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Third Diversity in Aquatics Special Issue

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Diversity in Aquatics Third Special Issue

About Diversity in Aquatics

Diversity In Aquatics is a 100% volunteer-led member organization. Its diverse leadership works collaboratively to promote water safety and drowning prevention education in historically marginalized communities. The organization approaches water safety and drowning prevention through the lens of social justice, education, and public health to address the impacts of race, socioeconomic circumstances, and cultural stereotyping on the global community. Through its membership of researchers, athletes, and advocates, Diversity in Aquatics works collaboratively with grassroots and national organizations to educate, promote, and support culturally competent and historically accurate programs, to improve the current statistics in drowning rates among marginalized communities, and to encourage participation and leadership in aquatics. The mission of Diversity in Aquatics is focused on efforts to eliminate the drowning disparity among historically underrepresented populations. Drowning is a “global epidemic” and since being founded in 2006, the organization has encouraged excellence through programming developed to educate, promote, and support collaborative community engagement efforts among diverse aquatic professionals and national aquatic stakeholders. Further information about DIA can be found at <https://www.diversityinaquatics.org>

About the Special Issue

The theme of this special issue is **“Co-Creating Equitable Aquatic Spaces: Becoming a JEDI through Collective Action.”** It highlights the need to continue the work and the ongoing quest for social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in aquatics. Recreational aquatic sites have been the setting for the turmoil of social justice, water safety, and public health not only in the past, but in our present times (Beale, Quan, Bennett, and Fielding, 2020). With the continuation of professional practices and policies in the field of aquatics, continuing to reflect this lack of responsiveness to the specific needs of diverse populations, there has never been a more relevant time to help engage the efforts of individuals, communities, organizations, and nations being made to address the gaps, and to strengthen, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in the field of aquatics.

At Diversity in Aquatics (DIA), we approach diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work through a Social Justice (SJDEI) lens of collective action, which challenges inequality directly by raising consciousness and focusing on improving conditions for historically marginalized, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), and/or under-represented groups. This approach is grounded in the understanding that we all need knowledge, weathering, and coping skills to reduce the public health crisis of racism that impacts us all. Research has shown that research and education via the lens of DEI tends to have a three-prong focus with 1) DEI focus on reducing prejudice; 2) DEI advocating collective action; or 3) DEI

focus on changing the attitudes and behaviors of a dominant group. Our approach views DEI work through collective action via a multi-sectoral lens which is unique when educating about the importance of SJEDI work.

Boyer (1997) argued that scholarly research ought to enhance one's ability to create new and valuable information that will be beneficial in one's field based upon the life patterns of individuals and their passions. Therefore, as readers, we invite you to embrace Boyer's model of the scholarships of integration and application as you read. In this special issue, we have curated and provided a platform to share findings from original empirical research (including quantitative, qualitative, intervention, or community-based studies), theoretical papers, educational articles, research notes, and voices from the field via a "collective action lens." Our aim is to help the aquatics community gain a deeper understanding and perspective about the challenges, success stories, and opportunities related to becoming a "JEDI" of social justice and advocate in the field of aquatics, water safety, and drowning prevention. We hope that these articles will inspire and inform our collective efforts to promote water safety and increase opportunities in aquatics for all.

Original Research

In the qualitative article, "A Leisure Model: Barriers and Black Womxn Collegiate Swimmers," a researcher casts a bright light on the gap in the literature about the experiences of Black womxn collegiate swimmers (BWCS) and the application of the leisure barriers model. Using a qualitative methodological approach to understanding the leisure constraints experiences by BWCS, this study methodically invited this demographic to share and discuss their lived experiences across generations. The researcher interviewed twenty-five self-identified Black womxn collegiate swimmers between the ages of 19-61. Each interview focused on the experiences and the barriers participants encountered during their swimming careers. The results of this narrative inquiry suggested that the experiences of BWCS differed individually but had similar themes as a collective. The author charged the field of leisure behavior to consider the experiences of marginalized groups who excel in a leisure activity outside of societal and cultural norms.

In the research article, "Self-reported Water Competency Skills at a Historically Black College & University and the Potential Impact of Additional HBCU-based Aquatic Programming," researchers examined self-reported water competency skills of undergraduate students at a historically Black university (HBCU). Undergraduate students were invited to self-report their skill level in swimming and basic water competency skills as identified by the American Red Cross. Globally and nationally, drowning disproportionately impacts historically marginalized and under-resourced communities. In the United States, with

drowning disparities particularly impacting Black Americans, 1.5 times higher than the rates for White Americans, the authors asked readers to consider the value of establishing community based Learn to Swim programs at HBCUs to save lives among members of those communities.

In their article, “Racist or Radical? The Strange Case of Robert Moses and the Building of New York’s Aquatics Infrastructure,” the authors examine the building of New York City’s aquatic infrastructure under the direction of controversial administrator Robert Moses. During his 40-year-plus career, Moses held more than 12 bureaucratic appointments, sometimes concurrently, allowing him to drive his WPA-funded infrastructure development agenda in a rapid manner. Among the capital improvement projects were 11 swimming pools dispersed throughout New York City. Unfortunately, many of Moses' achievements were overshadowed by allegations of racial politics including an absence of inclusion in planning processes in the construction of these major swimming pool projects. Moses’ multiple controversial policy and planning actions spearheaded an outcry for transparency and accountability in public service in New York City.

Research Note

In the article, “POOL: A Social History of Segregation” Exhibition: Exploring Social Justice through Water Safety Awareness and Art-based Education,” authors explored the impact of the POOL Exhibition which was created to illuminate a forgotten history of segregated swimming in America and its connection to present-day drowning issues affecting Black communities. Through this multi-disciplinary work, authors explored the impact of the POOL Exhibition as an Art-based Education tool used to raise water safety awareness and drowning prevention in communities. POOL invites visitors to explore the role of public pools in Black communities with the goal of deepening understanding of the connection between water, social justice, and public health.

Educational Research

In their article entitled, “Closing Racial Disparity by Dismantling Constructs of Fear - A Practical Methodology for Learning to Swim,” the authors explored the problem of lower swimming skill levels and higher drowning rates in communities of color. This article demonstrates how prioritizing the reduction of fear-producing brain processes while learning to swim can result in 79.5% of high-priority population non-swimmers being able to jump into deep water, roll onto their backs, and either float or tread for 60 seconds, and then swim 25 yards after an average of 14 practice sessions. Practical explanations of four key components (i.e., water exploration, structured games, emulating coaches, and water safety education) were provided. Three practical programming examples detailed how the curriculum was

structured and results for (1) a youth learn-to-swim program, (2) a high school program, and (3) a weekly day camp program.

Voices from the Field

In their educational article entitled, "Blue-Mindfulness: A Story of Restorative Justice, Decolonizing and Re-indigenizing Communal Relationships with Water," the authors have introduced a new approach to water safety and well-being called, Blue-Mindfulness Training™. The concept of Blue-Mindfulness Training™ was created by Thaddeus Gamory in collaboration with other experts in the field and is informed by practical experience and research. This article presents a "voice from the field" perspective on the creation and development of Blue-Mindfulness™ which focuses on promoting a positive and safe relationship with water while addressing the impacts of historical racial discrimination and trauma in Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), particularly among African American communities. The authors hope to encourage these communities to embrace the benefits of water as a source of healing and well-being, while also promoting water safety education and drowning prevention. The instructional framework of Blue-Mindfulness™ is presented to foster a communal and safe relationship with the water and ultimately contribute to reducing disparities in aquatics.