

Improving Intercultural Interaction through Sports and Art Brief

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BACKGROUND

In our initial brainstorming sessions, the problem of improving “real interaction” between otherwise disparate cultural communities was analysed from multiple angles, taking into account the actions and capabilities of various Government and non-government institutions, the funding available to CALD community organisations and what support they were given in actually running inter-cultural events, and the status-quo. We came to the conclusion that this could be best illustrated by looking at what interaction there was between artistic (dramatic, music & dance) and sporting groups/organisations that we believed really should be able to form cross-cultural connections with organisations that perform similar functions with people of different cultures or languages.

We decided to conduct research into the extent of this problem, by looking at what initiatives are in place at various organisations, (VMC, OMAC, Arts Victoria, Cricket Australia, FFA, FFV) to facilitate or improve intercultural participation in sport and art. We found that although all of the above organizations encourage multicultural participation, more could be done to actually facilitate the interaction of various individual cultural communities with each other and into what is colloquially termed the “mainstream” forms of sport and artistic culture.

The accessibility to financial assistance was one of the major blocks to furthering this objective, with event organisers needing to plan events up to a year in advance in some cases to access funding from government departments, while the non-government organisations promote the diversity and multiculturalism through their own internal programs. Another hurdle, which was found to be especially difficult to overcome was the often required cooperation of other CALD organisations or groups to apply for funding from OMAC, that are hard to initiate without the help of a central planning body.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To meet our objectives, we have three recommendations;

- Create a database of community leaders who are involved in music, dance, drama from various cultures, languages and suburbs who can access the database to plan and coordinate private events and form long lasting partnerships that are truly multi-cultural.
- Centralize access to financial assistance by updating the OMAC/VMC funding website to include other sources of financial assistance, such as the federal government's program, funding from non-government sources and local councils.
- Work with city councils, sporting centres and large clubs to organize and promote more council events that bring together people of different cultural backgrounds, as well as setting up an informal scouting network to turn talented social players (cricket, soccer, badminton, basketball etc.) towards organized competitive sport, which we believes enhances cultural diversity and social cohesion.

Religious Awareness Brief

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BACKGROUND

Religion has been one of the most sensitive topics since it's been introduced to human beings. It is more likely to be even more sensitive if people are not fully aware of one another's religion. Being illiterate about world religion means people are ignorant and ignorant will lead to faulty conceptions. And it is misconception that can lead to conflict between two or more different faith groups.

A small scaled research survey was conducted within the members of the Multifaith Multicultural Youth Network, where it was found that there were number of people that weren't fully aware of each other's' religions. Therefore indicating it is something that almost everyone seemed to be lacking information about. To encounter this issue, it is very important to have a better understanding of and also a respect to each other's' belief system. To reach these possible outcomes, education would be an essential first step to start educating young children from primary school level so that they may grow up with better understanding about the worlds culture and religions.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Cultural education can serve as the foundation for harmonious and understanding society. Misconception and prejudice can spread across communities, and initiate conflicts of all scales. Moreover, a basic understanding of all cultures will also provide for a more informed basis for freedom of speech by encouraging conversations between individuals. On a smaller scale, improvement of individual relationships in a school environment can lead to a better quality of education. Based on an anonymous survey conducted within the MMYN, an inference is made that the general public often mistakenly believe in statements about cultures and religions other than their own (*Appendix A*). Hence, it is inferred that educational material regarding multicultural and multifaith diversity is not yet readily accessible or promoted to the public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The MMYN understands that a lot of work is being done by the current Government regarding the initiation of steps to increase acceptance of people of different faiths and backgrounds in our society. However whilst the gap still exists currently with the general public, the growing need is to minimize and address the current misconceptions relating to such faiths and beliefs.

The MMYN suggest that this could be achieved through:

- Educational programs relating to culture, beliefs and values relating to faith diversity in the Victorian school curriculum, ultimately helping to familiarise students with diverse faiths in Australia and allowing them to develop a more educated opinion on different faiths.

Appendix A

Results of survey on cultural-religious understanding (conducted within MMYN)

Statement (True or False)	% of answers marked as 'true'	% of correct responses
Women are not allowed to be priests in the Catholic Faith.(T)	69%	69%
Buddhists do not believe in deity.(T)	19%	19%
Muslims believe in Jesus Christ as Son of God.(F)	0%	100%
Christians believe you must be Christian to go to heaven.(F)	25%	75%
Hinduism has many Gods.(debatable)	100%	n/a
Jews are religious.(debatable)	63%	n/a
Muslims don't eat pork because in the past, it was a common cause of illness.(F)	12%	88%
Some Sikhs carry weapons. (F, the kirpan is not a weapon in Victoria)	63%	37%
The Baha'i Faith is a branch of Islam. (F)	6%	94%

Racial Bullying & Social Inclusion Brief

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ISSUE

Racial bullying among school-age youth is a polemic issue. In identifying this topic the social inclusion working group consulted literature, listened to a presentation from a leading scientist on the matter – Dr. Sheryl Hemphill – in addition to consulting with peers and the community.

BACKGROUND

Racial bullying, as described by Misawa (2009)¹, is the combination of racism and bullying. It is a specific form of bullying and targets individuals based on race or ethnicity, in other words; people that are culturally, linguistically and physically different (Fox & Stallworth, 2005)².

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Our investigation into racial bullying has found that students experiencing high levels of racial bullying were likely to be associated with greater levels of stress (Brandt, Zaveri, Fernandez, Jondoh, Duran, Bell, Gutierrez, Benna, & Cruz, 2012)³; School satisfaction was influenced by the existence or absence of (racial) bullying (Spriggs, Iannotti, Nansel, & Haynie, 2007)⁴; Racial bullying of African-American teenagers in the United States was linked to long-term development of behavioral problems and depression (Brody, Chen, Murry, Ge, Simons, Gibbons, Gerrard, & Cutrona, 2006)⁵.

These findings have significant implications for Victorian and Australian students of culturally and religiously diverse backgrounds who find themselves the victim of racial bullying. Based on the literature, the presentation from Dr Sheryl Hemphill and discussions with our peers and the community, the MMYN social inclusion working group has made the following conclusions on the matter:

RECOMMENDATIONS

At present, racial bullying is ill-defined and not fully understood, resulting in schools struggling to develop relevant policies and procedures for dealing with the issue.

We would recommend that:

- State laws and school regulations need to clearly define what behaviour constitutes as racial bullying so that it stands out from other forms of bullying. While further preventing confusion with other terminology, stakeholders will develop a greater understanding and awareness of the extent and impact of this problem.
- Further by establishing a clear definition, schools and law makers can enforce laws/school rules as racial bullying occurs – because these institutions have a clear understanding of what racial bullying is and its unique impact on students.

At present, and in part due to a lack of understanding around this issue, perpetrators of racial bullying are too often not held accountable for their behaviour. Another recommendation outlines that:

- Schools should implement measures to hold perpetrators to accountable for their actions and ensure that there is zero tolerance for racial bullying in Victorian schools.

The MMYN sees a range of stakeholders as responsible for making progress on this issue, including schools, families, community leaders and government more broadly. Therefore in essence, the recommendations above aim to ensure that culturally and linguistically diverse youth feel comfortable and safe to wear their religious symbols, be proud of the colour of their skin, speak with a foreign accent, or identify with a faith community in Victorian schools without racial bullying occurring.

¹ Misawa, M. (2009) 'The intersection of homophobic bullying and racism in adulthood: A graduate school experience.' *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 6, 47-60.

² Fox, S., & Stallworth, L. (2005) 'Racial/ethnic bullying: Exploring links between bullying and racism in the US workplace.' *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 66, 438-456.

³ Brandt, A., Zaveri, K., Fernandez, K., Jondoh, L., Duran, E., Bell, L., Gutierrez, J., Benna, N., & Cruz, D. (2012) 'School bullying.' *Undergraduate Research Journal for the Human Sciences*, 11.

⁴ Spriggs, A. L., Iannotti, R. J., Nansel, T. R., & Haynie, D. L. (2007) 'Adolescent bullying involvement and perceived family, peer and school relations: Commonalities and differences across race/ethnicity.' *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 41, 283–93

⁵ Brody, G. H., Chen, Y.-f., Murry, V. M., Ge, X., Simons, R. L., Gibbons, F. X., Gerrard, M. and Cutrona, C. (2006) 'Perceived discrimination and the adjustment of African American youths: A five-year longitudinal analysis with contextual moderation effects.' *Child Development*, 77, 1170–89