The role of race and ethnicity in explaining variability in human behavior has long been considered in the anthropological and sociological studies of play, games, and sport. This paper suggests ways in which the field of sport and exercise psychology might more systematically begin to incorporate factors of race and ethnicity into its research agendas. The paper is divided into four major sections. The first section provides evidence of a dearth of such research in the field of sport and exercise psychology. The second section presents an overview of current work that highlights ethnic/racial differences in motor performance, physical activity levels, and recreational sport participation. The third section explores the theoretical relevance of comparative research on ethnic/racial similarities and differences in psychological processes and behavior. Finally, potential research methodologies that might be used in psychological research in sport and exercise contexts are presented. Implications for both basic and applied work are offered.

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Cross-cultural psychology has demonstrated that psychological phenomena are manifested differently in different locales, and it has identified certain cultural factors that foster these diverse manifestations. However, the progress of cross-cultural psychology has been curtailed by theoretical and methodological limitations. These limitations must be identified and corrected if we are to understand the cultural nature, origins, characteristics, formation, and functions of psychological phenomena. Our present focus is to identify problems in cross-cultural psychological research that impede this progress.