The purpose of this study was to determine what trends exist in the identification and description of participants used in data-based studies published in Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly and the Journal of Teaching in Physical Education. Data were analyzed using frequency counts for journals and time periods from the 1980s to 2005 with chi-square tests on gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Results indicate, for example, that across the time span both journals published articles reporting males first over females, $X^2 (3) = 22.16, p < .001$. Trend data also reveal that even today most data-based studies in these journals fail to report race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Findings are discussed with guiding principles for future research.

Several challenges face both adapted (APE) and general (GPE) physical education professionals in the conduct of research with culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse groups. Researchers unfamiliar with topics that may be especially sensitive for various groups often ignore such issues as (a) identification, description, and selection of samples; (b) heterogeneity existing within diverse groups; (c) cultural and language barriers; and (d) instruments and measurements used with diverse populations (Padilla & Lindholm, 1995). For example, Padilla and Lindholm asserted,

One critical issue in identifying a population is to understand the demographic characteristics of that population. What diversity is represented in the population? Understanding the heterogeneity that exists in different communities is
essential if we are to understand how best to move forward in gaining information about culturally different individuals. (Padilla & Lindholm, 1995, p. 101)

To be sure, researchers in APE and GPE should properly identify, select, and accurately represent all those we serve.

In the wake of America’s increasingly diverse demography, properly conducting and reporting research with persons who are not members of the dominant culture is crucial (DeSensi, 1995; Padilla & Lindholm, 1995). Typically, the dominant culture refers to the hegemony of White male domination within a Eurocentric paradigm (Gordon, 1995). Much research is situated in this dominant epistemological tradition and “[t]he hegemony of the dominant paradigm makes it more than just another way to view the world—it claims to be the only legitimate way to view the world” (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 258). Reflective of this, “[t]he majority of instruments and research procedures used in educational research have been developed by White male researchers from a monocultural perspective using White and generally middle-class students as the normative population” (Padilla & Lindholm, 1995, p. 98). In contrast, culturally diverse groups, particularly persons of color are often neglected, misrepresented, or marginalized (Bruening, 2005; Messner, 1992; Padilla & Lindholm, 1995). In this paper, cultural diversity is defined as “differences associated with gender, race, national origin, ethnicity, social class, [culture], religion, age, and ability/disability, but it can also be extended to include differences in personality, sexual orientation, veteran status, physical appearance, marital status, and parental status . . .” (DeSensi, 1995, p. 34).

**Today’s America: Increasingly Larger and More Diverse**

Recently, the U.S. Census Bureau (2006a) estimated a total population of some 297.8 million people in the United States of America (USA) and projects that the populace will continue to become larger and more diverse. Of this population, over 50.8% were females and 49.2% males (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006b). Population estimates on race alone-or-in-combination in 2004, indicate that 4.8% were Asian, 13.4% Black, 14.1% Hispanic, 1.5% American Indian and Alaska Native, and 0.3% Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders. Of the total population, 81.7% were identified as White. The population of White alone, non-Hispanic was 67.4% in 2004. In all, including Hispanics of any race, ethnic minorities comprise about 34.1% of the population. This trend of population diversification is evident in increases in school demographics (National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, NCDTF, 2004).

National data indicate that in 2001-2002, 62% of public school students were White, non-Hispanic; additionally, there were 17% Black, 17% Hispanic, 4.5% Asian/Pacific American, and 1% Native American students (NCDTF, 2004; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006b). In other words, students of color made up roughly 40% of elementary and high school enrollments. Specific to students with disabilities, the 25th Annual Report to Congress by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE, 2003) indicates that there were 5,867,234 students, ages 6 through 21 served under
the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997) in 2001-2002. Based on public school enrollments, 12% of all students received special education and/or related services. Those students with specific learning disabilities (LD), speech or language impairments, mental retardation (MR), and emotional disturbance (ED) accounted for most students served under IDEA. Nationally, most students served under IDEA were White (61.7%), plus 20.5% were Black, 14.6% were Hispanic, 1.9% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1.3% were Native American or Alaska Native (USDE, 2003).

More and more schools are being asked to educate an increasingly diverse student population (USDE, 2006) and to give extra attention to improving the academic and social experiences of culturally diverse and low-income students (Desimone, 2001; USDE, 2006). It is asserted that increased diversity within physical education contexts, schools, and neighborhoods make research, as well as teaching, more complex (Burden, Hodge, O’Bryant, & Harrison, 2004). Research shows that race, ethnicity, family income (i.e., as an indication of socio-economic status), and school location (e.g., urban, rural, suburban) do matter in student achievement (Desimone, 2001; USDE, 1996, 2006) including students with disabilities and those disadvantaged (Goodway & Rudisill, 1997; USDE, 2003, 2006). Related to this, Black and Hispanic youngsters are more likely than their White or Asian/Pacific Islander peers to attend high-poverty schools, attend schools with high ethnic minority enrollments, and to perform less well academically (USDE, 2006). For example, data in the recent report, The Condition of Education 2006 (USDE, 2006), complied by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) shows that:

Larger percentages of Black, Hispanic, and American Indian students attended high-poverty schools than White or Asian/Pacific Islander students. For example, 48% of Black, 49% of Hispanic, and 36% of American Indian students were enrolled in schools with the highest measure of poverty (schools with more than 75% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch), compared with 5% of White and 16% of Asian/Pacific Islander 4th graders. (USDE, 2006, p. 33)

Moreover, students in the highest poverty schools were more likely than their peers in the lowest poverty schools to have lower academic outcomes (USDE, 2006).

What’s more, students with disabilities are more likely to come from economically disadvantaged homes than students without disabilities (USDE, 2003). It is estimated that 24% of elementary and middle school students and 25% of high school students with disabilities live in poverty compared with 20% of the general population. Plus, students of color (e.g., Black, Hispanic) and those from poor families were disproportionately overrepresented in several disability categories and were more likely to be placed in special education programs (USDE, 2003). For example, Black students were three times more likely to be labeled MR and twice more likely to be labeled ED than all other groups combined (USDE, 2003). Likewise, the percentages of Hispanic (58%) and Native American and Alaska Native (56%) students with disabilities who received special education for LD were markedly higher when compared to all students with disabilities (49.2%) served under IDEA (USDE, 2003).
Theoretical Orientation and Frameworks

Our study was situated in a critical orientation and guided by feminism (Olesen, 2000) and critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Critical scholars, who rely on these theories, argue that it is vital to acknowledge “the influence of ‘Whiteness’ on academic research and literature by marginalizing both scholars and participants who are not members of the dominant culture” (Bruening, 2005, p. 330). Critical theory aims to understand the origins and function of repressive social structures. It is the critique of typically monocultural, White male domination (Gordon, 1995). Critical scholars posit that educational institutions reproduce hierarchy, exclusion, and inequality among gendered, racialized, and classed groups (Gillborn, 2006). This can occur, for example, by selectively disseminating differential knowledge in published research (Gordon, 1995). Critical scholars go beyond mere fault finding of hegemonic structures (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Rather they seek to understand the issues creating inequalities and injustices for those who are most often marginalized and propose alternative critical pedagogies and scholarship that emphasizes the social construction of meaning, and addresses questions around hegemony (Gordon, 1995; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Knapp & Woolverton, 1995). Of central importance to critical theory is the “assumption that individuals and social groups construct their own reality regardless of the oppressive elite-dominated social hierarchy in which they exist, and thereby have the capacity to resist and reconstrue their relationship to it” (Knapp & Woolverton, 1995, p. 551).

Critical Perspectives: Feminism

Broadly stated, feminist scholars hold that women have been marginalized and oppressed through history and across societies (Bhavnani, 1993; Macdonald et al., 2002; Oliver & Lalik, 2004). “Feminisms partake of different theoretical and pragmatic orientations and reflect national contexts among which feminist agendas differ widely” (Olesen, 2000, p. 216). Even so, feminist research “centers and makes problematic women’s diverse situations as well as the institutions that frame those situations” (Olesen, 2000, p. 216). Some feminists assert that hegemonic masculinity prevails in our epistemologies and social practices (Connell, 1995), a perspective that typifies mesomorphoric abled-bodied White males (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001).

To counter male hegemony, feminists seek to develop awareness that socially [re]construct society to eliminate oppressive behavior and empower women (Bhavnani, 1993; Bruening, 2005; Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000; Olesen, 2000). For instance, feminist scholars assert that the voices of girls and women have often been excluded from the culture of and scholarship in sport and physical education (Bruening, 2005; Cooky & McDonald, 2005; Oliver & Lalik, 2004). Some feminists have focused research on issues of gendered sport activities (i.e., the dynamics of gender and identity in the realm of sport activities; Birrell, 2000; Bruening, 2005). These feminists explore the (a) domination of males within gymnasiums, playing fields, and sport including the media (Macdonald, 1997); (b) concepts of gender relation or gender order of male dominance and female subordination that are constructed in sport and physical education (Clarke & Humberstone, 1997); and (c) strategies used by women to resist or challenge dominant gender logic (i.e., the notion that
girls and women are “naturally” less capable than boys and men in sport-related activities), which is often promoted and reproduced (Coakley, 2004).

Critical Theory: Race and Ethnicity

The extant physical education literature has also largely neglected to adequately represent the voices and lived experiences of persons from culturally diverse backgrounds, particularly persons of color. To counter the marginalization of such individuals, critical theory focuses on social justice and equity, with particular attention given to the intersection of race and gender (Bruening, 2005; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005a; Duncan, 2005). For example, some scholars use critical race theory (CRT) to analyze social justice and racial equality in USA schools (Jay, 2003). Critical race theory emerged as a counter legal scholarship to positivist and liberal legal discourse of civil rights (Ladson-Billings, 1998). In education, CRT serves as “a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain the marginal position and subordination of African American and Latino students” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 42). Dixson and Rousseau (2005b) served as co-editors of a special issue for the journal, *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, which provides a series of excellent articles situated in CRT.

In order to expand our knowledge base in APE, critical scholarship that examines hegemonic assumptions and the intersection of such variables as gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES) is needed. In that context, we decided to examine issues associated with the identification and description of samples in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and SES by conducting a documentary analysis of two premier journals in physical education. The purpose of the study was to determine what trends over time exist in the identification and description of participants used in data based studies published in *APAQ* and the *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education (JTPE)*. The research questions guiding this critical analysis were the following:

1. How are samples identified with regard to description of gender?
2. How are samples identified with regard to description of race and ethnicity?
3. How are samples identified with regard to description of socioeconomic status?

Method

The method selected for this study was documentary analysis (Bordens & Abbott, 1999). More specifically, two premier journals, *APAQ* and *JTPE* representing APE and GPE, were selected and analyzed using documentary analysis procedures. We established the selection criteria (i.e., data-based studies reporting original data involving human participants), and then all articles that met the criteria were selected and analyzed from each volume of each journal totaling 786 studies (*APAQ* = 419 and *JTPE* = 367) from the start of the journals (i.e., *JTPE* was first published in 1981 and *APAQ* in 1984) across the past two and one-half decades to 2005. Papers excluded were viewpoints, editorials, digests, and all other documents in which no original data were presented.
Coding, Recoding, and Establishing Interobserver Agreement

Subsequent to selection, each article was coded by an initial research team comprised of faculty and doctoral students and later recoded by a second research team. The following variables were coded and analyzed to address the research questions: (a) gender (identification and order), (b) ethnic and race identifiers, and (c) SES.

Two doctoral students, the lead author, and two separate research teams were used to ensure proper retrieval and coding of articles that met the selection criteria. To ensure reliability in the selection and coding of data based articles, we followed a systematic process. More specifically, two doctoral students (Students A and B), neither of whom was involved in the initial selection of the studies, independently selected from *APAQ* and *JTPE*, respectively, those studies they deemed met the selection criteria. These selections and coding were compared to the initial selections conducted by two teams of seven graduate students and faculty not used in other aspects of the study (i.e., Team A assigned to *APAQ* and Team B to *JTPE*). These individuals had also independently selected those articles they deemed met the selection criteria. When disagreements did happen, teams would again review the particular article(s) or variable(s) in question and come to a consensus with the lead author as to how best the information should be coded and reported. In following this process, we reached 100% agreement.

Data Analysis

Data from the frequency counts were analyzed across a 25-year span starting with the 1980s and ending in 2005. This time span included decade groups and frequency counts for key variables. Significant difference for frequency counts of journals and time periods was analyzed using chi-square tests. For all significant results, we used the formula, $r_{(1)} = (X^2/N)^{1/2}$ for calculating effect sizes (Rosenthal, Rosnow, & Rubin, 2000). Effect size values of .10 to .20 represent small, .20 to .50 medium, and > .50 represent large differences (Salkind, 2004). Figures 1, 2, and 3 depict trends identifying participants in *APAQ* and *JTPE*.

Results

Results were organized around the key variables of gender, race, ethnicity, and SES.

Gender

Combined contributors to *APAQ* and *JTPE*, did not explicitly state gender in 15.2% of the studies analyzed. Time period trends for this variable are found in Figure 1. In those studies where gender was reported, across the time span analyzed, both *APAQ* and *JTPE* were significantly more likely to report males first over females, $X^2(3) = 208.83$, $p < .001$ ($r_{\text{equivalent}} = .71$) and $X^2(3) = 129.84$, $p < .001$ ($r_{\text{equivalent}} = .59$), respectively (Figure 2). Combined, the percentages of studies in *APAQ* and *JTPE* demonstrating this tendency of reporting males first was 46% during the
1980s, 54% during the 1990s, and 53% during the 2000-2005 time periods. This trend is more evident in samples for *APAQ* than *JTPE*, during the 1980s, $X^2(3) = 22.16, p < .001, (r_{equivalent} = .17)$. This was not the case in the other two decades ($p > .05$). However, the overall trend supported a higher percentage of samples where males were reported first during the 1980s, $X^2(3) = 75.01, p < .001 (r_{equivalent} = .65);$ 1990s, $X^2(3) = 176.98, p < .001 (r_{equivalent} = .77);$ and 2000s, $X^2(3) = 71.27, p < .01 (r_{equivalent} = .68)$. 

**Figure 1**—Percent of data-based studies wherein gender was not explicitly identified.

**Figure 2**—Combined APAQ and JTPE on gender ordering across time span. 

*Note.* Alternate = back and forth alternating reference to female and male participants within articles analyzed.
Race and Ethnicity

For data analysis purposes, these variables were combined because the frequencies for each were very low and there was a lack of consistent accuracy in how contributors used the terms. For these variables, nonidentification occurred in 79% of the 786 studies analyzed. Over the years, a small increase in reporting race or ethnicity has occurred across both journals. This trend is greater in JTPE than in APAQ. That is, decade-related trends for the two journals were studied. These included identifiers explicitly stated, $X^2(4) = 73.14, p < .001 \ (r_{\text{equivalent}} = .30)$; race or ethnicity explicitly clarified as either race or ethnicity, $X^2(6) = 66.19, p < .001 \ (r_{\text{equivalent}} = .28)$; race or ethnicity stated in alphabetical order, $X^2(6) = 53.16, p < .001 \ (r_{\text{equivalent}} = .25)$; and race or ethnicity stated in relation to largest study group, $X^2(2) = 84.92, p < .001 \ (r_{\text{equivalent}} = .32)$. In those studies where race or ethnicity was reported, significant changes in percentages over the decades for explicitly stated identifiers were 4.5%, 12.4%, and 30.3% for the 1980s, 1990s, and the current decade, respectively. The “jump” in the current decade occurred mostly in JTPE because race or ethnicity was explicitly identified more in JTPE (55.8%) and much less so (15.7%) for APAQ (Figure 3).

With respect to race clarification, there was no incidence of reporting in the 1980s, 2% in the 1990s, and 3% in the current decade. Further, ethnicity clarification demonstrated a similar trend from no reporting in the 1980s to 5% in the 1990s, and 16% over the first half of this decade. The use of race and/or ethnicity identifiers in relation to alphabetical order and the largest group first has also increased slightly. But, 71% of the studies from the two journals still failed to report race or ethnicity in 2000-2005.

Combining studies from APAQ and JTPE, race and/or ethnicity were identified a total of 125 times. Of these mentions, Whites (59.2%) were typically identified

![Figure 3](image-url) —Percentage of data-based articles that identified participants’ race or ethnicity.
first in order over African American/Black (33.6%), Asian (2.4%), and Hispanic (4.0%) participants. That is, $X^2(3) = 111.56, p < .001$ ($r_{equivalent} = .94$) indicated that overall, White participants were more likely to be reported first over the other ethnic groups. However, much of this effect is due to the high proportion of JTPE articles demonstrating this effect. Specifically, JTPE contributors identified White (68.2%) participants first in order before African American/Black (25.9%), Hispanic (3.5%), and Asian (2.4%) participants. In contrast, APAQ contributors more often identified African American/Black (50%) participants first in order before White (40%), Hispanic (5%), and Asian (2.5%) participants. These proportions demonstrated a significant difference between journals in race and/or ethnicity reporting, $X^2(1) = 10.056, p < .01$ ($r_{equivalent} = .29$).

Frequently, APAQ and JTPE text mixed or confused race with ethnic status identifiers. That is, they identified participants as Caucasian (i.e., race identifier) as opposed to, for example, European American or Italian American (i.e., ethnic identifier). They also referred to “other” participants by ethnic status rather than race identifiers (e.g., African American, Mexican American). At other times, contributors reported “predominantly White students,” “predominantly White and middle-class,” and “predominantly Caucasian,” while not identifying “other” ethnic groups in the sample. A similar tendency was noted where contributors simply generalized by using such descriptions as “ethnic minority status” and “nonethnic minority status.” Further, although Hispanic participants may be of any race and of various ethnicities, contributors to both journals rarely clarified their use of the term Hispanic.

**Socioeconomic Status**

As a variable reported in studies found in APAQ and JTPE, socioeconomic status (SES) has been operationally defined in several ways; few studies reported SES variables. Specifically, 1.5% of the data-based studies from both journals utilized free lunch recipients as an indicator of SES, 1% considered average family income, 1% used direct reporting of SES, and 6.5% utilized geographic location to include estimates of SES in describing samples. There was no statistical significance between APAQ and JTPE in reporting SES variables.

**Discussion**

Our first research question was, “How are samples identified with regard to description of gender?” We found that in both APAQ and JTPE, the tendency was to identify participants who were mostly White from a male-oriented approach. Typically men and boys were identified first in order and women and girls second, this typifies a male-dominant paradigm (Gordon, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2000). In other words, typical of a male-dominant culture is the prioritizing of the male as first, as head, as the lead. We see this prioritizing of boys and men over girls and women, whether done so intentionally or unintentionally, in scholarship as well as in our daily conversations with common phrases such as men and women, husband and wife, boys and girls, and so on. This tendency was obvious across each of the decades analyzed and has occurred despite scholarship leading to a greater awareness and understanding of issues associated with gender equality in sport and
physical activity contexts. Possibly this is because poststructuralist, critical, and feminist scholarship mostly appeared in the physical education literature in the late 1990s to present day (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003; Azzarito & Solmon, 2005, 2006; Bruening, 2005; Cothran & Ennis, 1999; Gorely, Holroyd, & Kirk, 2003; Oliver, 2001; Oliver & Lalik, 2004; Wright, 1995). Perhaps the latter half of the current decade will show more sensitive handling of gender identity of participants. To date, this has occurred more so in studies in JTPE than studies in APAQ (Azzarito & Solmon, 2006; Oliver & Lalik, 2004; Wright, 1995).

On Research Question 2, “How are samples identified with regard to description of race and/or ethnicity?” this documentary analysis provides evidence of problematized trends in data-based studies published in APAQ and JTPE. Specifically, most articles neglected to provide data on participants’ race and/or ethnicity, which again typifies a White male, monocultural, dominant and normative paradigm (Messner, 1992). Moreover when used, scholars commonly mislabel race as interchangeable with ethnicity.

Encouraging, however, there has been an ascending trend of reporting race and ethnicity throughout the past decade by contributors to JTPE and less so in APAQ. Contributors to articles published in APAQ tend not to identify race and/or ethnicity variables, but rather tend to identify and describe participants in terms of disability, gender, and age variables. The use of race and/or ethnicity identifiers in relation to alphabetical order and with the largest group first also has increased slightly over the time span. But much less informative, a few contributors simply referred to minority and/or majority status (Hodge & Jansma, 1999). For example, some contributors identified participants in general terms as “ethnic minority status . . . and nonethnic minority status” (Hodge & Jansma, 1999). These types of descriptions provide no useful information for generalizing or replicating this research.

Problematic as well, although Hispanic participants may be of any race and various ethnicities, contributors to either journal rarely clarified their use of the term Hispanic. In this regard, Azzarito and Solmon (2006) confirmed that approaching experiences of students and teachers in physical education “as acontextual and acultural and treating race and gender as isolated categories within homogeneous groups and unspecific contexts are among the shortcoming of physical education research” (p. 75). To make claims about generalization of findings or transferability of findings with such flaws would be speculative and reflective of a Eurocentric or Euro-American paradigm (Azzarito & Solmon, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Padilla & Lindholm, 1995).

In APAQ, Sutlive and Ulrich (1998) and Sherrill and O’Connor (1999) stressed the importance of fully describing participants for both generalization and replication purposes. Despite this call, 71% of the data-based studies we analyzed from both APAQ and JTPE neglected to report on race or ethnicity from 2000 to 2005. Neither claims about generalization nor transferability of findings have much meaning if and when participants are not fully described. Given that the intersection of race, gender, disability, and social class does matter (Gillborn, 2006), scholars are obligated to pay attention to these and other variables such as SES, geographical location, and individuals’ social positioning (e.g., dominant or marginalized status; Bruening, 2005; Cothran & Ennis, 1999). “Most White people would probably be surprised by the idea of ‘White world’; they see only the ‘world’. Its White-ness is invisible to them because the racialized nature of politics, policing, education,
and every other sphere of public life is so deeply ingrained that it has become normalized—unremarked and taken for granted” (Gillborn, 2006, p. 173). This quote situates our position that we must no longer neglect to include and properly represent the voices, wisdoms, and experiences of persons from culturally diverse groups in our epistemologies, polices, and professional preparation programs.

Repeated oversight to properly and fully identify participants’ race and/or ethnicity is also problematized from the standpoint of perpetuating the hegemonic assumption of a “White standard reference group.” This perpetuates the notion that the White and typically male, middle-class American is the normative standard against which other groups should be compared (Gordon, 1995). Historically, according to Padilla and Lindholm (1995), White authors from a monocultural perspective have used White and typically middle-class students as the normative population in much of their research. Our analysis lends support to this claim specific to scholarship in physical education. Padilla and Lindholm argued that this approach lends itself to a narrow database that results in biased conclusions on substantive educational outcomes that are problematic even for White samples that differ (e.g., persons with disabilities) from the normative group. The problem is exacerbated if instruments and procedures used are not suited to groups who do not share all the demographics of the normative group.

Certainly there has been some progress, particularly with an emergence of scholarship on issues of physical activity, gender, and race in urban settings (Cothran & Ennis, 1999; Ennis, 1994; McCaughray, Martin, Hodges-Kulinna, & Cothran, 2006) and rural and suburban areas (Azzarito & Solmon, 2006). In *JTPE*, for example, Cothran and Ennis (1999) found that a diversity of students (some 95% African American student body with smaller percentages of Asian, European American, Hispanic, and Native American students) at a large urban high school felt socially detached and thus unwilling to engage in physical education. Also appearing in *JTPE*, Azzarito and Solmon (2006) reported that students’ socially constructed bodily meanings in physical education differed by race and gender. Our point in highlighting these two studies is that we still have much to learn in physical education by studying such issues as body meanings associated with race and gender, urban education, cultural diversity, SES, social and educational inequities, and legal, political, and moral injustices, and so on.

All these issues are particularly relevant, although not limited, to research involving students of color and students who are socially and economically disadvantaged. It is well known that students of color, including those with disabilities, comprise an ever-increasing proportion of urban public schools that most often are schools with high levels of low-income families (NCDTF, 2004). In contrast, White students are more likely to attend schools in suburban and rural communities and less likely to attend schools in high-poverty communities (Borman et al., 2004; Orfield & Eaton, 1996; USDE, 2006). Moreover, although students of color, particularly African American, are overrepresented in some disability categories, White students represent the majority of students who receive special education services (IDEA, 1997). Given these realities, researchers must be mindful of the challenges they face in conducting research with a diverse participant population. These challenges can be addressed only by properly identifying, describing, and representing members of these diverse communities.
Specific to Research Question 3, “How are samples identified with regard to description of socioeconomic status?” we found that typically contributors to APAQ and JTPE failed to report SES data. A few studies gave information on free lunch recipients and average family income as indicators of SES; direct reporting of SES was seldom used. In designing research studies, it is important to consider such variables as geographic location and population demographics and to reflect on how these variables might impact the findings. Geographical location was used as an estimation of SES in a few studies. National data shows that there exist a higher proportion of residents of color living in poverty in urban communities compared to mostly Whites who live in suburban communities (USDE, 1996, 2006). But to simply identify participants as those from urban, suburban, or rural contexts is insufficient on the question of SES. Experts believe that SES variables should be defined by individual family incomes and social context, not merely resident location (Borman et al., 2004; Desimone, 2001). Desimone (2001) asserted that “it is widely acknowledged that generalization to an ‘average’ student can be misleading, generalization to an ‘average’ Black, Hispanic, or low-income student can be equally misleading” (p. 25).

Guidelines for Research and Professional Practice

Arguably, the problematized trends that emerged from this analysis were a reflection of a dominant cultural approach to conducting and reporting research in the two journals analyzed. To counter this, properly identifying and describing participants’ gender, race, or ethnicity, and SES should become common practice in APE. Important also is the necessity of discerning between race and ethnicity; as these represent two different constructs, yet so often are reported as one and the same. Future studies must attend to these issues. The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2001, p. 61) states that

As an organization, APA is committed both to science and to the fair treatment of individuals and groups, and policy requires authors of APA publications to avoid perpetuating demeaning attitudes and biased assumptions about people in their writing. Construction that might imply bias against persons on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, disability, or age should be avoided.

In support of this position, we encourage contributors to APAQ and JTPE to carefully review and adhere to the guidelines identified and discussed within the APA Publication Manual (2001) on pages 61-76. In this study, we have highlighted gender, race, ethnicity, and SES and will make a few comments for future research specific to these variables.

On Gender

In those studies where variables believed to be associated with some biological dimensions of maleness and/or femaleness are deemed relevant to the inquiry the use of the term sex to distinguish participants is acceptable. However, gender is
a more commonly used term in today’s discourse. Since the 1980s, gender has become a preferred term to *sex* to refer to a socially constructed pattern of behavior recognized as feminine or masculine (Kirk, 2003). Use of the term gender implies a recognizing of a person’s social, cultural, ethnical, and bodied identities (Gorely et al., 2003; Kirk, 2003).

**On Race and Ethnicity**

In general, we support the guidelines articulated by APA (2001) with regard to racial and ethnic identity (see pages 67-69) and agree that specificity and sensitivity in identifying participants is essential. But we do have a point of departure from their position that

"Part of writing without bias is recognizing that differences should be mentioned *only when relevant*. Marital status, sexual orientation, racial and ethnic identity, or the fact that a person has a disability should not be mentioned gratuitously. (APA, 2001, p. 63, emphasis added)

From a critical perspective, we would assert that race and ethnic identity is *always* relevant to the proper identification, description, and representation of participants. In the dominant paradigm, persons of color have been neglected, marginalized, and excluded from research epistemologies but scholars can counter this by properly identifying and representing the voices and lived experiences of such persons (Messner, 1992). In the “essence of ‘voice’—the assertion and acknowledgement of the importance of the personal and community experiences of people of colour as sources of knowledge” (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005a, p. 10) is critical to our researching, understanding, valuing, and educating increasingly larger and more diverse school populations and societies.

Moreover, typical of White male hegemony is the positioning of White individuals, particularly men, as the normative group (Gordon, 1995), which is reflected in the tendency to identify White participants first in order whenever race and/or ethnicity are identified in published studies. To avoid this tendency, authors should consider the use of race and ethnicity identifiers in alphabetical order (e.g., African American, European American, and Mexican American) or order from the largest to smallest group or vice versa. The point here is to avoid *always* identifying White participants as first in order.

**On Socioeconomic Status**

Within its guidelines, APA (2001) does not speak directly to issues associated with SES variables. Nonetheless, research shows that SES using such indicators as family income and eligibility for free or reduced school lunch does matter in student achievement (Desimone, 2001; USDE, 1996, 2006) including students with disabilities and those disadvantaged (USDE, 2003, 2006) in physical activity settings (Goodway & Rudisill, 1997). Our position is that SES indicators are relevant to the proper identification, description, and representation of a diversity of participants and should commonly be reported. In their study, Goodway and Rudisill (1997) provide a good example of reporting SES and other relevant variables.
Summary

Positioned as critical scholars, we agree that “no picture can be considered final when the perspectives and narratives of so many are missing or distorted to serve dominant majority interests” (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000, p. 1057). In physical education, as indicated in the current study findings, scholars have largely ignored issues related to (a) the proper identification, description, and selection of culturally diverse samples and (b) researchers have failed to recognize the heterogeneity existing within culturally diverse groups. It is encouraging that progress has occurred over the histories of both journals, but far less progress has been made than is desirable. In future studies, researchers should be mindful of the aforementioned guidelines as well as Sutlive and Ulrich’s (1998) and Sherrill and O’Connor’s (1999) guidelines for improving APAQ research. We believe that if physical education scholars pay attention to these issues socially just change will occur. We also believe that forms of discourse other than research should follow these guidelines as well. Ideally, this should result in contributions to social justice by all individuals.

References


**Authors’ Notes**

1. *Hegemony* refers to domination, control, power structures, and authority. Typical of White male hegemony is the positioning of boys and men as the authority or normative group (Gordon, 1995) as head, as the lead. The prioritizing of boys and men over girls and women occurs, whether intentionally or unintentionally, in our daily lives. For example in daily conversations we tend to use such common phrases in order as men and women, husband and wife, boys and girls, and so on.

2. *Gender* is a social construct and increasingly has become a preferred term to *sex* to refer to patterns of behavior recognized as feminine or masculine, which implies a valuing or at least recognizing of person’s psychosocial, cultural, ethnical, and bodied identities (Gorely, Holroyd, & Kirk, 2003; Kirk, 2003).

3. *Race* is a social construct used to categorize individuals based on usually visible biological features, although not supported by genetic indicators, such as skin color, facial features, and so on (Coakley, 2004; Loury, 2002).

4. *Ethnicity* refers to cultural traditions and languages, family ancestry, and historical background and practices (e.g., African American, Asian American, Italian American, and Mexican American people; Coakley, 2004).

5. *Culture* represents “ways of life” practices, traditions, and behaviors. Culture cuts across race and ethnicity and is largely associated with levels of socioeconomic status, social positioning, and family histories (Coakley, 2004).

6. The U.S. Census uses the race *alone-or-in-combination* to identify single-race population estimates plus all persons who are of the specific race in combination with any other race.

7. The term *Black* is used by the U.S. Census Bureau in reference mostly to African Americans in United States of America and other people of African ancestry.

8. Because *Hispanics* may be of any race, data reported by the U.S. Census Bureau for Hispanics overlap slightly with data for the Asian/Pacific American, Black, Native American, and White populations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003).

9. The term *White* is used by the U.S. Census Bureau and similarly we use the terms White and White American rather than European American to recognize Anglo (White) descendants from European countries, as well as, those who have ancestry of non-European countries including Hispanic origins.

10. The category *White alone, non-Hispanic* is used by the U.S. Census Bureau to identify people who are White and no other race and who are not Hispanic.

11. We used the terms *ethnic minority* or *minorities* to capture a particular point or cite other published papers or reports. But we prefer to avoid these terms in identifying individuals or ethnic group status regarding people of color (e.g., African American) because the terms (a) lack global validity and (b) often impart a negative connotation toward such individuals (Coakley, 2004).