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Guest Editors' Introduction to the Special Issue, Diversity in Aquatics

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Cover Page Footnote

As the Founding Editor of the International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education (IJARE), I wish to acknowledge and thank the special issue editors and the authors for their contributions in creating this groundbreaking first-ever special issue, "Diversity in Aquatics." Specifically, I recognize and congratulate the three special issue editors, Angela Beale-Tawfeeq (Rowan University), Steven Waller (University of Tennessee-Knoxville), and Austin Anderson (University of Southern Indiana) for proposing the Diversity in Aquatics special issue and for their successful efforts in reviewing, editing, and pulling this issue together, without which it would not exist. Terrific job, one and all!

Guest Editors' Introduction to the Special Issue, *Diversity in Aquatics*

The *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education (IJARE)* is dedicated to advancing the knowledge and practices of human aquatic professionals worldwide. This special issue of the journal represents a coordinated and collaborative effort among various aquatic stakeholders to examine issues of diversity as part of a holistic effort to address drowning as a “neglected public health” issue. Stemming from a “Call to Action” during the 2017 Diversity in Aquatics Convention in Miami, Florida, the goal of this special issue was to highlight various research topics, historical perspectives, and plans of action surrounding and impacting diversity in aquatics.

[Diversity in Aquatics \(DIA\)](#) is the largest network of ethnically diverse aquatic researchers, practitioners, professionals, athletes, and enthusiasts in the U.S.A. working together to help save lives. Founded in 2006, Diversity in Aquatics advocates for empowering communities through shared efforts to eliminate the drowning and access disparity present among historically underrepresented populations.

The goal of this special issue is to bring the voices of diversity to the current body of scholarly work in aquatics, voices which at times have been largely overlooked. As readers will certainly discover, the aim of this work is to have an impact on mainstream aquatic, public health, and educational sectors. The special issue editors and authors are as diverse as a patchwork quilt, which in the African American tradition, among other ethnicities, populations, and cultures, has been used to provide a unique record of cultural and political past, important contributions, and to record the value of heritage and history. We invite readers of this special issue to explore the scholarly work of these diverse authors who serve as university faculty, students, and professionals in the areas of recreation, public health, physical education, sports, and law in addition to roles as aquatic professionals, lifeguards, water safety instructors, coaches, authors, reviewers, volunteers, and consultants.

This special issue provides a platform to share insights from empirical research (including quantitative, qualitative, intervention, or community-based studies), research notes, and theoretical/educational papers. Analyses of aquatic involvement, water safety education policy and practices, and historical underpinnings of aquatic participation from diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives are presented. This issue features two original research articles, four research notes, which show the continued desire to add to the scholarly brain trust in aquatics yet to be fully explored, and three thought-provoking educational research articles. We believe that this issue represents

powerful informed voices addressing drowning, social justice, and aquatic inequities as a “neglected public health threat,” in need of public policy change.

Original Research Articles

In the issue’s opening research article, entitled “We Just Treat Everyone the Same: LGBTQ Aquatic Management Strategies, Barriers and Implementation,” Austin R. Anderson (University of Southern Indiana) and Eric Knee, William D. Ramos, and Tiffany Monique Quash (all at Indiana University – Bloomington) examine the management strategies in aquatic venues in numerous areas (e.g., facilities, programming, human resource management, marketing, policies) as they pertain to LGBTQ participants and their participation. The study employed in-depth semi-structured interviews with 16 aquatic managers to examine steps that currently are in use (or are lacking) when it comes to creating environments that are perceived to be open, or closed, to LGBTQ participants. The authors offer multiple strategies that can aid managers in the creation of inclusive environments for LGBTQ participant populations.

In the second research article, Mariett Teixeira Matias (*MEMOS-Université Catholique de Louvain*) and Milena M. Parent (University of Ottawa) deliver an intriguing qualitative examination of global para-swimming programming in their paper, “Developing and Implementing a Community-level Para-Swimming Program.” Using a thorough examination of documents and semi-structured interviews with a variety of leaders in para-swimming, the authors propose conditions that are best practices for successful community-level para-swimming programs through integration and inclusion in normative aquatic programming.

Research Notes

The purpose of the research notes is to share current research in action. Boyer (1997) stated that scholarly research ought to enhance one’s ability to create new and valuable information that will be beneficial in one’s field based upon the life patterns of individuals and their passions. Therefore, as readers, we invite you to embrace Boyer’s model of the scholarships of integration and application as you read these four research notes.

In “Conflicted: An Autoethnography on Researching the Minority Swimming Gap,” author Dawn M. Norwood of Wingate University successfully examines reflexivity within her own research on the minority swimming gap (and hair!). Norwood offers an extremely rich and detailed description of her own research and its larger place in minority aquatic scholarship.

Knolan C. Rawlins, Delaware State University, captures the initial steps of a university community-based collaborative trying not only to save the lives of students on campus, but those within the broader community they serve as well. “Reestablishing a Culture of Water Competency at an Historically Black College and University (HBCU)” seeks to add to the current body of literature on university-community partnerships as it addresses drowning as a public health threat. The history of swimming at HBCUs debunks the myth that African-Americans do not participate in nor value aquatic physical activity. Whether through competitive programming or instructional swimming, he shows that attempts made to recapture and support this “lost” history will have a beneficial societal impact.

Tiffany Monique Quash, a graduate student at Indiana University–Bloomington, in her note, “Swimming Through the Waves: Black Collegiate Swimmers and their Experiences,” examines the lived experiences of black collegiate swimmers from both historically Black colleges and universities and predominantly white institutions. By using a case study methodology that included semi-structured interviews, she explores what it means to be a black collegiate swimmer. Probing family history, swimming experiences, financial and personal costs to participate in swimming, and stereotypes associated with black collegiate swimmers, Quash’s findings offer new insights into the difficulties and barriers faced by black collegiate swimmers as well as their accomplishments.

In the final research note entitled “Modeling Initial Participation of Diverse Communities in Competitive Swimming,” Dane W. Wolfrom and Emily J. Murray (both at Western Washington University) and Angela M. Dominguez (Pacific Lutheran University) introduce the “Initial Participation Model” that proposes that participation in an activity is built upon commitment as a function of enjoyment, feelings of inclusion, and opportunities for involvement. The specific focus of the paper investigates how current deficiencies in adopting an inclusive culture in the world of competitive swimming may discourage continuing participation in competitive swimming among historically underrepresented populations (e.g., Black, Hispanic, Latino, Native American, low-socioeconomic communities) and reinforce existing stereotypes.

Educational Articles

Angela K. Beale-Tawfeeq (Rowan University), Austin Anderson (University of Southern Indiana), and William D. Ramos (Indiana University-Bloomington) challenge the aquatics community to become strategic in their thinking and actions toward addressing the global public health threat of drownings. Their informative article, “A Cause to Action: Learning to Develop a Culturally

Responsive/Relevant Approach to 21st Century Water Safety Messaging through Collaborative Partnerships,” calls for multi-sector collaborative efforts that include culturally- and linguistically-diverse stakeholders to support water safety awareness in communities. In their article they propose that water safety education ought to be approached using a social justice lens to inform the programming and collaborative partnerships.

Kevin Dawson (University of California, Merced), in his paper, “Parting the Waters of Bondage: African Americans’ Aquatic Heritage,” presents a fascinating history of the importance and value of swimming (and water) in African cultures, and the impact of those traditions on American history. Dawson uses this deep and impactful consideration of aquatic traditions to “challenge notions that swimming is historically ‘un-black’,” as is often postulated in contemporary America.

In the third and final educational research article, Steven N. Waller and James H. Bemiller (both at The University of Tennessee-Knoxville) present an historical look at discrimination in American public aquatic settings through a legal lens in their paper, “Navigating Rough Waters: Public Swimming Pools, Discrimination, and the Law.” Through the examination of significant case and statutory law, the authors successfully “examine the social pattern of discrimination that has stymied the growth of swimming in minority communities across the US.”

Both history and scholarly literature have shown the linkage as well as the positive and negative impact of social determinants on diverse populations in the broad areas of athletics, education, health, economics, and social conditions. As readers, we are hopeful that this groundbreaking special issue challenges you to answer this “Call to Action,” to save lives and create global change especially in water safety and drowning prevention. As we presented earlier, this special issue of “Diversity in Aquatics” is just an initial patch of a much larger quilt that we intend to sew to save lives. We urge you to read and submit future manuscripts to *IJARE* as one means to expand the aquatic literature aimed at bringing awareness to the need for global social change to improve worldwide health, water safety, and opportunity for all persons.

Reference

Boyer, E. L. (1997). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.