; soccer,  $t(450) = 6.70, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = .09$ ; swimming/diving,  $t(450) = 29.44, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.66$ ; tennis,  $t(450) = 25.48, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.60$ ; track and field,  $t(450) = -10.55, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.20$ ; volleyball,  $t(450) = 22.37, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.53$ ; and wrestling,  $t(450) = 16.59, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.38$ .

Regarding the perceived welcomeness between Whites and Hispanic/Latinos, significant differences were found in all sports analyzed except for basketball: baseball,  $t(450) = 3.72, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.03$ ; cross country,  $t(450) = 20.31, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.48$ ; field hockey,  $t(450) = 30.44, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.67$ ; football,  $t(450) = 12.35, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.25$ ; golf,  $t(450) = 32.24, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.70$ ; gymnastics,  $t(450) = 27.24, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.62$ ; lacrosse,  $t(450) = 31.83, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.69$ ;

soccer,  $t(450) = -10.10, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.18$ ; swimming/diving,  $t(450) = 28.40, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.64$ ; tennis,  $t(450) = 26.36, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.61$ ; track and field,  $t(450) = 9.94, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.18$ ; volleyball,  $t(450) = 26.54, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.61$ ; and wrestling,  $t(450) = 18.80, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.44$ .

Similarly, significant differences between the perceived welcomeness of African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos were found in all sports analyzed except for swimming/diving and tennis: baseball,  $t(450) = -15.48, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.35$ ; basketball  $t(450) = 31.70, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.69$ ; cross country,  $t(450) = 15.84, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.36$ ; field hockey,  $t(450) = 5.29, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.06$ ; football,  $t(450) = 27.73, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.63$ ; golf,  $t(450) = 8.35, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.13$ ; gymnastics,  $t(450) = 5.16, p < .001, \eta^2 = .06$ ; lacrosse,  $t(450) = 4.50, p < .001, \eta^2 = .04$ ; soccer,  $t(450) = -16.37, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.37$ ; track and field,  $t(450) = 22.14, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.52$ ; volleyball,  $t(450) = 6.79, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.09$ ; and wrestling,  $t(450) = 4.10, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.04$ .

**Table 1.** Perceived Welcomeness of Whites, African Americans, and Hispanic/Latinos in each sport

Sport	Whites		African Americans		Hispanic/Latinos	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Baseball	6.25#^	1.03	4.74*^	1.63	5.99*#	1.40
Basketball	4.27#	1.48	6.73*^	0.70	3.98#	1.80
Cross Country	5.73#^	1.44	4.89*^	1.80	3.56*#	1.97
Field Hockey	6.01#^	1.37	3.15*^	1.94	2.84*#	1.96
Football	5.23#^	1.48	6.61*^	0.78	4.15*#	1.80
Golf	6.41#^	1.02	3.87*^	1.90	3.23*#	1.97
Gymnastics	5.95#^	1.54	3.36*^	1.98	3.01*#	2.01
Lacrosse	6.18#^	1.28	3.08*^	2.00	2.80*#	1.94
Soccer	5.39#^	1.54	4.79*^	1.69	6.30*#	1.30
Swimming	6.16#^	1.23	3.17*	2.02	3.17*	2.03
Tennis	6.15#^	1.22	3.75*	1.91	3.47*	2.00
Track & Field	5.06#^	1.61	6.08*^	1.37	4.07*#	1.93
Volleyball	6.10#^	1.15	3.94*^	1.97	3.43*#	2.04
Wrestling	5.94#^	1.40	4.27*^	1.99	3.94*#	2.04

\* Significantly different than the perceived welcomeness of Whites at the 0.001 level; # Significantly different than the perceived welcomeness of African Americans at the 0.001 level; ^ Significantly different than the perceived welcomeness of Hispanic/Latinos at the 0.001 level

The resultant tally of participants analyzed to answer RQ3 was 225, of which 187 identified as Caucasian and 38 in one of the racial/ethnic minority categories. Regarding race, there was a significant difference between Caucasians and racial/ethnic minorities on the combined dependent variables  $F(12, 210) = 3.82, p < 0.001, \Lambda = 0.82, \eta^2 = 0.18$ . When considered separately and using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of 0.004, significant differences were found in the sports of baseball/softball  $F(1,221) = 9.83, p < 0.004, \eta^2 = 0.04$ , golf  $F(1,221) = 31.11, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.12$ , lacrosse  $F(1,221) = 15.34, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.07$ , and swimming/diving  $F(1,221) = 8.83, p < 0.004, \eta^2 = 0.04$ . Caucasian participants ( $M = 6.01, SD = 1.60$ ) felt more welcome in baseball/softball than their minority counterparts ( $M = 4.96, SD = 1.84$ ), as well as in golf ( $M = 5.27, SD = 2.09$ ) compared to ( $M = 3.03, SD = 2.23$ ). Likewise, Caucasian participants ( $M = 3.99,$

$SD = 2.30$ ) felt more welcome in lacrosse than did their minority counterparts ( $M = 2.26$ ,  $SD = 2.02$ ), as well as in swimming/diving ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 2.30$ ) compared to ( $M = 3.07$ ,  $SD = 2.20$ ).

## **DISCUSSION**

From the racially segregated sport leagues of the early to mid-1900's, to the more recent phenomena of stacking (32), positional segregation (36), and racial tasking (3), race continues to be a factor in sport participation (16). Differences in socioeconomic status, race, and social structures such as schools and recreational sites can limit access and marginalize participation opportunities for minority youth. Consequently, particular sports may not be considered "racially neutral" resulting in participation differences accordingly with those traditionally labeled "Black" or "White" (34). Thus, some sports may "seem more appropriate for one racial group versus another" (14). Accordingly, outcomes from this study validate previously cited literature that welcomeness in sport may be racialized.

The results of this study advance the current understanding of racialized sports in several ways. First, previous evidence has established that differences regarding perceived welcomeness in sport do indeed occur between the races, however, results have been mixed. The current findings provide further evidence that individuals perceive there to be particular sports in which racial groups "fit" or feel welcome (29, 31, 34). The results establish a clear delineation between the sports in which each race might perceive to be most welcome, confirming existing literature on the racial-appropriateness of particular sports, such as basketball for African American participants (13).

Previous literature alludes to limited access and opportunities to particular sports, as well as education, as to why African Americans are so visible in sports such as football and basketball (33). Accordingly, this study's results found football and basketball to be the two sports in which African Americans are perceived to be the most welcome. Regarding disproportionate social outcomes and opportunities, Eitle and Eitle (12) identified economic variables as being strong predictors of Black and White youth participation patterns, with Blacks being disadvantaged. While such studies posit participation patterns as a function of economic factors and access, such that "divergent experiences between Black and White youth in education and sports are influenced by structural inequalities in school and neighborhood resources" (21), this rhetoric minimizes the experiential impact of developing racial identity as an African American within the context of sport (19).

Stereotypes can form the basis of African American racial identity, which can socialize African American youth into recognizing an unspoken consciousness regarding the overrepresentation of successful African American athletes in spite of limitations in other spheres (10, 19). In previous work (10), African Americans perceived a lack of opportunities and access as a product of their race, rather than social class, which supports this notion of an unspoken consciousness that places emphasis on and identity with athletic realization and sport participation. Harrison (18) asserts that misleading information, or stereotypes, when acquired early in life, can be "internalized and mobilized subconsciously without benefit of experience".

Thus, racially diverse sport participants may perceive to be unwelcome in certain sports due in part to stereotypes and other culturally based considerations.

Exemplifying the opposing experiences, this study illuminates a significant difference for Whites in their perceived welcomeness in most sports. Even when perceived welcomeness may have been lower than that of African Americans or Hispanic/Latinos, Whites were still perceived to be “welcome” to participate. Furthering this point, there were no sports in which Whites were perceived to be unwelcome, yet African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos indicated lower than the median score in four and seven sports, respectively. This finding could have been exacerbated given slightly over three-fourths of the participants were White and college educated, members of the dominate group in sports, who as a result of their race, may innately preserve perceptions of (un)welcomeness or fit. Regardless, based on one’s race, an individual may feel more or less inclined to partake in a particular sport. Additionally, youth may self-select themselves out of a particular sport because of their race, potentially limiting their effort and performance levels, health benefits, academic achievement, and even possible networking opportunities. As such, a primary implication of this research is the development of education, access and opportunity for all youth interested in sport.

Additionally, these findings provide rationale for the inclusion of socialization in sport participation research. Socialization is a lifelong process of “creating and incorporating new members of a group from a pool of newcomers, carried out by members and their allies,” (26) which is furthered into adulthood by other external forces. Bruening (4) suggested individuals migrate toward sports in which they are pressured to participate by others, as a result of extant perceptions that these individuals may have a greater chance for success in said sports. Such perceptions might be established through years of socialization stemming from an individual’s family, friends, and other close relationships in his or her social circle. It has been noted that African American families serve as a very strong socialization agent for youth and provide greater encouragement to participate in sport (33). Beamon and Messer (2014) stated that “sport participation has been positive for Blacks and for American society by both aiding integration and providing opportunities, such as college scholarships, social mobility, etc. that may not have been available in other avenues”. Moreover, Burden et al. (5) found that both African American and White American students held beliefs that were influenced by socio-cultural variables (e.g., cultural norms, group identity, media) and reinforced by the representation (or lack thereof) of role models in certain sports. Given the low perceived welcomeness scores in over half of the sports analyzed, this proves problematic in that social and familial pressures to participate in sport might manifest in simply reinforcing racialized sport stereotypes. To this point, the three sports in which African Americans were perceived to be most welcome were the three sports in which African American athletes are overrepresented: men’s and women’s basketball, football, and track & field at the professional and collegiate levels (23, 24, 25).

Given the substantial increase in the proportion of Hispanic/Latinos in the United States over the past ten years (37), these results are important as they begin to establish where Hispanic/Latinos are perceived to ‘fit’ in terms of sport participation. The results demonstrate

that Hispanic/Latinos might be expected to feel the most welcome in soccer and baseball, while potentially feeling less-welcome in many of the other sports. This suggests a similar level of discrimination may be present for Hispanic/Latinos as has been for African Americans. Similarly, differences in perceived welcomeness may result from being socialized to participate in soccer and baseball at younger ages. Alternatively, the results may point to a greater level of cultural misunderstanding, in that the national and international sports in which Hispanic/Latinos have the most success are baseball and soccer. Interestingly, Woods (2011) reported that volleyball was the only sport at the NCAA that did not suffer from an underrepresentation of Hispanic/Latinos, and yet their perceived welcomeness was low compared to other sports.

Previous research has demonstrated that students are more “motivated to engage in activities and achieve success when they believe they can accomplish the activities” (13). Given the findings of this study, it would behoove practitioners to fight stereotypes about the proclivity of members of a certain race to excel in certain sports. At the youth and recreational level of sport, participants should be encouraged to take chances and try new things. This could be especially critical in an educational environment, as it is within these structures where the socialization process is likely to occur.

Schools, as well as other educational organizations and programs, whether sport focused or not, should consider teaching students and youth participants about various sports and the inherent health benefits of being active. Participants should be introduced to a bevy of sports and understand that it is not race, but interest, that should motivate people to be active. This can be accomplished in physical education classes and extracurricular programs by offering introduction to and instruction in lesser known sports. Sport consumers should be made aware of the participants in a multitude of sports that do not fit the racial expectations of said sport, particularly if they are successful. Affording young participants chances to experience and enjoy other sports only provides them with more opportunities for success. Furthermore, getting more people involved in sport and leisure activities should lead to healthier lifestyles.

As with any research investigation, this study is not without limitations; some of which might be due to the participant sample. First, it only included undergraduate students. However, given their familiarity with sports, 93% (n = 417) played competitive sports, as well as the predominance of sport management majors (33%, n = 148), this sample may provide strong insight into the study’s purpose. Second, being that the homogenous sample (i.e., 77% white, 100% college educated) was largely representative of the dominate group in sports, it is likely that they are inherently promulgators of perceptions of (un)welcomeness. The sheer number of participants and sports analyzed could have impacted the results. However, this was likely mitigated via the Bonferroni correction. Lastly, the measures utilized do not directly measure the main tenets of welcome theory. However, given the use of such methodologies in previous investigations (22, 31), the authors deemed them sufficient for this study.

The current investigation provides a quantitative analysis of perceived welcomeness for three different racial groups. Allowing participants the opportunity to further explain why they may

or may not feel welcome to participate in certain sports, may allow for greater understanding of the issues and challenges these individuals face. Additionally, administering both qualitative and quantitative studies to youth sport participants may provide deeper insight into the sport socialization process, a better understanding of access and other resources, as well as the authentic feelings of welcomeness. In doing so, this may allow sport administrators and organizations the ability to better alter certain structures to become more welcoming.

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