

POSTER: MOTOR COMPETENCE AND WATER COMPETENCE: A DYNAMICAL DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

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Objective: This paper examines the parallel concepts of motor competence and water competence from dynamical and developmental perspectives. Method: This study examined the existing literature in the fields of aquatics and motor development over the past two decades to identify the frequency of usage and to explore the similarities and differences in how these two “competencies” have been operationally defined, cited, and interpreted. Results: The history of the term “water competence” dated back to 1995 when this author used it broadly to describe an overall proficiency among a variety of aquatic skills, sports, and topics. It originally intended to be a gender-neutral replacement for “watermanship,” a term borrowed from 19th Century Britain to describe proficiency among operators of various kinds of small craft. The term, “motor competence,” originally appeared around 2008 as a synonym for skillfulness or proficiency in motor performance after the publication of the first article using the term. Discussion: The most significant issue related to either water competence or motor competence has been the failure to view the concepts from a developmental perspective. In other words, most often competence has been considered from an “error correction” model wherein competence is viewed as an ideal state and any deviations from that state are viewed as errors or suboptimal performance. Implications: This paper advocates for interpreting both types of competence using the characteristics of the developmental perspective (i.e., 8 characteristics associated with developmental change) as well as the dynamical constraints model (i.e., relationships among personal characteristics, task demands, and environmental conditions). Competence therefore ought to be viewed as a progressive series of states associated with personal characteristics of the actor performing differing task demands within varying environmental conditions. Changes among the relationships therefore alter the degree of competence.