Your New Editor

At this writing it has been almost 6 months since I accepted the invitation to become the editor of Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly (APAQ) and 5 months since I started becoming involved in editorial decisions. I thank the APAQ Editorial Board (EB) and Human Kinetics for their trust and faith in my ability to build on the work of my predecessors, important luminaries in the field of adapted physical activity. It is humbling and inspiring to be entrusted with the future of APAQ and to play a role in our important field of study.

I have three major purposes in writing this editorial. The first is to introduce myself to readers of APAQ. The second is to report on some preliminary observations about research submissions to the journal and how readers can address the issues I enumerate. Finally, I wish to share my vision for how to improve the quality and impact of APAQ.

I perceive myself to have an unusual background for an adapted physical activity scholar. I completed my PhD in sport and exercise psychology in 1992 under the guidance of Dr. Diane Gill at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. In that same year I started my present position at Wayne State University (WSU) and, with some chagrin, admit that I knew nothing about disability sport, adapted physical activity, or adapted physical education. Carol Mushett, a prominent disability scholar and advocate, who was also at WSU, was quick to cure me of my ignorance. Attendance at two week-long summer-camp disability sport competitions in Scotland and England and seeing the joy experienced by children participating in sport was an emotionally moving experience. At the same time I recognized that scientists in sport and exercise psychology, with some rare exceptions, had produced very little research involving individuals with disabilities and that there was clearly a need for development of the knowledge base in the area. The disability sport camp experience and the dearth of research were my dual impetuses to devote my academic career to studying disability sport and exercise psychology.

Prominent individuals in the field and involved in APAQ, such as Claudine Sherrill, Greg Reid, and Dale Ulrich, welcomed me and were, and continue to be, supportive. Over the last 25 years disability sport and exercise psychology has become my major line of research as I have tried to bring sport and exercise psychology into the world of disability. Simultaneously, I have also sought to bring disability sport and adapted physical activity into the sport and exercise psychology world. I often find myself straddling both areas as I publish and present in the disciplines’ respective journals and conferences. Back in the early 1990s it was extremely rare to find an edited sport and exercise psychology text with a chapter on adapted physical activity or disability sport. Today it is quite common to see book chapters devoted to disability and very gratifying to see the discipline of sport and exercise psychology recognize the involvement of people with disabilities in sport and physical activity.
APAQ Challenges and Potential Solutions

Despite previous experience as an Editor (Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology) and as an Associate Editor at four different journals, I have quickly realized that APAQ is unique. This uniqueness brings with it a series of challenges and opportunities to improve the well-being of the journal. As many readers know, APAQ publishes articles that span, to mention a few example disciplines, physical education, biomechanics, exercise physiology, sport psychology, and sociology. APAQ also publishes research that, broadly speaking, can be classified as both quantitative and qualitative in nature. The methods and philosophy of science behind each are different, although those differences tend to be exaggerated while similarities are often ignored (Martin, 2011). I have also noted that authors of submissions to APAQ come from a host of disciplines aside from those mentioned previously. For instance, researchers aligned with rehabilitation, medicine, health, recreation, and leisure, as well as experts in specific disabilities (e.g., spinal-cord injury), submit papers to APAQ. Finally, APAQ clearly has an international reputation, as authors come from countries spanning the globe.

This observation comes with some challenges for authors, reviewers, and editors of APAQ. For instance, researchers for whom English is not their native language are faced with the extra responsibility of soliciting English experts to help them write their articles. In 2016 we received submissions from authors in 26 different countries. Certainly the APAQ reviewers and EB and Human Kinetics professionals, often behind the scenes, are critical to getting manuscripts into good shape. Ultimately, however, it is the author’s responsibility to make strong and good-faith efforts to ensure that their research efforts are well written. I should also note that many English-first authors, including myself, often have difficulty spinning a grammatically correct phrase. APAQ is not unique in facing the challenge inherent in poorly written papers (Jiwa et al., 2011). For example, 30% of the submissions to the Australasian Medical Journal contained major grammatical errors. Authors from backgrounds such as medicine are reminded that their submissions must adhere to the standards contained in the American Psychological Association publication manual. It is disheartening to send submissions back to authors when these guidelines have been completely ignored. The number of authors who appear to ignore the page-limitation guidelines offered on the APAQ Web site is also surprising.

Another observation that has become apparent to me, and a challenge I often face in my own research in the area, is related to sample size. It can be difficult in many research studies to recruit an adequate sample size. I recall early in my career going to multiple road races over a 3-year period to eventually obtain an adequate sample size for a study I was conducting on wheelchair road racers. While the causes of small samples are understandable, they are, nonetheless, a design weakness. One way to offset small samples is for researchers to get creative in their designs and conduct more research examining within-subject longitudinal change (e.g., Giacobbi et al., 2006).

The most pernicious outcome of small samples can be found in the underpowered analyses of those studies. When multiple nonsignificant findings are reported, albeit with moderate effect sizes, reviewers and potential readers cannot know if the results are a function of the study being underpowered or if the null hypothesis truly reflects the phenomenon of interest. Authors are urged to conduct