

**ADDRESSING AND ENHANCING DIVERSITY IN ACADEMIC PROGRAMS:
CULTURAL, RACIAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY**

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Overview

The US is the most demographically diverse nation in the world (after 2000 Census)--whether we define that diversity linguistically, culturally, religiously, or ethnically. I stress demographic diversity because what we've typically meant when we refer to diversity has changed. The term has often been used in the past as a euphemism for racial issues, and issues related to bilingual education and affirmative action, and more often than not, the context in which these issues were discussed was generally negative. Most of the academic programs in our professions in no way mirror those US demographics, thus the title of this session, **Enhancing** Diversity. We also have to be concerned about how we manage or address diversity or we could potentially enhance diversity but any gains would be short-lived. We have to talk as well, about diversity at different levels--among the student population in our programs, the diversity of our faculty, and the extent to which our curriculum addresses diverse needs of increasingly diverse clients. Before we get into specific issues that you are having to manage related to diversity, I'd like to get us all on the same page related to how we're viewing diversity.

There are theories of social categorization that basically imply that we are likely to be drawn to those like ourselves and to create "in-groups" and "out-groups." Whether or not we agree with this or think that it is true, you have to admit that groups do exist and that as humans, we find comfort in shared experiences. The basis for those shared experiences can cut across a number of variables that essentially define who we are. These are cultural variables. Yet, I do not want to give the impression that diversity and culture are the same. They are not. Diversity is more a means of characterizing the

differences we see in others and ourselves, while culture is the basis for the existence of those differences.

We have made a number of attempts to try to distinguish groups using a number of titles and we cannot assume that they are all interchangeable. For example, many of you may feel the need to actively recruit racial/ethnic minorities, but do you feel the same way about recruiting Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgendered individuals or persons with disabilities into your programs? Yet, you might use the terms “multicultural populations” or “culturally and linguistically diverse” as targets for your recruitment activities. We have to be careful to say what we really mean.

Diversity is inclusive. When we talk about diversity, we’re talking about all people who are different...that is all of us...and because very few of us share exactly the same culture, we are all culturally diverse. You will hear us use the term culturally diverse populations to refer to those who are different from the mainstream—while this is an incorrect use of the term, it is one that is widely accepted.

Diversity does include culture. The elements of culture, things like our values, traditions, history, behaviors, beliefs, actions, and so forth, exist in different forms because of the experiences we’ve had as members of different groups. We all belong to a variety of groups. There are times when we are proud to display our “groupness” and other times when we try to deny that our “groupness” makes a difference. But, that “groupness” is what makes us who we are. Let’s concentrate first on the cultural aspect of diversity because it helps us identify from our own experiences, the differences that exist in all of us.

Technically, culture can be defined as the shared rules for appropriate behaviors that are learned by an individual as a result of being a member of a group or community. The other key component of culture that pertains to diversity is that culture provides a defined and acceptable system of interaction, but as groups come in contact with each other, systems that are not shared lead to conflict.

A consistent finding of research related to diversity is that including diverse perspectives can generate more creative and innovative ideas. Diversity of thought leads to new modes of thinking and more efficient ways of accomplishing things. While problem solving with diverse groups may take more time and energy initially, the benefits are assumed to be long-term, and worth the wait. There are social consequences though to the way we divide and combine groups of people. Those consequences influence how we see each other and ourselves individually and as a group/community. I am assuming most of you have seen the impact that one minority may have in a group, and similarly you have seen how several minorities can impact a group and the behaviors of those present. Intergroup dynamics differ and do so for a variety of sociopolitical reasons. Many of you have not had the experience of impacting group dynamics so directly as when you are the “one” or among the “few” who are obviously different from all of the others in a room, or in a situation. Some of us experience that on a regular basis. And while many of you would venture to deny that this impact is significant, my own experiences, and those of a “few” others here, would beg to differ. We cannot underestimate the power of our personal histories on our behavior in the present. Difference does make a difference. The extent and direction of the difference depends on what we allow.

An argument could easily be made for including diverse groups in the work that you do, because it will presumably allow you to accomplish some new and different things, but there are other equally, if not more compelling reasons for addressing diversity. We live in a society that demands increasingly customized and personalized customer service. As faculty members in Communication Sciences and Disorders programs, your customers are primarily your students and secondarily the clients they will serve. Students are beginning to demand that they be provided an education that adequately prepares them to meet the needs of a diverse client pool, and that their own personal needs are met. Your ability to anticipate their needs will dictate how competitive your program will be in the future.

The demographics speak for themselves. The composition of your classroom will change. In addition to the composition of your classes changing, the students themselves are different. College students today have experienced a different public school system than many of us experienced. The assimilationist approach of preparing students for social, civic, and economic participation has given way to an approach that has encouraged students to retain and take pride in their backgrounds. If you have been in academe for a while, you've probably noticed that you aren't getting the same results, and/or you're still getting similar results, but the expectations have changed. These students need knowledge and skills that will help them succeed as fully contributing professionals. The strengths that individuals have to offer are diverse and are not static; so our approaches to teaching them to be successful must also be diverse and dynamic. If you decide to provide an education designed around the needs of only those students who fit the traditional notion of what a student in Communication Sciences and Disorders should be and do, you could be doing a huge disservice to the professions. We teach our professionals to develop intervention plans tailored to individual clients' needs, why would we do any less for our students? To avoid that double standard we also have to be willing to include all groups in our definition of diverse, and do what we can to understand and address all of their needs.

Cultural, Racial, and Linguistic Diversity

Generally speaking, we don't change our behavior without some reason to do so. What I'd like to do now is to provide a rationale and some evidence for you to change your behavior in order to address and enhance diversity in academic programs. I want to provide you with information on where we are relative to issues of race, ethnicity and language, so let me move onto that.

The 2000 US Census defines 4 racial groups:

1. Black, African American, or Negro
2. White

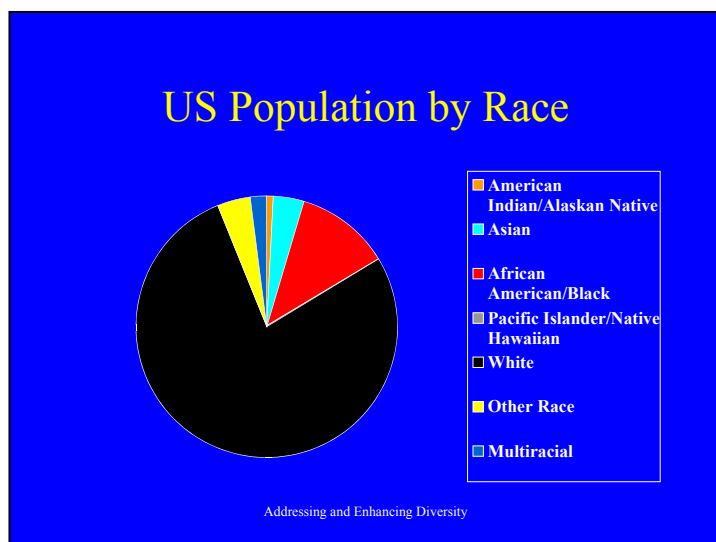
3. American Indian, Alaska Native (which does assume enrollment or affiliation with a tribal entity), and
4. A number of Asian Groups including
 - Asian Indian
 - Chinese
 - Filipino
 - Japanese
 - Korean
 - Vietnamese
 - Native Hawaiian
 - Guamanian or Chamorro
 - Samoan
 - Other Pacific Islander

The Census also allows specification of “Other race.”

The Hispanic/Latino/Spanish population is defined by ethnic group. Individuals in this ethnic group include

- Mexicans, Mexican Americans, Chicanos
- Puerto Ricans
- Cubans
- Others (includes S. American and Central American groups)

Because the Latino population is not defined by race, these individuals are asked to identify with a specific racial group in addition to their ethnicity. Almost 1/2 of Hispanics/Latinos in the 2000 Census identified themselves as White (approximately 17 million). Most of the others, identified themselves as “Other Race” (about 15 million), but did not specify a race. It is believed by some that this has been done to show resistance to being categorized on the basis of a common primary language. The preference many of these individuals have indicated is to maintain a connection to their country of origin without connecting to others that they may have little in common with.



According to the 2000 US Census, the breakdown of the US population by race is as follows:

American Indian/Alaskan Native 0.80%

Asian 3.80%

African American/Black 11.70%

Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian 0.20%

White 77.50%

Other Race 4%

Multiracial 2%

The African American population has stayed fairly steady at about 12% for many years now. Currently, about 10% of the US population are foreign-born.

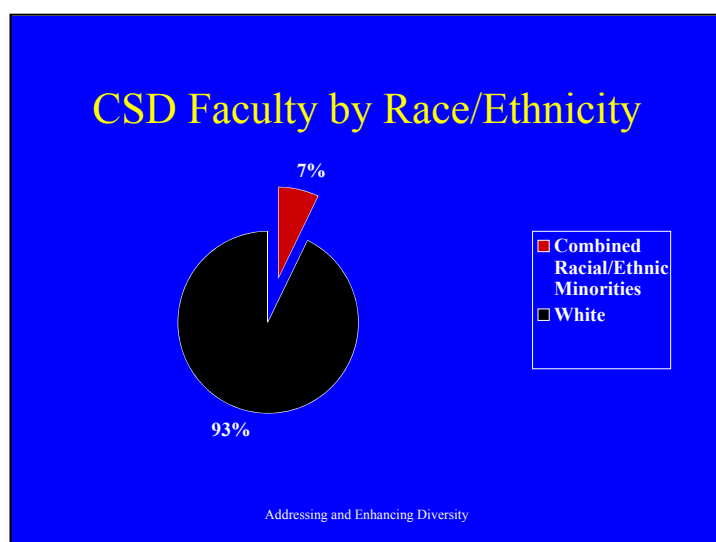
There was a 58% increase in the Hispanic population between 1990 and 2000, while the percentage of increase for the entire US population was only 33%. Mexicans account for the largest group of Hispanic origin. Fifty nine percent of US Hispanics are Mexican. The median age of the Hispanic population is almost 10 years less than that of the overall US population. Three states accounted for half of the Hispanic population growth: California, Texas, and Florida. Half of all Hispanics live in just 2 states,

California and Texas. And, Hispanics in New Mexico are 42% of that state's total population, which is the highest proportion for any state.

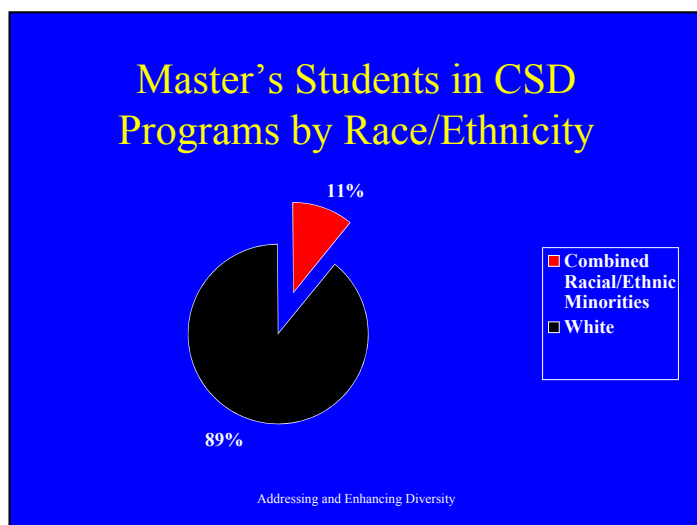
By contrast, the membership of our professions is significantly less diverse. Year-end 2001 Membership Counts indicate the racial makeup of ASHA's membership as follows

American Indian/Alaska Native 0.30%
 Asian 1.70%
 African American/Black 2.10%
 Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian 0.10%
 White 95.10%
 Multiracial 0.80

The Latino/Hispanic population among the ASHA membership is just 2.5%.



Data from the Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders shows the racial/ethnic makeup of faculty in communication sciences and disorders. While these data don't identify specific racial groups, and do include Hispanic/Latino populations, which is separated out for ASHA's and the US population data, the lack of diversity among the faculty in our programs is still evident.



The Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders' recent data also provides statistics on the numbers of students enrolled in Masters programs in 2000-2001. Again, these data combine racial and ethnic groups. One figure that we do not get from the Council's data is how many of these students actually graduate. We know how many are enrolled but the other side of recruitment is retention and we know anecdotally that many of these students do not remain in our programs through graduation.

We have identified a number of reasons for the limited diversity in our professions and our programs. Some of those include:

- *Students have little or no knowledge about the professions--generally they don't know who we are or what we do.*

Focus Group data indicate that undergraduate racial/ethnic minority students think speech-language pathologists are middle-aged white women in the schools, and audiologists are middle-aged white men in lab coats. Increasingly more materials are becoming available to promote the professions to racial/ethnic minority students, but programs have to take an active role in racial/ethnic minority recruitment.

- *Admission criteria are so strict that even very good racial/ethnic minority students can't get in.*

Often the students who have fared well in the classroom may have lower GRE scores than non-minority students. We generally accept the notion that racial/ethnic minority students as a whole don't score well on standardized tests, but we continue to rely on these test results in spite of poor predictability with racial/ethnic minority students.

- *Racial/ethnic minority students often can't afford to continue their education.*

Completing an undergraduate education is often cost-prohibitive; pursuing graduate studies is often financially out of the question. Institutional training and personnel grants are available in decreasing numbers, in spite of the availability of grant funding.

- *These students report that faculty are insensitive to their realities.*

Many racial/ethnic minorities have to work, some are non-traditional students who have returned to school but have families and family obligations. For example, Native American students may be called home because of tribal issues/obligations, but programs don't allow any flexibility for extended leave that may be necessary in those circumstances.

- *These students report generally that they don't feel welcomed.*

The students feel that the program/department environment is not very nurturing as a learning environment, that generally neither faculty members nor other students extend themselves, and that the minority students are left to fend for themselves. Also, in many instances, they are the only one or one of few racial/ethnic minority students in a program.

- *Some of these students resent being expected to serve as the expert from their group on what to expect in normally developing persons from their racial/ethnic group.*

Racial/ethnic minority students report that they don't think it's fair that they are expected to provide information on speech, language, or hearing related behavior in minority groups. We teach majority students about normal development in their groups, and non-minority students are not expected to take on roles of providing such expertise. Also, it's not safe to assume that these students will know any more than any other student in your class about behaviors in a particular group. Their experiences may vary significantly from the groups being discussed.

Minority faculty members face similar issues and expectations.

- *Faculty members from racial/ethnic minority groups are always assigned tasks/responsibility for multicultural efforts.*

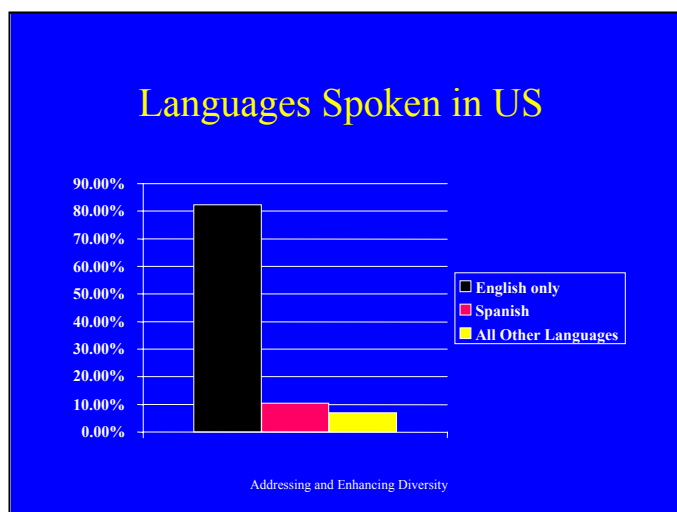
These faculty members report that they often have to be the expert on racial/ethnic minority group behavior, whether or not that has been their developed expertise or area of interest. They report also being perceived to be the expert on all racial/ethnic minority groups, not just the group to which they belong. By default, these faculty members are often given the job of having to mentor minority students, teach the multicultural classes, and may also be junior faculty with requirements to complete research and publications, and take on a number of other responsibilities, typically given to junior faculty members, like being the NSSLHA Chapter advisor.

- *Racial/ethnic minority faculty members report feelings of isolation.*

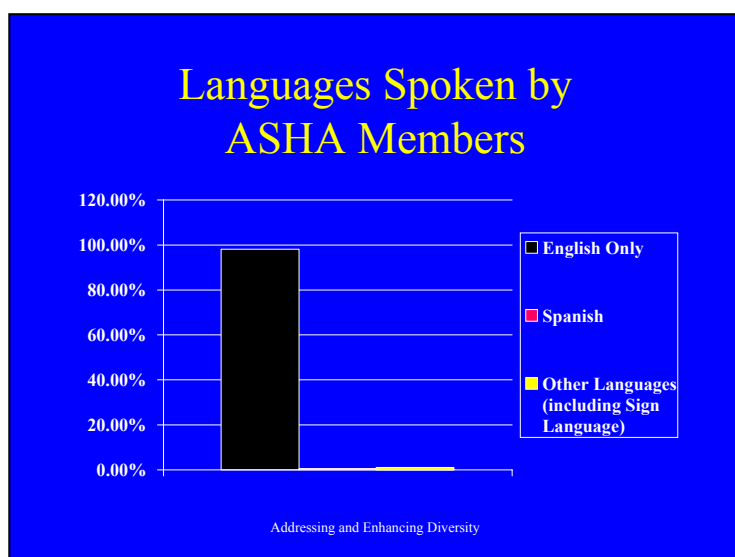
Often these individuals may be recruited to areas where there are few racial/ethnic minorities in the community beyond the campus, and they experience extreme loneliness and isolation, without any familiar social outlets to balance their lives outside of work.

The 2000 Census provided new figures on the linguistic diversity of the United States. While there may be some question about the accuracy of the figures, responses to questions about the primary language spoken, indicate that in a little over 82% of homes in the US, English is the only language spoken. Spanish is spoken in 10.5% of the homes, and some other language, including other Indo-European

languages is the primary language spoken in about 7% of US homes. These figures include the language used by all members of US households who are at least 5 years old, and that English is spoken less than “very well.” Some believe that these figures are inflated because of parental desires to maintain the home language, and/or an inability on the part of some parents to realize just how well their children speak English.



While 10.5% of the population speaks Spanish in the home, only .6% of the ASHA membership speaks Spanish. Another 1.2% of the ASHA membership speaks/uses some other language proficiently, including sign language. Ninety-eight and two-tenths percent of the ASHA membership are monolingual English speakers. At the same time, we are not actively encouraging our students to learn another language, we are not recruiting among undergraduate language majors, nor are we providing any in-depth education for students on working with Interpreters in clinical interactions.



Though we sorely need bilingual professionals to help provide services to bilingual populations, we are actively discouraging many bilingual students from completing their training. Bilingual students who do enter our professions tell us that they are not being allowed to take clinical practicum, and in some instances are tracked into non-clinical programs, so that they can get their degree, but cannot pursue certification. In other instances, they may be allowed to complete practicum requirements, but only after being subjected to accent “reduction” or therapy by the same students they are in class with. Some creative solutions to building skills in standard English for English language learners and nonstandard dialect speakers are needed so that these students can succeed in the clinic and not be subjected to embarrassing requirements that discourage them and lead them to drop out of programs, change majors, or take on related, but non-certified roles.

In some instances, international students have been recruited into graduate programs but are not allowed to take clinical practicum because of their accents. The assumption being that they will return to their home countries where they don't need the ASHA CCC to practice. This discriminatory view assumes that the same level of training is not needed to provide services to some populations.

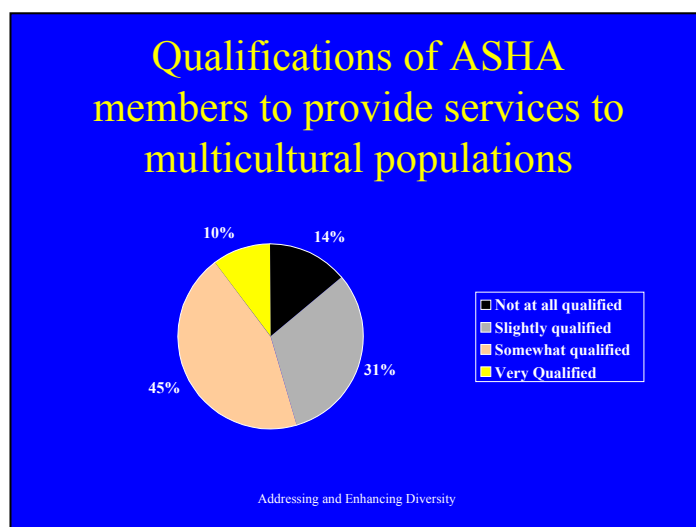
So, what difference does race/ethnicity/language make? If the goal of our professions is to mirror society, as you now see, we have quite a way to go. If we want to experience the benefits of diversity that I mentioned earlier, we need a more racially/ethnically and linguistically diverse composition to achieve those results, and to challenge us to grow and change. If we do not deal with diversity within our ranks, we'll never be able to teach students to deal with it—and as future practicing clinicians, they won't have the option of NOT dealing with it.

We have systems in place that have traditionally served us well in terms of preparing students to serve the population with communication disorders. These systems may have outlived their usefulness. As you talk about standards and criteria this weekend, think about the extent to which these systems may be imposing disparate

outcomes and keeping out some of those we want and desperately need in our professions.

I challenge you not to be afraid to ask the ridiculous question or pose the “what-if” scenario that may seem far-fetched. What if we identify alternatives to the Praxis Exam that would accomplish the same thing? Don’t dismiss the questions without really trying to answer them. There are some programs that are doing a great job of recruiting these students into their programs and supporting them. What’s working for them and why can’t more programs do what they are doing? One thing we know is that Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have historically graduated more African American students who went on to pass the Praxis Exam and become ASHA certified, but now only one program in an HBCU is still predominantly Black, so they too are graduating fewer African Americans. Why is this and what can be done about it?

Also, we know that there is a greater propensity on the part of racial/ethnic minorities to serve racial/ethnic minorities in their communities. A huge step in correcting much of the under-service and disservice to racial/ethnic minorities is to increase the racial/ethnic diversity of our professional pool. It is also safe to assume that we’d likely see an increase in the proliferation of research on multicultural populations and would have more role models for creating increased interest on the part of more racial/ethnic minorities to enter the professions.



ASHA's 2001 Omnibus survey asked members how qualified they felt to provide services to multicultural populations. These numbers are of ASHA certified members, some of whom have had access to continuing professional development activities, but almost half indicated that they don't have confidence in providing such services.

Questions to ask yourself include the following:

- ❖ How much of what you teach do you expect to be generalizable to any given client? Is that reasonable?
- ❖ What have you done to extend yourself to minority faculty members?
- ❖ How comfortable are you talking about cultural issues/variables?
- ❖ What information/resources are available in your area of expertise related to culturally and linguistically diverse populations? Do you know where to find that information?
- ❖ Are you meeting the requirement to cover issues related to communication sciences and disorders across culturally diverse groups?
- ❖ How much discussion occurs in your classes on alternative assessment procedures, how to modify tests and report the use of tests with populations for which the test was not normed?

Questions to ask at the program level include

- ❖ How much of an opportunity do your students have to work with racial/ethnic minority or bilingual clients? How might we increase these opportunities?
- ❖ What are we doing to recruit students from diverse backgrounds?
- ❖ Have we sought grant funds to recruit these students?
- ❖ What are we doing to keep those students we get into our programs?
- ❖ What support do we have in place for students who may need to improve their standard English skills?
- ❖ When was the last time we looked critically at our recruitment tools, materials, and methods, or course syllabi?
- ❖ What have we done to recruit and welcome racial/ethnic minority faculty?

“If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you always got.”

The challenge to you extends beyond increasing your sensitivity--it is possible to be sensitive and not do anything differently. Change will only come about if you try to do something with the knowledge and information that you gain. That means that you have to move to the next level and identify what you can do, and then act on those things you’ve heard and seen here.