

The prism of culture: Seeing through the lens of globally situated sport psychology professionals

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The current study was undertaken to develop an understanding of how sport psychology professionals (SPPs) attribute meaning to the concept of culture within the context of their scholarly and applied work. Researchers examined how 25 internationally located SPPs described the construct of culture using Hill's (2012) Consensual Qualitative Research. Their description of culture, which was grounded in their professional and personal experience within the sport psychology field, entailed three domains: (a) the multifaceted meaning of culture; (b) cultural development as the result of internal processes; and (c) cultural development as a contextual social interaction. These SPPs' description of culture also helped us to identify some of the key aspects that may be considered relevant to conceptualize culture within the sport psychology professional context. SPPs could benefit from exploring and integrating these key aspects as a way to engage in culturally grounded applied and scholarly sport psychology practice.

KEY WORDS: Sport Psychology Practitioners, Sport Psychology Scholars, Culture, Cultural Competence.

The globalization of sport has led to an increased interaction between sport psychology professionals (SPPs) and athletes from a variety of cultural backgrounds (Ryba, Stambulova, & Ronkainen, 2016). The diversity in life stories that an SPP may encounter has resulted in the need for SPPs to understand their own cultural background as well as those of their clients, the context in which they work in, and how the interaction of similarities and

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differences between these cultural boundaries (e.g., Gill & Kamphoff, 2009; Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013). Consequentially, scholars have stressed the importance of SPPs developing the cultural competence needed to develop interventions and research projects that reflect the culturally diverse backgrounds of clients and participants they work with and understand how to work within cultural contexts that are dissimilar to their own (Parham, 2008; 2013; Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane, 2012). An increasing number of SPPs now recognize the need to explore the central role of culture in their work (e.g., David, Steinfeldt, Miller, & Hyman, 2019; McGannon & Smith, 2015; Ryba et al., 2013). SPPs have also begun to pay greater attention to culture as a foundational aspect of performers' well-being, engagement, and performance outcomes (McGannon, Schinke, & Busanich, 2014; Terry, 2009). However, scholars have pointed out that many SPPs continue to explore, understand, and describe culture from a taken for granted Eurocentric perspective (Butryn, 2002; Hagan & Schack, 2019; Ryba & Schinke, 2009). Thus, Ryba et al. (2013) called for a new way of thinking about sport, its participants, and the professionals involved. They highlighted the importance of appreciating the diversity and complexity of their culturally contextualized experiences. Describing and understanding the diverse conceptualizations of culture can facilitate the development of culturally competent research and practice, instead of trying to fit individuals into pre-determined frameworks (Ryba et al., 2013).

Defining culture has proven to be challenging because of the complexity of the construct, itself. Some researchers have suggested that one singular definition may not be optimal (e.g., Jahoda, 2012). Jahoda (2012) explained that culture is not a singular conceptual object, but a social construct with a multitude of definitions that can be incompatible. Jahoda (2012) also identified two existing main approaches to the construct of culture: (1) culture as external and (2) culture as internal or internal and external. Culture as external refers to the relationship between culture and the "social system." This view is based on the idea of culture as a changing environment, not keeping in consideration the interaction between the individuals and their cultural context. Other definitions place the importance on both the internal and the external aspects of culture. These definitions consider the beliefs and actions of individuals while also considering the environments surrounding them (Jahoda, 2012).

Within sport psychology (SP) Crurickshank and Collins (2012) proposed defining culture as the shared values, beliefs, expectations, and practices of a defined group. However, other researchers have argued that their definition is limited to the viewpoint of "team culture" and ignores the more

complex aspects of culture (McDougall, Nesti, Richardson, & Littlewood, 2017; Nesti, 2010; Nesti, Littlewood, O'Halloran, Eubank, & Richardson, 2012). McDougall et al. (2017) have argued that those in SP have skipped the step of defining culture and instead have gone straight into what they define as "culture change." The examination of change in culture operates on the assumption that culture must be a static construct that is generalizable to a specific group of people. This is problematic for some researchers who have advocated for conceptualizing culture as a dynamic construct that reflects the continuing development of an individual's ideas about oneself, one's culture, the cultural background of those one interacts with, and surrounding contexts (Schinke, Fisher, Kamphoff, Gould, & Oglesby, 2016).

Cultural competence has been defined as the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with people from cultures or belief systems in some way(s) unique from one's own and developing culturally relevant skills and knowledge so as to forge effective working relationships (Rodolfa, Bent, Eisman, Nelson, Rehm, & Ritchie, 2005). Cultural competence is generally understood as encompassing cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills (Sue, Sue, Neville, & Smith, 2019). Cultural competence is one of the factors considered foundational for engaging in the process of recognizing participants' cultural backgrounds, understood as the result of complex intersections of different cultural sites and identities (e.g., Fisher & Anders, 2019; Gill & Kamphoff, 2010). SPPs have previously reported only receiving limited training regarding cultural competence and perceived the training they have received to be non-satisfactory in addressing their research and/or applied practice needs (Quartioli, Vosloo, Fisher, & Schinke, 2020). As a project team we have previously found that SPPs' who report lower levels of color-blindness and higher level of commitment to, and exploration of, their own ethnic identity, have higher levels of perceived cultural competence. However, these predictors explained a third of the variance, indicating that there were other factors involved in this process. We proposed that one of the possible explanations for the aforementioned lack of variance might be unclear descriptions of what the term culture means (Quartioli et al., 2020).

Cultural sport psychology (CSP) scholars offered a variety of definitions of culture and ways to study culture (e.g., Ronkainen & Blodgett, 2020). However, existing definitions refer to the value of culture within the encounter between SPPs and their clients or participants (Ryba & Schinke, 2009). CSP scholars have highlighted the importance of SPPs integrating culture into the conceptualization, design, and implementation of research projects and/or applied interventions (Ronkainen & Blodgett, 2020). Researchers have rarely focused on how SPPs attribute meaning to the term culture within the context of their professional careers. While a definitive definition of culture might not

be possible, a better understanding of what “culture” means to scholars and applied sport psychology professionals will help augment cultural awareness and competence in SPPs (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2015; McDougall et al., 2017). Therefore, our purpose was to examine how globally situated SPPs, who identified their work as culturally grounded, define culture and have developed their awareness of what culture means in the context of their practice. Our goal in this project is to develop a clear understanding of how SPPs attribute meaning to the construct of culture. We hope to contribute to the promotion of culturally-centered research and practice. The findings of this study could help training programs to better prepare future SPPs to develop their own cultural awareness and knowledge and therefore potentially being able to engage in more culturally grounded sport psychology applied and scholarly work. With this study, we aimed to answer to two research questions: (a) how do SPPs define culture? and (b) how did SPPs develop their awareness of culture?

Methodology

This study was conducted from a critical realist ontological position in which culture was assumed to be a mind-independent reality. Ontologically, those who embrace critical realism argue for a threefold stratification of reality into the real, the actual, and the empirical (Bhaskar 1978; Fleetwood, 2014). The “real” is what exists. We believe that the construct of culture exists as a mind-independent reality, whether acknowledged by an individual or not (Fleetwood, 2014). The real domain consists of objects, structures, mechanisms, tendencies, rules and conventions that act as causal mechanisms outside of individuals’ consciousness. The real domain becomes an ‘actual’ reality when the possibility exists that an individual may observe the mechanism occurring as an event in their life. However, aligned with our epistemological position, we acknowledged that we would only be examining the empirical reality as expressed by SPPs in their descriptions of the connection between culture and the choices they made in the carrying out of their research and/or professional practice (Fleetwood, 2014).

We recognize that our knowledge about the nature of this reality could only be understood through the descriptions provided to us by those immersed in the field (i.e., a social constructivist epistemological position; Bhaskar, 1989; Danermark, Ekström, & Karlsson, 2019). We chose to use the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill, 2012) methodological approach to understand how globally-situated SPPs, who self-conceptualize their own sport psychology work as culturally grounded, describe, under-

stand, and experience culture in their applied and scholarly practice. The predominantly constructivist philosophical stance of CQR support its use as an effective approach to data collection and analysis for this study.

RESEARCH TEAM

Our team included six members assembled based on their areas of expertise, research interest, level of seniority, and nationality as well as other cultural identifiers. Alessandro (Ale) is an early mid-career researcher interested in studying professional development from an international and cultural perspective. He conceptualized the current study and led all phases of this study. Justine's expertise is in the area of professional development. In addition to her active role during the analysis of the data she also provided feedback on the final version of the manuscript. Ale and Justine engaged in the data analysis, developing a shared understanding of the SPPs' narratives from the perspective of our experiences in professional development research and our personal and professional interest in moving the discipline and profession of sport psychology toward being more culturally and internationally grounded. Robert has an extensive experience as a scholar and practitioner, working with Olympic athletes and professional sport clients in a variety of cultural contexts, across several countries. Acting as one of the external auditors, he provided feedback on the data analysis and extended guidance in the development of the manuscript. Shelby was brought in at a later time to provide new insight and to support the writing process. Her insight was grounded in her interests in diversity, inclusion, and advocacy within the profession. Leslee has extensive experience in developing SPPs and is also a qualitative scholar exploring the psychological and sociocultural factors that impact sport performance, participation, and well-being. In her role as external auditor, she provided insight to the construction of our results. She also provided feedback to the write-up of the final version of the manuscript. In their role as external auditors, Robert and Leslee challenged the team to reflect upon the results aiming to develop a deeper understanding of the SPPs' shared narratives. Robert enriched this work by providing feedback centered in his in-depth understanding of the complexity of intersecting identities, which he developed through his work with multicultural and multinational clients and participants. Leslee focused her feedback in her extensive expertise in critical theories and intersectional identities within the sport context. Thierry was invited to join the team at a later time to provide new insight about the paper and to support the writing process, due to his expertise in philosophy of science and cultural sport psychology.

PARTICIPANTS

After the study was approved by the first author's Institutional Review Board, we recruited SPPs using three online announcements posted on two professional online listservs. We then used a secondary purposive snow-ball sampling strategy (by asking volunteer participants to recommend other potential participants) (Handcock & Gile, 2011). The inclusion criteria to participate were: SPPs who completed graduate-level training in SP, who are working in SP (academia or practice) and who have accumulated some experience (not otherwise defined) working within contexts and with clients/participants from cultural backgrounds different from one's own.

There were 25 SPPs (12 females, 13 males) located in 10 different countries within four different continents (i.e., North America, $n = 12$, Asia, $n = 2$, Oceania, $n = 6$, Europe, $n = 5$). They ranged between 27 and 70 years of age ($M = 41.08$, $SD = 13.1$) and identified as White-Caucasian ($n = 23$) and Black ($n = 2$). Twenty of them held a doctoral degree while the remaining ($n = 5$) held a master's degree. Participants worked in academia ($n = 14$), as private practitioners ($n = 9$) or in both settings ($n = 2$). To protect our participants' anonymity, pseudonyms are used to represent their contributions throughout the results.

DATA COLLECTION

We employed semi-structured interviews as a means to facilitate the sharing of SPPs' stories and experience in relation to culture (Smith & Sparkes, 2016). Ale conducted all interviews using a semi-structured interview guide. Many of the participants had an existing relationship with the interviewer, which along with the commonly shared SP background and terminology, facilitated the conversation.

The study guide was developed collaboratively by the team starting from the existing literature. The guide was then piloted with one non-participant volunteer (excluded from the main analysis), and based on the feedback, a few semantic changes were made to enhance the fluency and clarity of the questions. Questions were developed to gain insight into SPPs' conceptualization of culture (e.g., "How would you define the concept of culture?") and into the personal meaning they attributed to the term culture (e.g., "What does culture mean to you?"), and how their conceptualization has changed throughout their careers (e.g., "How has your conceptualization of culture changed since you began your career?"). Finally, Ale also invited participants to recount the primary message they wanted to communicate about the importance of cultural competence in SP research and practice (i.e.,

“Given everything we talked about, what do you think is the most important message to take away from our conversation?”).

DATA ANALYSIS

All the interviews were conducted virtually using Skype (2014 Microsoft) and digitally recorded using eCamm (2014 Ecamm network, LLC). The interviews lasted between 48 and 97 minutes ($M = 57$) and were transcribed verbatim removing any identifying information (e.g., names, job placement, geographical location). Initially identified with a code (e.g., P012), SPPs were then assigned a pseudonym.

We then engaged in an inductive process which enabled us to explore the diverse descriptions of culture shared by the SPPs, without predetermined responses in mind (Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, Hess, & Ladany, 2005). First, data was analyzed by three members of the team, individually and then as a group (Ladany, Thomson, & Hill, 2012; Thompson, Vivino, & Hill, 2012). Precisely, each member first independently read the transcripts and identified domains (main topic areas), categories (domain specific sub-themes), and illustrative core ideas (summary of participants' key words and ideas). For each of these three phases, after each member worked through-out the transcripts individually, the group met to share the domains, categories, and core ideas developed and identified in the transcripts. The group discussed each individual's interpretation of the data and either reached consensual agreement upon one of the interpretations or developed an alternative, consensually accepted, interpretation of the data, often going back to the raw data. At the end of each analytic phase, the results were reviewed by the two senior members who functioned as external auditors and who provided feedback. The year-long analysis process included weekly meetings during which the research team engaged in a consensual process of data analysis. We engaged in this collaborative, structured, rigorous, and team-based approach remotely through Skype. The use of this remote platform provided the opportunity to assemble a group of researchers, with different and complementary backgrounds, expertise, and cultural frameworks, to engage in this analytic process (Quartiroli, Knight, Etzel, & Monaghan, 2017).

Authenticity and Rigor

We acknowledged that our subjectivities are inevitable and recognized that they influenced our analysis of the data (Hill, 2012). Striving to limit our

influence on the results, we shared our preconceptions with the team during our first meeting and regularly discussed our interpretations at length throughout the research process (Hill et al., 2005). Participating in open discussions, we engaged in a reciprocal checking process of our interpretations which allowed us to develop a clearer awareness of our own subjectivities (Hill et al., 2005). We acted as “critical friends,” engaging in “a critical dialogue between people, with researchers giving voice to their interpretations in relation to other people who listen and offer critical feedback” (Smith & McGannon, 2017, p.13). We achieved this by respectfully challenging each other’s viewpoints and offering alternative interpretations, frequently also returning to the raw data. Conversations continued until the group members were able to either agree with one of the views after further clarifications or to group-generate an alternative for the interpretation of the data.

Results and Discussion

Our exploration and consensual analysis resulted in three domains related to the construct of culture from the perspective of globally situated SPPs and how their conceptualizations of this construct have evolved throughout their careers. We present the SPPs’ shared description of culture and of how they have become aware of it, aiming to link their description to the current literature. Following CQR procedures, three domains came to light: (a) *Multifaceted meaning of culture*, (b) *How to become aware of culture through internal processes*; and (c) *How to become aware of culture through diverse experience and social interactions*. While the first domain was developed in response to the first research question, the second and the third domain addressed the second research question we developed for this study. Definitions of each category are presented in Tables I and II.

Domain I: Multifaceted Meaning of Culture

In response to the first research question, the description of culture shared by SPPs pointed to the complexity, developmental, and contextual nature of *culture*. Domain I included the categories of (a) situation and context; (b) visible/invisible and unique/shared factors; (c) shared norms, values, and beliefs; (d) shared behaviors, traditions, and customs; (e) personal experiences and journey; (f) process of negotiation; (g) perceived identities; and (h) developmental.

Participants stressed how their definition of culture is influenced by the contextual surrounding as well as by a combination of interconnected

aspects that can be detected and defined both by individuals and their communities. Illustrating this point, Aanisah explained how “the definition of culture will vary depending on the location you’re in,” while Noah placed his understanding of culture in, “the context within which a lot of people’s

TABLE I
Summary of Domains, Categories, and Core Ideas

Domains/Categories	Illustrative Core Idea
<i>Domain 1: Multifaceted meaning of culture</i>	
1. Situations and contexts	The result of the influence of the surrounding macro (i.e., historical and geographical; society) and micro (i.e., family) context, which permeates every aspect of life
2. Visible/invisible and unique/shared factors.	A combination of interconnected micro and macro aspects, similar and unique aspects across people that can (or not) be detected and defined by both individuals and the communities.
3. Shared norms, values, and beliefs	Defined by worldviews, beliefs, norms, values, morals, and ethics shared by a particular group of individuals.
4. Shared behaviors, traditions, and customs	Defined by shared language, social behaviors, traditional and religious practices, customs, sports, and food that are transmitted from generation to generation.
5. Personal experiences and journeys	Defined through the uniqueness of someone’s personal and professional experience, and influence of someone’s upbringing and experience of privilege (or lack thereof).
6. Process of negotiation	The result of an ongoing life negotiation between personal, professional, contextual, and situational factors as well as between self-attributed and externally attributed identities.
7. Perceived identities	Defined by the complex interrelation of multiple overlapping identities in which individuals identify themselves.
8. Developmental	Defined and perceived as an evolving and changing factor throughout the life journey of each individual.
<i>Domain #2: How to become aware of culture through internal processes</i>	
1. Personal and professional reflection	Defined by personal and professional self-reflection about identity (i.e., ethnicity, race, culture, etc.), white (or other form of) privilege, as well as culture-related limits (i.e., racism, bigotry, narrow-mindedness), assumptions and stereotypes.
2. Result of personal experiences, traits, & worldview	The result of the interaction between one’s personal direct or indirect experiences of culture(s), one’s heritage and characteristics, and one’s worldview, which can lead to a greater awareness of the meaning of culture and cultural differences.
3. Training & professional experiences	The result of the internal integration of training and professional experiences leading to greater cultural awareness.
4. Acceptance and appreciation of own and other cultures and identities	The result of understanding, appreciation, and awareness of one’s own culture and identity as well as of “the other” cultures and identities, and of their interactions.
5. Active and conscious investment	The result of a genuine, authentic, conscious, proactive, and transformative process, leading to step outside one’s own comfort zone and to break cultural barriers.
6. (Un)comfortable internal negotiation	The result of an internal negotiation between personal, contextual, and situational factors, leading one to become comfortable with the unknown and uncomfortable, while remaining true to one’s own morals and beliefs when understanding the “other” culture.
7. Self-identity as cultural foundation	Defined by the awareness of the intersectionality of one’s own multiple identities and how they influence one’s life.

TABLE II
Summary of Domains, Categories, and Core Ideas

Domains/Categories	Illustrative Core Idea
<i>Domain 3: How to become aware of culture through diverse experience and social interactions</i>	
1. Personal socialization	The result of genuine interactions between people from different backgrounds, leading to a greater understanding and knowledge of different worldviews, values, and beliefs.
2. Professional interactions and negotiation with clients, students, and participants	The result of professional interaction with clients from different backgrounds and of the negotiation between the practitioner's and the students' and participants' cultures.
3. Engagement with the socio-cultural environment	The result of a proactive engagement between the individual and the surrounding culture, characterized by interaction and negotiation between practices, worldviews, and identities, and leading to a greater sense of cultural understanding of self and others and of belonging within the cultural community.
4. Interactions with professional network	The result of working with culturally aware and sensitive supervisors and mentors as well as professional and culturally aware scholarship.

beliefs are grounded.” Heidi similarly described how culture “is an environment and a particular one... It’s a way of life in a particular environment. It is what is normally done in that environment.” Finally, summarizing culture as a combination of individual and contextual aspects, Mishas described culture as consisting of “lot of environmental factors, personal factors, situational characteristics and, and it’s also constructed through dressing, how you dress, how you speak, how you eat; music and arts and all kinds of stuff. It’s embodied in so many different ways.”

The SPPs also recognized how culture is characterized by shared worldviews, norms, and morals as well as language, traditions, and practices. Illustrating this characteristic, Tarni defined culture as “a combination of values, beliefs, norms, behaviors, things that make up a group of people that make them in some way different from another,” while Noah described it “in terms of ideas and customs, and social behaviors.” Culture was also described as highly influenced by the uniqueness of someone’s experiences and was characterized as an ongoing process of negotiation between personal, professional, contextual, and situational factors. Illustrating this process of negotiation, Leena highlighted how she “negotiated over the last 40 years of my life, different elements from different aspects of my life depending on what context I’ve been to create a culture that stands well with my values and my beliefs.” On the other hand, Francesca added how “culture is where you come from, or what your previous life experiences have been,” while Joci described it as “a hugely complex concept that involves family of origin, your own personal experiences, and your world view.”

Similarly, SPPs described culture as grounded in the complex interrelation between one’s own multiple overlapping identities and the contextual

changes one experiences over a lifetime. Describing such interaction, Aryeh described culture as “one’s combination of socialization experiences and the ethnic, religious, gender, sexual orientation, etc., disability and so on, groups within which one identifies.” Bardo added a developmental dimension to culture, indicating how his definition of culture is “still evolving because...my range of cultural experiences influences my culture, so my culture has continued to evolve”.

The multifaceted description of culture offered by the SPPs is testament of the complexity of this construct, extending the idea of culture exclusively based on shared characteristics (e.g., Cruickshank & Collins, 2012; Henriksen, 2015), and instead including the personal characteristics of each individual experiencing it. Supporting and extending previous literature (e.g., Schinke et al., 2012; Terry, 2009), the current findings highlighted the importance for SPPs to recognize the cultural characteristics of their clients and participants and to negotiate them with their own. They recognized how their conceptualization of culture was the result of their experience of negotiation between themselves, their clients and participants, and the context within which they live and work. The process of negotiation may help SPPs to become able to better understand themselves as cultural beings, by identifying and recognizing their own cultural identities, in relation to their clients’ and participants’ identities, and how both impact their professional practice (Lee, Quartiroli, Baumann, Harris, Watson, & Schinke, 2020; Schinke & Moore, 2011). Developing an enhanced awareness of their own as well as their participants’ cultural backgrounds may influence the research process (Blodgett et al., 2015; McGannon & Johnson, 2009) as well as the way to implement and integrate culturally sensitive approaches to practice with individuals from backgrounds different from their own (Lee et al., 2020; Ryba et al., 2013)

The described process of negotiation could also be a starting point for SP scholars and practitioners to move from working for or on clients and/or participants, to working with them (Blodgett et al., 2015). By doing so, SPPs will reduce the imbalance in their relationships with participants and clients, instead engaging in relationships where the worldviews and frames of reference of all participating actors are recognized, respected, and integrated.

Domain II: How to become Aware of Culture Through Internal Processes

Aiming to address the second of our research questions, these SPPs described how they became aware of culture via internal processes. Domain II included the categories of (a) personal and professional self-reflection; (b)

results of personal experiences, traits, and worldviews; (c) training and professional experiences; (d) acceptance and appreciation of own and other cultures and identities; (e) active and conscious investment; (f) (Un)comfortable internal negotiation; and (g) self-identity as cultural foundation.

SPPs recognized how cultural awareness was the result of their reflections about their identities, privileges, and stereotypes. Bardo, described the importance of constantly engaging in personal reflection, by saying that "...ultimately, you have to sort of be able to pass the looking in the mirror test and say '...the way I'm operating is true to my cultural values'." Moreover, great importance was placed on understanding the intersectionality of one's own identities and how they influence one's life and work. Furthermore, these SPPs highlighted the importance of understanding and appreciating the other person's cultures and identities and how they interact with one's own. Lily stated how "people must understand how their worldview, their perspective of the world, their perspective of the interactions they're having with other people are influenced by their identities," which, as described by Noam, needs to be also accompanied by "the ability to accept that not everyone behaves the same and is the same way."

The participating SPPs recognized how their definition of culture was influenced by their cultural heritage, and how integrating their training and professional experiences led them to develop a greater awareness of its meaning. Marc highlighted how his "professional development has linked into my personal development which has linked back into my professional development." While Johanna described how living in different countries helped her "to get a sense for culture at all", adding how living in only one country, culture would be "something that's there and you don't necessarily think about it...it's very foreign for you, you don't know any other cultures so it might be hard to relate to other cultures because you aren't even aware of the differences."

Participants also described how their idea of culture was the result of an authentic, proactive, and transformative process grounded in their self-reflection, which also led them to step beyond their comfort zone, enabling them to understand the 'other' culture, while remaining true to their own morals and beliefs. Ethan described the value of the "willingness to learn it [culture], to break down a barrier and just, to get absorbed, embrace, learn, grow from and integrate it, into your own system." Francesca, instead, described the challenges associated with not understanding someone's worldview and with the effort of getting out of one's own comfort zone to understand it.

...there are plenty of times where I don't understand what someone means by something or their worldview, because it's different from my own and sometimes I feel like a huge idiot asking, and it's uncomfortable to admit that 'I don't have any idea what you're talk-

ing about' or 'can you help me understand this?' and it's always a really awesome process when I have the opportunity to do that but it's always really uncomfortable because I don't want sound judgmental or as if I'm questioning their view, and being able to genuinely say, tell me more about that.

As described in the literature (e.g., Anderson, Knowles, & Gilbourne, 2004; Butryn, 2002), our findings support how the process of self-reflection is not limited to increasing one's awareness of the 'other' perspective. Engaging in a self-reflective process is highly valuable to developing awareness about one's own worldview as well as identities (Lee et al., 2020), which do play an important role in how SPPs conceptualize and experience culture (Carter & Davila, 2017; Yu, Nguyen, & Petrie, 2016). The process of self-reflection described by these SPPs is foundational to the development of one's own personal awareness of cultural background and personal identity as well as to the development of appreciation of the cultural background of the clients and participants one works with (e.g., McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Sarkar, Hill, & Parker, 2014). The value attributed to self-reflection by the SPPs aligns with the professional value that scholars have described it to have as a means for professional development and effective practice (e.g., Anderson et al., 2004; Huntley & Kentzer, 2019).

The individuals' awareness of their self as cultural beings and how every encounter, whether with colleagues, clients, or participants, is a multicultural encounter, and is foundational to the development of culturally competent scholarship and practice (Lee et al. 2020; Schinke et al., 2016). Therefore, it is important that engagement in self-reflection become an integrative part of one's training and professional and personal journey (Anderson et al., 2004; Cropley, Miles, Hanton, & Niven, 2007; Cropley, Hanton, Miles, & Niven, 2010; Schinke et al., 2006). Professional organizations and training programs should support SPPs development of self-reflective practice by helping SPPs develop the skills needed to engage in and integrate culturally grounded self-reflections in their professional lives (Cropley et al., 2010; Terry, 2009). The promotion and development of self-reflective practice will help bring a shift toward more culturally competent sport psychology research and practice (Lee et al., 2020; Quartiroli et al., 2020).

Domain III: How to Become Aware of Culture through Diverse Experience and Social Interactions

Finally, while still aiming to answer to the second research questions, the participating SPPs described how their interactions within external and social contexts impacted their conceptualization of culture and fostered their cultural awareness. Domain III included (a) personal socialization; (b) pro-

fessional interaction and negotiation with clients, students and participants; (c) engagement with the socio-cultural environment; and (d) interaction with professional network.

Aligned with previous literature (e.g., Ponnusamy & Grove, 2014; Terry, 2009), SPPs described how their social and environmental interactions, both at the personal and professional level, influenced the way they conceptualize culture. They reported how engaging in a variety of social experiences with people from backgrounds different from their own led to a greater understanding and awareness of different worldviews, values, and beliefs, which consequentially also influenced their conceptualization of culture. Moreover, they described how these experiences impacted their way of interacting with individuals from a breadth of cultural backgrounds. These SPPs highlighted the importance of genuinely interacting with people from different backgrounds in their work and also in their personal lives. For instance, Jemma described how being “in contact with more people from different places, countries, and religions, and from different parts of the world, and then coming back [participant home] has been really, really significant” in developing her cultural awareness.

Participants also acknowledged how working with culturally aware and sensitive supervisors and mentors while engaging in culturally aware scholarship and practice, contributed to the way they conceptualized culture. Marc described how “having supervisors that were particularly culturally aware - either from that specific culture or who were very interested and aware of different cultures” - was very important for him. Finally, they described how engaging with the surrounding culture was an important aspect of their own and others’ cultural understanding. Oskar described how he “changed as a person by embracing and being part of that culture, being part of the community, embracing the practices, different worldviews, different values that you have, that is different in different cultures.”

The socially-grounded developmental process toward a conceptualization of culture described by SPPs unfolded in their personal journeys as well as in their professional careers. In fact, they described how their professional interactions with clients, students, participants, and colleagues highly influenced the way they experience, appreciate, and understand their own culture as well as how others construct it. Previously (see Quartiroli et al., 2020), we reported how direct contact with clients from diverse backgrounds, along with attending workshops, formal courses, and research projects focused on culture, only partially explained SPPs’ perceived sense of cultural competence. The limited ability of these factors to explain the SPPs’ perceived sense of cultural competence may be partially explained by the lack of a clear definition of what culture is for SPPs, as described by McDougall et al.

(2017), who argued for the need of a clear definition of culture before being able to move toward ‘cultural change’ - the integration of cultural competence in scholarly and applied practice. A clear, professionally-grounded, description of how culture is understood and conceptualized by SPPs and within their professional context could provide the bases for future SPPs, scholars and practitioners alike, to develop cultural competence.

Supporting previous literature, our findings highlighted the importance for SPPs to fully engage in effective and productive culturally curious and grounded interactions with both clients (e.g., Ponnusamy & Grove, 2014) and participants (e.g., Ryba, Schinke, & Stambulova., 2012). This engagement will not only enhance the development of their interventions or studies, but it will also serve as an avenue to explore their own cultural backgrounds, which is foundational for professional development. The journey that these SPPs recounted characterized how their experiences influenced how they understand and conceptualize culture. However, it is possible to move further and argue that SPPs began to develop cultural competence (understanding, experiencing, and appreciating other’s culture), within their own conceptual framework of culture and through a process of cultural reflection unfolding from their experiences. This shift is key in the ideation, development, implementation, assessment, and evaluation of culturally grounded, competent, and sensitive practical interventions and research projects.

Limitations

While we strove to develop a sample of globally situated SPPs, the racial identities of our participants make our sample still a homogenous group of SPPs. Researchers may need to include professionals from further diverse backgrounds that are multidimensional. For example, it would be beneficial to interview more SPPs who come from developing / emerging countries, identify as people of color, as people with disabilities, among a breadth of intersecting, complex identities.

A potential limitation of our work stems in the lack of attention to the intersection between gender and culture, which was not discussed by our participant SPPs. Gill (2017) has been at forefront of bringing attention to intersection of gender and culture. As she noted, “Gender is a particularly visible cultural influence often leading to restrictions in sport, exercise and performance settings” (p. 3). Despite continuing efforts for gender equality in sport leading to the increased involvement of girls and women in sport there remain (culturally related) barriers to their equitable involvement in sport. We encourage researchers to bring greater focus to the intersection of

gender and culture diversity issues when designing and conducting research projects with athletes, coaches, SPPs and any other individuals who are present in the sport context.

From the perspective of our data collection, the use of single interviews may have limited our study (Culver et al., 2012). A single interview may have impeded us to provide the SPPs with the opportunity to deliberately reflect upon the content elicited during the interview or upon their own cultural development throughout their professional career. The SPPs narratives revealed the evolving nature of their conceptualization of culture. Researchers can explore this evolving aspect by following SPPs' careers or by exploring cohorts of SPPs at specific developmental stages.

Another limitation is related to our choice of interviewing only SPPs who identify their work as culturally grounded. While our choice has provided us with several views of the challenges that the discipline and the profession are experiencing, it may have also depicted a limited view of the current status quo of the profession. While we recognize that culture should be integrated in any scholarly or applied activities, we also recognize that culture may not always be the center of SPPs' attention. Future researchers may benefit by expanding their participants to SPPs who may not define their work as culturally grounded. Future research is warranted to explore how SPPs are able to overcome culturally underpinned challenges and to develop their own cultural competencies needed to engage in a suitably culturally grounded, sensitive, and competent SP scholarly and applied practice.

Finally, while online interviews represented an extremely useful approach, they also posed difficulties. For example, in the interviews with those SPPs residing in areas where internet was not reliable, numerous interruptions were experienced. To overcome such disruptions in dialog, the interviewer and the participants chose to not use the video connection, which may have reduced the level of rapport between the two (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Additionally, the interviewer tried to be as succinct and direct as possible, which would have reduced the richness of the conversation.

Conclusions

The knowledge developed through stories shared by these 25 SPPs provides a description of the construct of culture as unfolded within the lived personal and professional journeys of a select few globally situated SPPs. The shared accounts support a dynamic and complex conceptualization of culture, grounded in internal and external processes, which unfolds within and is influenced by the surrounding macro and micro contexts. Culture, as con-

ceptualized by the participants, permeates every aspect of the personal and professional lives of the SPPs and it is shaped by a process of negotiation between personal, professional, contextual, and situational factors. Drawing from the SPPs descriptions, we were able to characterize the nuances and complexity of the construct culture as lived and experienced by SPPs who identify their work as culturally grounded. Our results have inclusively recognized aspects of culture that several scholars had previously considered foundational aspects of the construct, while addressing the limitations of the existing exploration of the construct of culture as highlighted by other scholars (e.g., McDougall et al., 2015).

Our hope is that the findings presented provide future and current SPPs with an added resource to be used when engaging in their own continuing journey of increasing their cultural awareness. The first step towards developing cultural competence is engaging in increasing an awareness of one's own cultural heritage, values, and biases and of how these affect one's relationships with clients and research participants. Accordingly, training programs and professional organizations could integrate our findings in the development and delivery of their sport psychology curricula. For example, training programs could start promoting the integration of culture as a multifaceted construct in their curricula both in terms of specific knowledge delivered as well as in the form of theoretical frameworks that characterize everything SPPs do. However, they could go even further and focus their attention in supporting trainees' cultural awareness development. This integration of cultural awareness in training, developing, and professional programs may address the need for more culture in the general training and continuing education curriculum that has been recently identified in professional training literature. On the other hand, professional organization could contribute to the integration of culture within the current scholarly and applied practice as well as to the development of cultural awareness in currently practicing SPPs. For example, the International Society of Sport Psychology (ISSP) could lead collaborative efforts with other national and international organizations, to support the further development of a greater awareness of and appreciation for culturally competent research and practice. In the spirit of these efforts, the results of our study support the spirit of the newly launched ISSP Registry which provides a more nuanced understanding of how culture is conceptualized by SPPs from diverse backgrounds.

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