

## A content analysis of cultural diversity in the Association for Applied Sport Psychology's conference programs.

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Kamphoff, C.S., [Gill, D.L.](#), Araki, K. & Hammond, C.C. (2010). A content analysis of cultural diversity in the Association for Applied Sport Psychology's conference programs. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 22, 231-245.

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### **Abstract:**

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) conference programs address cultural diversity. A content analysis was conducted by analyzing 5214 AASP conference program abstracts from 1986 to 2007. Only 10.5% of all abstracts included discussion of a cultural diversity issue and 31.9% included a diverse sample. Of those abstracts that addressed cultural diversity issues, the majority addressed gender, with almost no attention to race and ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, social class, disability, or older adults. These results highlight the continuing neglect, but compelling need to address cultural diversity in sport and exercise psychology, and specifically within AASP programming.

**Keywords:** cultural diversity | sports psychology | Association for Applied Sports Psychology | psychology | athletics | cultural diversity in sports | exercise psychology

### **Article:**

Given the changing demographics in U.S. society and increasing globalization of our field, it is essential that applied sport and exercise psychology professionals understand cultural diversity. In the U.S. population, the percentage of White/Caucasians has declined over the last decade while the proportion of minorities and non-English speakers has increased (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001). Cultural diversity, however, goes beyond racial and ethnic categories and takes varying forms in global context. In their multicultural psychology text, Mio, Barker-Hackett, and Tumabling (2006) adopt a broad definition of culture that refers to shared values, beliefs and practices of an identifiable group of people. Thus, cultural diversity includes race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality and older adults, as well as physical abilities and characteristics.

Although cultural diversity is increasing in the population, in many ways sport remains an exclusive space that privileges some over others, and sport and exercise psychology reflects that exclusive emphasis (see Gill, 2007, or Gill & Kamphoff, 2010 for further review). More girls and women are participating in sport than ever before; however, the numbers of female and male participants are not equal and sport is clearly gendered (e.g., Acosta & Carpenter, 2008; Gill & Kamphoff, 2010). In the 2005 Racial and Gender Report Card, Lapchick (2006) reported that

24.8% of male athletes and 15.4% of female athletes in U.S. National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I were Black, whereas Latino, Asian American and Native American athletes were under-represented at very low percentages.

When considering “power” positions in sport, such as coaching or administration, the lack of cultural diversity is clear. Over 90% of women's athletic teams in the United States were coached by women before Title IX was passed in 1972, but Acosta and Carpenter (2008) have clearly documented the continuous decline in the number of women coaches since then. In 2008 the proportion of women as coaches remains low at 42.8%; and the proportions of female athletic directors (21.3%), head athletic trainers (27.3%), and sports information directors (11.3%) remain far below male numbers. Similarly, the 2005 Racial and Gender Report Card indicated that Whites dominate collegiate coaching, holding approximately 90% of the head coaching positions at all divisions (Lapchick, 2006).

Sport studies scholars, including Messner (1992) and Griffin (1998), point to the homophobic nature of sport and argue that homophobia restricts all men and women in sport. Within sport and exercise psychology, Krane and Barber, who have often presented their work at AASP, clearly document the homophobic and exclusive nature of sport (Barber & Krane, 2005; Krane, 2001; Krane & Barber, 2005). For example, in one study they found that all lesbian collegiate coaches that they interviewed struggled to negotiate their lesbian identity within the collegiate coaching atmosphere (Krane & Barber, 2005). Furthermore, the former women coaches that Kamphoff (in press) interviewed provided examples of rampant homophobia in U.S. collegiate coaching that clearly restricted their behavior, limited their ability to continue coaching, and affected all women in the collegiate system.

Although there is less research and data on physical characteristics, persons with disabilities certainly are excluded in sport and exercise settings. Rimmer (2005) reported that people with physical disabilities are one of the most inactive segments of the population. He argued that the lower rates of physical activity among people with physical disabilities are more related to organizational policies and practices, discrimination and social attitudes rather than physical barriers.

Not only is organized competitive sport exclusive, but multiple reports indicate that physical activity is limited by gender, race, and class. Physical activity decreases across the adult lifespan, with men more active than women, and racial/ethnic minorities less active across all age groups (Pratt, Macera, & Blanton, 1999; USDHHS, 2000). Crespo (2005) called for professionals to consider unique needs and cultural constraints when giving advice on exercise and within their research and professional practice.

As both Crespo and Rimmer suggest, social psychological factors play a major role in cultural diversity in sport and exercise. Topics such as discrimination, attitudes and cultural constraints certainly fall within the purview of sport and exercise psychology and clearly call for investigation. Just as cultural diversity is a logical topic for research, attention to cultural diversity is needed in professional practice. Professionals would be wise to heed Crespo's call to consider unique needs and cultural constraints in applied sport psychology practice. Applied sport and exercise psychology would have a stronger scholarly base and more effective programs

by incorporating cultural competence in research, professional practice and educational programs.

Cultural competence is a critical professional competency for applied sport and exercise psychology professionals for several reasons. First, cultural competence demands awareness and knowledge of issues that culturally diverse athletes and exercisers face and the ability to effectively communicate with athletes. At all levels of sport and exercise, participants are culturally diverse. Culturally competent sport and exercise psychology professionals may be better able to understand their diverse clients' perspectives and meet their needs more effectively. Cultural competence must go beyond "color blindness" and the assumption that it is appropriate to "treat everyone the same." As Gill and Kamphoff (2010) argue, professionals who fail to recognize and value multiple identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, social class, sexuality, spirituality/religion, physicality) and treat everyone the same, do a disservice to their clients. Sport and exercise psychology professionals who are culturally competent can expand the scope of the field and extend services to people not currently served. Much applied sport and exercise psychology focuses on the physically and culturally elite, yet all people can benefit from physical activity, and those who are not elite athletes may have much to gain from sport and exercise psychology services. Sport and exercise psychology research and educational programs should provide that base knowledge for professionals, but our research seldom addresses cultural diversity issues and our educational programs do not incorporate multicultural competencies (see Gill & Kamphoff, 2010, for a review).

Over 20 years ago, Duda and Allison (1990) brought this issue to the forefront by identifying the dearth of research related to race and ethnicity in sport and exercise psychology. They analyzed 199 manuscripts from the *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology* (JSEP) from 1979 to 1987, when JSEP was the major journal and reflected the major issues and research directions in sport and exercise psychology. The results pointed to a clear lack of attention to race and ethnicity with only one of 13 published theoretical papers and seven of 186 empirical papers (fewer than 4%) considering race and ethnicity. Moreover, none of those 7 empirical papers addressed race or ethnicity on a conceptual level, and 6 of the 7 provided only a description of the sample included in the study. They concluded that over 96% of the empirical papers in JSEP did not report the racial or ethnic composition of their sample, and that there was "no systematic attempt to deal with race and ethnicity as conceptual and meaningful categories of human experience" (p. 117) in the sport and exercise psychology literature.

Ram, Starek, and Johnson (2004) replicated and extended Duda and Allison's work by analyzing 982 manuscripts published in JSEP, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, and *The Sport Psychologist* between 1987 and 2000 for inclusion of race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. They confirmed the void in scholarly literature, reporting that only 19.86% of manuscripts included references to race and ethnicity, and only 1.22% referenced sexual orientation. In addition, only 15 papers between 1987 and 2000 considered race and ethnicity in a substantial and conceptual way. Although there was a slight increase in reporting race and ethnicity since Duda and Allison's original paper, there was clearly no attempt to discuss sexual orientation. Similar to Duda and Allison, Ram et al. concluded that there has been "no systematic attempt to include the experiences of marginalized groups in the literature" (p. 250). That is, sport and exercise psychology has not made progress; our scholarship does not address cultural diversity.

Scholarly journals may be overly restrictive and selective with a bias toward more controlled designs and “hard science” topics. One might expect that scholarly presentations at conferences such as the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) would be more open to a wider range of topics, research approaches and professional issues. Thus, AASP conference programs might well represent the leading edge of cultural diversity scholarship and practice, but conference programs have not been examined for inclusion of cultural diversity.

AASP was formed in 1986 to advance research and professional practice in applied sport psychology. Today, AASP also offers certification as Certified Consultants for professionals in sport and exercise psychology. As an international organization, members represent 28 different countries outside North America. In fact, with more than 1200 members, AASP has emerged as “the largest applied sport and exercise psychology organization in the world” (AASP, 2008a, p. 1). According to AASP's website, the purpose of the organization is to provide leadership in theory, research and applied practice within sport, exercise and health psychology (AASP, 2008a). Furthermore, of particular interest to this paper, one of the organization's secondary purposes is the promotion of respect and value for cultural diversity. The AASP Ethical Code (Principle D; Respect for People's Rights and Dignity) clearly calls for an understanding of cultural diversity and multiculturalism within sport and exercise psychology stating:

AASP members are aware of cultural, individual, and role differences, including those due to age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status. AASP members try to eliminate the effect on their work of biases based on those factors, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone unfair discriminatory practices (AASP, 2008b).

Given AASP's emphasis on cultural diversity within its purpose and ethical code, it is important to determine whether that stated commitment to diversity is reflected in conference programming. Furthermore, given the exclusive nature of sport and exercise, it is essential that applied sport and exercise psychology professionals understand and actively address cultural diversity issues. This study extends the work of Duda and Allison (1990) and Ram et al. (2004) to include conference program abstracts. The abstracts accepted for the AASP annual conference represent major directions and emphases within sport and exercise psychology. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the extent of cultural diversity content in AASP conference programs from 1986 to 2007, and to determine whether AASP's commitment to diversity is reflected in conference programming. An additional purpose was to determine the first authors' diversity in terms of gender and country.

## METHOD

A content analysis was conducted of all AASP conference abstracts, starting from the first year of the annual conference in 1986 up to 2007. More than 5214 abstracts were analyzed to examine the extent to which race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, disability, nationality, and older adults have been addressed over time within AASP conference programs.

### Content Analysis

As a research method, Neudendorf (2002) describes content analysis as a systematic and objective analysis of characteristics of a message that relies on the scientific method. More specifically, content analysis includes the systematic and careful examination of any type of

human communication in forms such as books, websites, magazines, and television. Neudendorf describes the method of content analysis as one of the fastest-growing techniques in quantitative research and provides examples of content analyses including the analysis of character portrayals in TV commercials or the word usage in news releases. She also emphasizes that content analysis relies on objectivity, a priori design (in which the procedures and “coding” are decided before the study begins), reliability, validity, and replicability. Furthermore, Krippendorff (1980) argues that content analysis is an excellent research technique that is replicable and reliable, allowing inferences to be made from large amounts of data.

### Categories of Analysis

Using a priori design in this study, the AASP program abstracts were analyzed in the following three areas: (a) the inclusion of a diverse sample, (b) a discussion of a diversity issue, and (c) country and gender of the first author of the abstract. To be classified as a diverse sample, abstracts had to specifically state that non-majority or culturally diverse participants were included in the study, such as women, people of color, older adults, participants of various social classes, nationalities (other than U.S.), lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered (LGBT), or participants with disabilities. A diversity issue was coded in abstracts that discussed a diversity issue in a meaningful or conceptual way, such as discussions of gender roles, racial identity, homophobia, disability, ageism, understanding other cultures, or social class issues. The following categories of analysis were set a priori and used for both a diverse sample and a diversity issue: race/ethnicity, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, social class, disability, and older adults. In addition, two categories were added after the start of the coding process to address two issues with the categories of analysis that became apparent. Several abstracts discussed diversity, culture or multiculturalism broadly; therefore, a “general diversity” category was added under diversity issue to code these abstracts accurately. In addition, the majority of the abstracts initially coded as gender issues addressed simple gender differences (specifically, comparing men and women). Because these abstracts were quite different than those addressing gender in a conceptual or meaningful way, gender differences was added as a separate category.

### Coding Procedures

To make accurate conclusions about the status of cultural diversity in the AASP conference program abstracts, all years of conference programs were analyzed (1986 to 2007). All abstracts were included with two exceptions. Symposiums typically included an overall abstract with several supporting abstracts. If the supporting abstracts for each separate symposium section were available, then the overall symposium abstract was not coded to eliminate coding duplicate information. Because abstracts for keynote addresses were inconsistently included in the conference programs, a decision was made to eliminate the keynote addresses from the analysis completely.

The research team included three coders (two doctoral students and one master's level student) and a faculty member with expertise in sport and exercise psychology. Each coder was trained in the procedures of the study and all four coded the first 100 abstracts from the 2000 conference program separately. After coding, a group discussion of the first 100 abstracts from 2000 took place and each coder was provided a recording sheet with the categories, as well as a list of operational definitions (see Table 1). Each coder worked independently to control for unwanted cooperation or bias. All abstracts included in this study were coded by one coder and then

checked by another. The codes were then compared and the faculty member was consulted to determine the proper code if the coders could not agree on the coding. Coders recorded their categories for both diversity sample and diversity issue as the following: race/ethnicity, gender (difference or issue), nationality, sexual orientation, social class, disability, and older adults. Coders also recorded the first author's gender and country. The first author's gender was only coded when the gender of the author was clear or could be determined. If the first author's gender could not be determined (e.g., the name listed on the abstract was gender neutral or only an initial of the first name was given), the first author's gender was not coded. A total of 143 abstracts could not be coded for the first author's gender. The country of the first author, which was also listed with each abstract, was coded by region to determine general trends. The regions included U.S., Canada, Australia/New Zealand, Europe, Central America/Mexico, Asia and Africa.

### **Table 1 Operational Definitions**

Category of Analysis	Definition
1st Author Gender	Gender of the first author of the abstract.
1st Author Country	Country of the first author of the abstract.
Race/Ethnicity Issue	Discussion of race/ethnicity issues or concepts such as White privilege or the portrayal of Black athletes in the media.
Race/Ethnicity Sample	Reporting participants' race/ethnicity in a study.
Gender Issue	Discussion of gender issues or concepts such as discussing gender roles or stereotyping.
Gender Sample	Reporting participants' gender in a study.
Gender Difference	Examining gender differences, or comparing males and females.
Nationality Issue	Discussion of nationality issues or concepts such as discussing how sport psychology consultants could work with athletes from a country other than their own.
International Sample	Reporting participants' country, other than the U.S., in a study.
Sexual Orientation Issue	Discussion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender (LGBT) issues or concepts such as discussing how sport psychologists can best support LGBT individuals.
Sexual Orientation Sample	Reporting LGBT participants in a study.
Social Class Issue	Discussion of social class issues or concepts such as the role of socioeconomic status on the experiences of athletes or exercisers.
Social Class Sample	Reporting participants of one or more social classes (upper-class, middle class, lower class, etc.) in a study.
Disability Issue	Discussion of disability issues or concepts such as discussing how best to consult with athletes who have a physical disability, or work with individuals in clinical populations (e.g., clients with cancer).
Disability Sample	Reporting participants with disabilities in a study.
Older Adults Issue	Discussion of issues or concepts related to older adults such as barriers to physical activity in the older adult population.
Older Adults Sample	Reporting older adult participants in a study.

General Diversity Issue      Discussion of diversity, culture, or multiculturalism issues or concepts broadly such as the importance of adopting a multicultural perspective as an applied sport psychologist.

### Reliability and Analysis

As in other studies using content analysis, intercoder reliability was established using percent agreement (Neudendorf, 2002). The initial agreement on the first 100 abstracts of the 2000 AASP conference program was 93%. The intercoder reliability for the remainder of the AASP conference programs ranged from 83% to 95%. When disagreement occurred and the coders could not come to a consensus, the faculty member was consulted and a consensus decision was reached on how to code the abstract, thus leading to 100% intercoder reliability.

Once coding had been finalized, a series of chi-square analyses were used to explore differences in cultural diversity content by year. The AASP conference program abstracts were divided into four time periods (1986–1991, 1992–1997, 1998–2002, and 2003–2007) to determine differences over time. The level of significance was set at  $p = .05$  for all analyses.

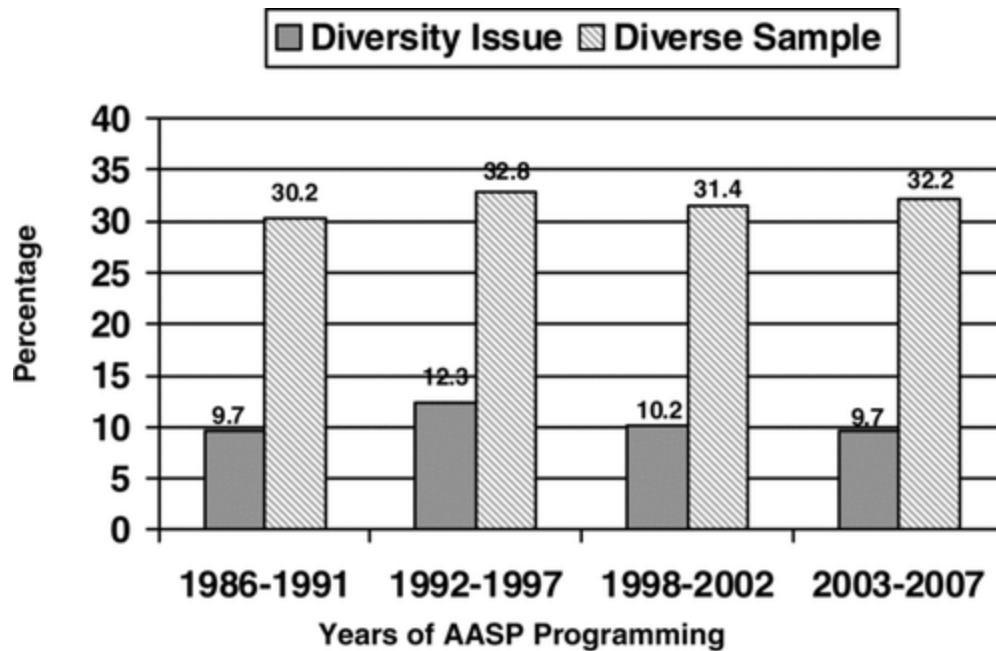
## RESULTS

### Overall Cultural Diversity Content

Of the 5214 AASP abstracts coded, 37.2% ( $n = 1937$ ) addressed cultural diversity in some way. Yet only 10.5% ( $n = 550$ ) discussed cultural diversity in a meaningful or conceptual way (diversity issue), whereas the majority of the abstracts simply described a culturally diverse sample as part of a research study (31.9%;  $n = 1664$ ). A small percentage of AASP abstracts (6.1%,  $n = 318$ ) included both a culturally diversity issue and a diverse sample; therefore, some overlap was present.

### Inclusion of a Culturally Diverse Sample

As mentioned, almost one-third of the abstracts included a description of a culturally diverse sample (31.9%;  $n = 1664$ ). A chi-square analysis revealed a non-significant difference over time in inclusion of a diverse sample,  $\chi^2(3, N = 5214) = 1.50$   $p = .68$ . Across years of AASP programming, the percentage of inclusion of a diverse sample remained around 30% (1986–1991, 30.2%,  $n = 169$ ; 1992–1997, 32.8%,  $n = 458$ ; 1998–2002, 31.4%,  $n = 527$ ; 2003–2007, 32.2%,  $n = 510$ ). See Figure 1.



Note: 6.1% ( $n = 318$  of 5214) abstracts included both a cultural diversity issue and a culturally diverse sample.

**Figure 1** Percentage of cultural diversity content in Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) conference programs (1986–2007).

The majority of the abstracts that described a diverse sample addressed gender (80.5% of the total diverse samples,  $n = 1339$  of 1664) with almost no attention to race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, disability, and older adults (See Figure 2). Around one-quarter (25.7%,  $n = 1339$ ) of the total abstracts addressed gender. Other than gender, international participants were included a little more often than other culturally diverse samples (6.6%,  $n = 345$ ).



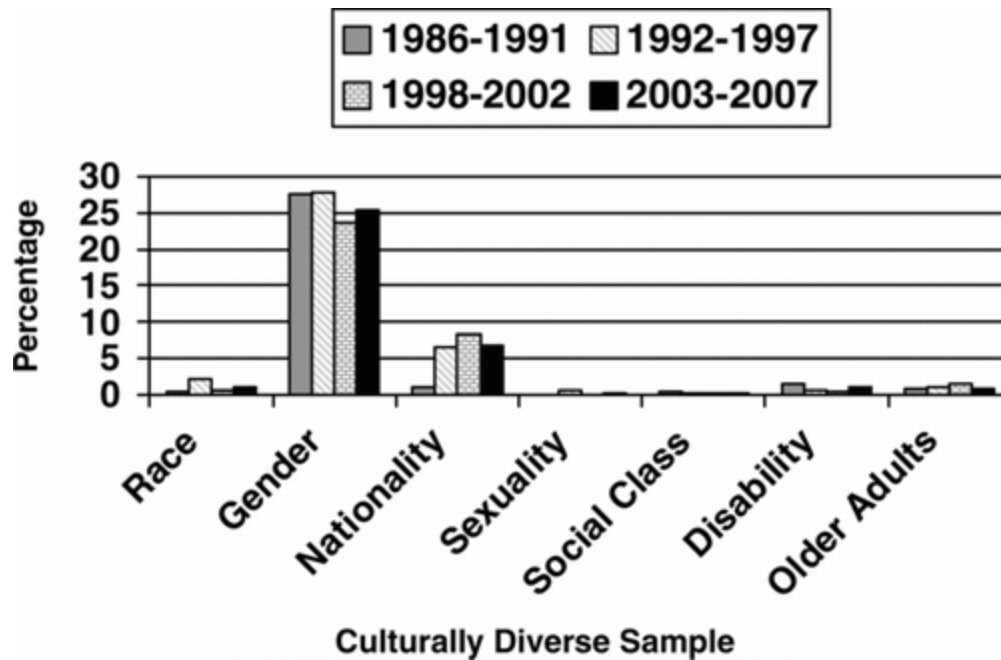


Figure 2 Percentage of culturally diverse samples in Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) conference programs (1986–2007).

Race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, disability, and older adults were almost non-existent as diverse samples. Descriptions of a racially or ethnically diverse sample were included in 61 abstracts (1.2%), participants with a disability in 44 abstracts (.8%), and older adults in 58 abstracts (1.1%). LGBT participants and participants of various social classes were even less apparent, described in only 9 (.2%) and 7 (.1%) of the total abstracts, respectively.

A chi-square analysis for each of the culturally diverse samples revealed significant differences over time for race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, and disability. For race/ethnicity samples,  $\chi^2(3, N = 5214) = 16.67, p = .001$ , the 1992–1997 time period had the highest percentage (2.1%) compared to .5% in 1986–1991, .6% in 1998–2002, and 1.2% in 2003–2007. Similarly, samples including LGBT participants,  $\chi^2(3, N = 5214) = 17.96, p = .001$ , had the highest percentage during the same 1992–1997 time period (.6%), compared to 0% in 1986–1991, 0% in 1998–2002, and .1% in 2003–2007.

International participants were significantly more likely to be included in abstracts during the 1998–2002 time period (8.4%),  $\chi^2(3, N = 5214) = 36.58, p = .001$ , compared to 1.0% in 1986–1991, 6.5% in 1992–1997, and 6.8% in 2003–2007. Samples including participants with a disability were included most often during the first time period of AASP programming (1986–1991; 1.6%),  $\chi^2(3, N = 5214) = 8.67, p < .05$ , with a decrease after that (1992–1997, .6%; 1998–2002, .5%; 2003–2007, 1.1%). There were no significant differences over time in samples including females, older adults, or participants of various social classes.

#### Inclusion of a Cultural Diversity Issue

As stated, 10.5% of the total abstracts ( $n = 550$  of 5214) addressed cultural diversity in a meaningful or conceptual way. The period 1992–1997 had the largest percentage of cultural

diversity issues (12.3%,  $n = 172$ ) compared to 1986–1991 (9.7%,  $n = 54$ ), 1998–2002 (10.2%,  $n = 171$ ), and 2003–2007 (9.7%,  $n = 153$ ). Since the 1992–1997 time period, the number and percentage of abstracts addressing a cultural diversity issue has decreased, although this finding was non-significant,  $\chi^2(3, N = 5214) = 6.63, p = .08$  (See Figure 1).

Similar to the trend for diverse samples, the majority of the abstracts that addressed a cultural diversity issue discussed gender (See Figure 3). Although the total percentage of abstracts that discussed a gender issue was low (4.6%, 240 of the 5214 total abstracts), this still accounted for nearly half (43.6%,  $n = 240$  of 550) of the abstracts that addressed a cultural diversity issue. Little to no attention was directed to sexual orientation, social class, disability, older adults, or general diversity. Social class was discussed in only 10 of the total abstracts (.1%), older adults in 17 abstracts (.3%), sexual orientation in 28 abstracts (.5%), disability in 36 abstracts (.6%), and general diversity in 41 abstracts (.8%). Discussion of race/ethnicity issues ( $n = 85$ , 1.6%) and nationality issues occurred a little more often ( $n = 149$ , 2.9%).

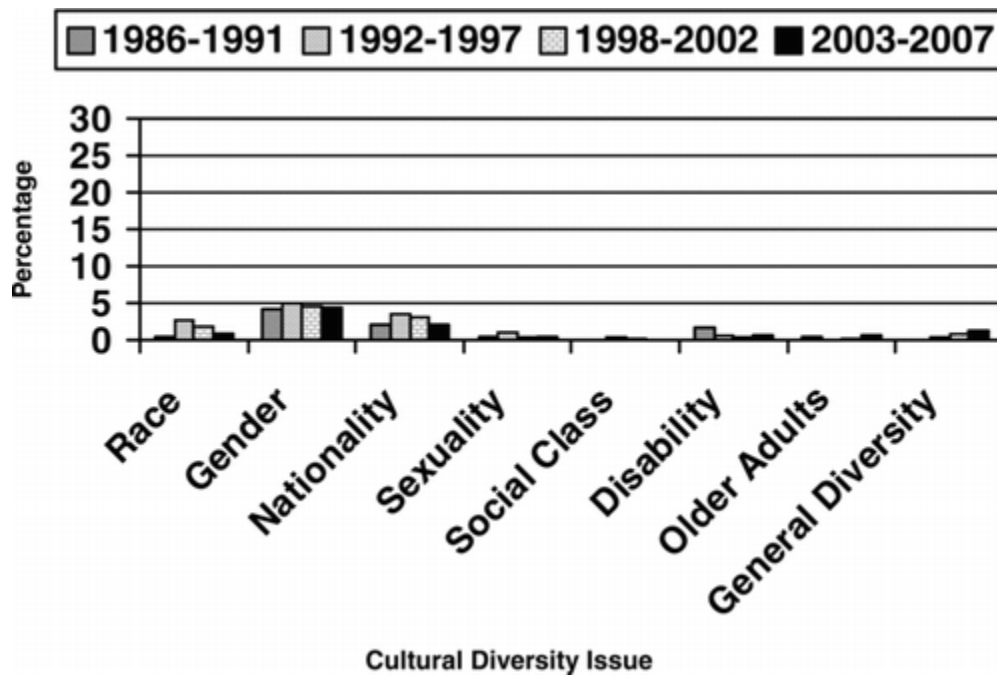


Figure 3 Percentage of cultural diversity issues in Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) conference programs (1986–2007).

A chi-square analysis for each of the cultural diversity categories revealed significant differences over time for race/ethnicity, nationality, disability, and general cultural diversity. For race/ethnicity issues,  $\chi^2(3, N = 5214) = 22.85, p = .001$ , the 1992–1997 time period had the highest percentage (2.7%) compared to .5% in 1986–1991, 1.9% in 1998–2002, and .8% in 2003–2007. Similarly, with nationality issues,  $\chi^2(3, N = 5214) = 7.88, p = .048$ , the highest percentage was during the 1992–1997 time period (3.6%), compared to 2.0% in 1986–1991, 3.2% in 1998–2002, and 2.1% in 2003–2007.

Disability had its highest percentage during the first time period of AASP programming (1986–1991; 1.6%),  $\chi^2(3, N = 5214) = 9.62, p = .022$ , with a decrease after that (1992–1997, .7%; 1998–2002, .4%; 2003–2007, .7%). However, general diversity increased slightly since the beginning of AASP, peaking in the 2003–2007 time period at 1.3% (compared to 0% in 1986–1991; .4% in 1992–1997, and .9% in 1998–2002). There were no significant differences over time in discussion of issues involving gender, social class, sexual orientation or older adults.

#### Gender Difference and Gender Issue

Most of those abstracts that addressed gender described differences between men and women rather than addressing issues such as gender roles or stereotyping. Gender difference was the focus of 436 of the 656 abstracts (66.4%) addressing gender with a decrease over the years of AASP programming,  $\chi^2(3, N = 5214) = 15.23, p = .002$ , from 11.4% in the time period of 1986–1991 to 6.8% in the time period of 2003–2007 (See Figure 4).

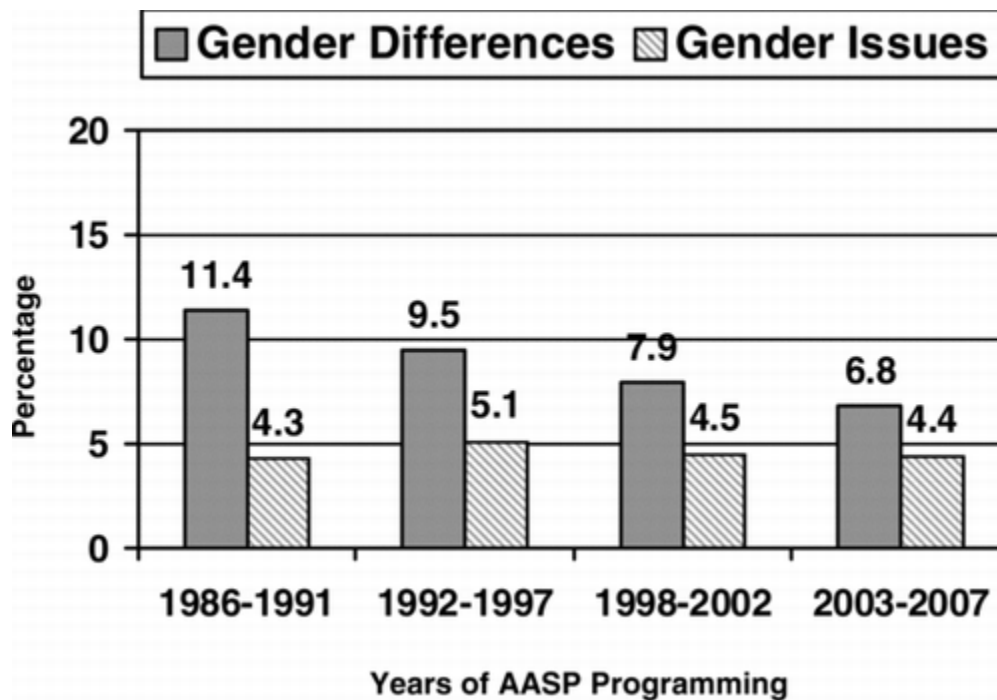


Figure 4 Percentage of gender differences and gender issues in Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) conference programs (1986–2007).

#### First Author's Country and Gender

Nearly one-half of the total abstracts (42.1%,  $n = 2196$  of 5214) had a woman as the first author. A chi-square analysis revealed a significant increase in female first authors,  $\chi^2(3, N = 5214) = 37.44, p = .001$ , with the number gradually increasing over each period of AASP programming. More specifically, the 2003–2007 time period had the highest percentage of female first authors (46.1%,  $n = 729$ ), compared to 33.6% ( $n = 188$ ) in 1986–1991, 40.8% ( $n = 569$ ) in 1992–1997, and 42.3% ( $n = 710$ ) in 1998–2002.

In terms of nationality, 73.4% of the first authors were from the U.S., whereas 26.6% ( $n = 1389$  of 5214) were from a country other than the U.S. A chi-square analysis revealed a significant difference over time in international first authors,  $\chi^2(3, N = 5214) = 168.63, p = .001$ . However, unlike the gradual increase over time of female first authors, international first authors increased from 4.8% ( $n = 27$ ) in 1986–1991 to a peak during the 1998–2002 time period (32.7%,  $n = 549$ ), then decreased to 27.4% ( $n = 382$ ) in 1992–1997 and 27.2% ( $n = 431$ ) in 2003–2007. The majority of the international first authors were from Canada (11.0%,  $n = 573$ ) and Europe (9.0%,  $n = 469$ ). A smaller percentage of first authors were from Australia/New Zealand (3.5%,  $n = 184$ ), Asia (2.6%,  $n = 136$ ), Central America/Mexico (.4%,  $n = 22$ ), and Africa (.1%,  $n = 4$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to determine the extent of cultural diversity content in AASP conference programs from 1986 to 2007, and to determine whether AASP's commitment to diversity is reflected in conference programming. An additional purpose was to determine the first authors' diversity in terms of gender and country. Results indicate that similar to Duda and Allison (1990) and Ram et al.'s (2004) findings, which addressed sport and exercise psychology scholarly publications, cultural diversity has rarely been addressed in a meaningful way in AASP conference programs. More specifically, AASP's commitment to diversity is not reflected in conference programming and no progress has been made over those 20 years in addressing cultural diversity. The lack of attention to cultural diversity persists in applied sport and exercise psychology despite clear multicultural diversity in society and in sport.

Only 10.5% of abstracts from 1986–2007 addressed cultural diversity in a meaningful and conceptual way. Although more abstracts described a diverse sample (31.9%), the majority of all of the abstracts addressing a cultural diversity issue or a culturally diverse sample addressed gender (80.5% of the diverse samples and 43.6% of the diverse issues), with almost no attention to race and ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, social class, disability, or older adults.

Abstracts addressing cultural diversity in a conceptual or meaningful way have not increased over time of AASP programming. In fact, inclusion of cultural diversity issues peaked during the 1992–1997 time period, decreasing since then. Furthermore, some culturally diverse topics such as disability were addressed most frequently during the beginning years of AASP conference programs (e.g., 1986–1991). International first authors peaked during the 1998–2002 time period and decreased in the most recent time period (e.g., 2003–2007), similar to the trend for international samples, which peaked in 1998–2002 and has decreased since then. This trend toward less cultural diversity in the most recent time period is particularly disturbing given that cultural diversity is continuing to increase in U.S. society and that the larger field of psychology has clearly seen increased attention to multicultural issues in that recent time.

It was expected that AASP conference programs might be more open to a wider range of research topics than our scholarly journals and as such, be the leading edge of cultural diversity scholarly and practice. Compared to Duda and Allison (1990) and Ram et al. (2004)'s findings, the present study suggests that cultural diversity is even less evident in AASP conference programs than in sport and exercise psychology scholarly journals. For example, Ram et al. (2004) found 19.86% of manuscripts published in the major sport and exercise psychology

journals between 1987 and 2000 included references to race and ethnicity, and 1.22% referenced sexual orientation. Results of the present study suggest less attention in AASP conference programming to race and ethnicity and sexual orientation than in the sport and exercise psychology scholarly journals. Specifically, only 1.2% of AASP conference abstracts included a racially or ethnic diverse sample, 1.6% addressed a race or ethnicity issue, .2% included LGBT participants, and .5% addressed a sexual orientation issue. It is possible that scholars are more likely to submit work on cultural diversity to journals than to the AASP conferences in attempts to reach a wider audience. Also, it may be more difficult to identify cultural diversity within short abstracts than in articles. Given that abstracts may not have a full description, samples may well be more diverse than were evident in our results. We suspect, however, that we have not underestimated sample diversity by much. More important, the presence or absence of diversity issues is likely to be evident in an abstract even if the sample is not fully described. Our findings, along with those of Ram et al., clearly indicate that neither conference programs nor journal articles address cultural diversity issues.

What percentage of abstracts would reflect AASP's commitment to diversity? It is difficult, if not impossible, to set a target percentage for cultural diversity issues. Encouraging authors to describe sample diversity might yield a higher percentage, but the key indicator of commitment is addressing cultural diversity issues in a meaningful way. It is not necessary that every abstract, or even half of the abstracts, address cultural diversity. Nevertheless, our finding that only about 1% address race and ethnicity or any issue other than gender clearly indicates neglect.

Recommendations for the AASP Organization and Sport and Exercise Psychology Professionals  
These results highlight the need to address cultural diversity within the AASP conference programming, particularly given the importance of cultural diversity in the practice of applied sport and exercise psychology. It is imperative that the AASP Executive Committee as well as the membership of AASP commit to cultural diversity programming at all AASP conferences and insist on inclusive language in all AASP conference presentations. Moreover, an active commitment to diversity calls for seeking and supporting programs that address diversity issues, and presenters from underrepresented cultural groups, including international authors.

As an organization, AASP should take specific steps to realize the stated commitment to cultural diversity. We offer some possibilities here as a start. First, we suggest that AASP develop an organizational action plan with specific steps and timelines. This might be initiated by the Executive Committee or a charge to an ad hoc committee. The action plan should not be the charge only of the Diversity Committee; delegating the charge to a committee with no formal power is shirking responsibility. Instead, the action plan and commitment to diversity should be reflected in all AASP structures and programs including conference programs, membership, professional development, certification and education. For example, the certification committee could review the current AASP certification requirements and consider adding a more explicit requirement related to diversity to ensure Certified Consultants have at least some diversity training. However, given that our findings reflect conference programs, our suggestions focus only on that.

Clearly AASP conference programs do not address cultural diversity in a meaningful way, and AASP might take steps to encourage submissions on cultural diversity issues. Recruiting

speakers and programs that reflect diversity and ensuring that program announcements and events are inclusive and inviting to all is essential. AASP committed to an invited diversity scholar lecture at the 2009 AASP conference. The continuation of the invited diversity scholar, as well as continuation of the invited international scholar lecture helps to increase the awareness of cultural diversity among members, provide a model, and may encourage members to develop and submit programs on diversity issues. Publication of the diversity lecture and posting of a summary, highlights or key points at the AASP website would have even greater impact. We also believe that it is important that abstract authors recognize and clarify the cultural diversity in their samples and methods. Even if full information cannot be provided in a short abstract, that information can be provided in the actual presentation. It is just as important to recognize lack of diversity and limits of any research findings or programs and to offer suggestions for expanding to more diverse groups in the presentations.

The decline in international scholars in recent years (specifically 2003–2007) may be due to international scholars submitting fewer abstracts. An alternate explanation is that abstracts from international authors were less likely to be accepted. Our data do not directly support this conclusion because abstract acceptance rates were not examined; however, international authors attending AASP have suggested this explanation to us. To ensure fair review, the Executive Committee or program committee should examine the abstract submission and review process to eliminate possible conscious or unconscious biases and barriers. Guidelines for abstract reviewers as well as guidelines specifically for international authors, and particularly those whose first language is not English, may help. It may be appropriate to set up a panel to review abstracts from international or non-English-speaking authors, and that panel should include international reviewers.

Beyond recommendations for the AASP Executive Committee, and other AASP organizational structures, sport and exercise psychology professionals should commit to professional practices that promote cultural diversity in sport and exercise psychology, as well as developing their own cultural competencies. First, we hope this article will increase the awareness of cultural diversity issues and prompt professionals and students to address this gap in our research and practice. Researchers might consider how their specific line of research could expand to include culturally diverse samples or culturally diverse issues. For example, consider populations that have not been studied and how research could move beyond the culturally elite. As described in this paper, much of the limited research on cultural diversity involves gender, with a general lack of literature on other diverse groups such as racial and ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, and persons with disabilities.

It is particularly important to advance the scholarly base by addressing cultural diversity issues. Researchers might consider intersections and variations within cultural groups as well as social psychological processes that are particularly relevant to culture. For example, one might examine gender appropriateness of competitive behaviors across age and cultural sub-groups; one might look at the relationship of acculturation (adaptation to a different culture) and enculturation (identification with a culture) to sport participation; or one might identify relevant traditional activities (e.g., Korean dance, tai chi) for a physical activity promotion program. These are but a few examples. Sport and exercise psychology researchers could look to the multicultural psychology scholarship for more ideas; the possibilities are endless.

As well as building the scholarly base and disseminating that scholarship at conferences and in publications, professionals in sport and exercise psychology can examine their own biases and develop their cultural competencies (see Gill & Kamphoff, 2010 for more discussion).

Professionals who are culturally competent act to empower participants, challenge restrictions, and advocate for social justice. Cultural competence is required in psychology and many health professions. The widely cited Joint Commission on Health Education and Promotion Terminology report (Gold, Miner, Fiori, Glazer, Hager, Harlan, et al., 2002) described cultural competence as:

The ability of an individual to understand and respect values, attitudes, beliefs, and mores that differ across cultures, and to consider and respond appropriately to these differences in planning, implementing and evaluating health education and promotion programs and interventions (p.5).

Psychology and major psychology organizations are actively promoting multicultural competencies, providing a model for sport and exercise psychology. The American Psychological Association (2003) has comprehensive guidelines and resources that reflect a commitment to cultural diversity, and several texts and chapters on multicultural psychology provide guidance for sport and exercise psychology. For example, Mio et al. (2006) describe multicultural competence as “the ability to work and be effective with individuals who are of a different culture from yours” (p. 265), and describe culturally competent professionals as proficient in three general areas: (a) awareness of one's own cultural values and biases, (b) understanding of the client's worldviews, and (c) development of culturally appropriate intervention strategies. Cultural competence in the three often-cited general areas of awareness, understanding, and culturally appropriate interventions is essential for professional practice in applied sport psychology.

Professionals might also adopt Sue's (2006) characteristics of cultural competency: scientific mindedness, dynamic sizing, and culture-specific expertise. Scientific-minded practitioners form hypotheses rather than make premature conclusions about culturally different clients; they continually test and revise hypotheses and act based on acquired data. Dynamic sizing reflects the balancing of individualizing and contextualizing, both of which are clearly relevant and often promoted in applied sport psychology. Sue describes dynamic sizing as knowing when to generalize and when to individualize in working with clients; those who are skilled avoid stereotyping while appreciating culture. Culture-specific expertise refers to knowledge and skills specific to the culture of the client. If AASP is truly committed to cultural diversity, an action plan to explicitly incorporate cultural competence as a requirement in certification, professional development, and educational programs is needed. Not only can AASP explicitly include culture competence in its professional and educational standards, but with a stronger scholarly base and professional commitment, AASP can take the lead in developing educational programs to promote cultural competence among other sport professionals (e.g., coaches, teachers, trainers).

#### Limitations of Current Research Project

Certainly, it is important to acknowledge limitations of the current research. Quantifying cultural diversity is a difficult task, especially at the organizational level and future research may expand or alter the conclusions presented here. An additional limitation is the limited information in

abstracts; authors may not have, or may not report the composition of the sample. We also add a note of caution. Our recommendations for enhancing cultural diversity are just recommendations, not evidence-based prescriptions. There is little research on efforts to enhance cultural diversity or develop competencies, particularly at the organizational level. We can look to APA and health-related agencies for guidance, but must also consider the unique traditions and cultural context of sport and exercise psychology and the AASP organization. Strategies that work at the individual level or in other agencies may not work in AASP. Still, with commitment from the leadership and membership, AASP can take steps to move toward cultural competence.

Furthermore, our findings are limited to AASP programs and may not reflect other sport and exercise psychology conferences (such as the North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity, the International Society for Sport Psychology, and the American Psychological Association, Division 47: Exercise and Sport Psychology). However, we believe these findings reflect the dominant culture within sport and exercise psychology. As Ram et al. (2004) argue, when the dominant group's experiences are continuously represented in the literature, and in this case conference programming, members of the dominant culture are less likely to notice when others' experiences are missing; thus, they continue to conduct and present research that only reflects the dominant paradigm. It may be that professionals in our field are unconcerned with cultural diversity or unaware of the issues. Regardless of the explanation, the findings are disturbing considering the importance of cultural diversity for research and practice in applied sport and exercise psychology.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the diversity of participants and need for cultural competence, it is clear that sport and exercise psychology has not adopted multicultural perspectives or addressed cultural diversity in a meaningful way. AASP program abstracts suggest that sport settings, sport and exercise psychology research, and professional practice are culturally elite, and conference programs do not reflect AASP's stated commitment to cultural diversity. To realize that commitment and remain relevant, sport and exercise psychology must expand the research base on cultural diversity and incorporate cultural competence in professional practice.

In sum, our results affirm the findings of earlier surveys of publications (Duda & Allison, 1990; Ram et al., 2004). AASP conference programming rarely addresses cultural diversity, and sport and exercise psychology has not made progress in addressing diversity in research or incorporating multicultural competencies in applied practice. These findings highlight the need to address cultural diversity specifically within the AASP conference programs. More broadly, attention to cultural diversity is vital to sport and exercise psychology. Professionals in applied sport and exercise psychology must be culturally competent to remain relevant and effective in research and practice.

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