

## Inclusive Leisure Services: Responding to the Rights of People with Disabilities

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### **Article:**

Common themes in current leisure research include topics regarding opportunities and availability of recreation programs, stigma, negotiating barriers and constraints, and physical and psychological accessibility of recreation for women, people of color, low socio-economic groups, families, or other disenfranchised groups. Theories, research, and examples presented within the reviewed disability texts have relevance to issues of inclusion for all disciplines of leisure research, not just those dealing with disabling conditions. Research that directly or indirectly addresses related topics of race, culture, gender, class, religion, and ethnicity can be enhanced by the information provided in both the reviewed texts.

Currently, few books exist that comprehensively present issues of inclusion for people with disabilities. Two of the most recent books were reviewed: Smith, R.W., Austin, D. R., & Kennedy, D. W. (1996). *Inclusive and Special Recreation: Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities* (3rd Ed). Dubuque, IA: Brown and Benchmark Publishing; and Dattilo, J. (1994). *Inclusive Leisure Services: Responding to the Rights of People with Disabilities*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing, Inc.

Smith and his colleagues present a well organized text describing the concept of inclusive recreation services as well as techniques and examples of how to design, develop, and implement these programs. The book is divided into four sections. The first section, "Introduction and Overview," addresses the conceptual issues of attitudes as well as legislative foundations of inclusion of people with disabilities into community recreation programs. Particular attention is given to the Americans with Disabilities Act in this section. Additionally, the authors use this section to describe the basic characteristics of common disabilities. The second section, "Program and Facility Planning," presents separate chapters to describe barriers and accessibility, planning and evaluation techniques, and samples of exemplary inclusive recreation programs. The third section, "Inclusive and Special Recreation Program Areas," focuses on recreation experiences in camping and wilderness-adventure experiences, competitive sports, and arts. The last section, "Resources and Trends," presents the supportive needs and community resources of inclusive programming and discusses the patterns inclusive recreation is developing. Additionally, Smith et al. provide useful appendices on organizations and related resources dealing with recreation and people with disabilities.

Dattilo's text addresses similar topics with a moderately different approach, dividing his text into three sections. The first section entitled, "Develop an Awareness" addresses attitudes of self and others, terminology, and barriers. This section also includes a chapter on support families which addresses social support systems. The second section, "Facilitate Participation" focuses on the Americans with Disabilities Act, how to provide and facilitate self-determination, leisure education, accessibility, adaptations, and how to act as an advocate for the recreation of people with disabilities. The third section "Consider Individual Characteristics," describes people with physical, cognitive, and sensory disabilities. Additionally, technology with regard to inclusion is addressed. Both texts have practical activities that aid in the understanding of the principles and concepts presented.

As undergraduate texts about inclusion, both of these books have a lot to offer leisure professionals. Each in its own way provides a comprehensive and strong foundation for understanding and implementing quality inclusionary community recreation programs for people with disabilities. Although written as texts for undergraduate Special Recreation courses, these books also can be used by professionals interested in research about inclusion and special recreation. The authors of both of these texts use many recent research studies and theoretical literature to "teach" the points of the topics. This approach is particularly useful to leisure educators since presenting this research adds credibility to the lessons by saying someone actually tested these ideas with the following results. For example, Smith et al. refer to constraints literature (e.g., Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991) (Smith et al., p. 81) to introduce specific types of barriers to people with disabilities' pursuits of recreation as well as to studies that examined the use of art related activities for to promote social interaction among children with disabilities (e.g., Schleien, Rynders, & Mustonen, 1988) (Smith et al., p. 226). Similarly, Dattilo cited and briefly described specific studies that tested integrating recreation activities as methods for changing attitudes of others (e.g., Stewart, 1988) (Dattilo, p. 49) as well as studies that delineated the importance of friendships in leisure (Hanline, 1993) (Dattilo, p. 186).

One of the primary strengths of these texts for leisure researchers is their potential to direct researchers to new or related studies about the aforementioned topics. The texts include research studies in areas such as attitude development, discrimination, empowerment, freedom, self-determination, and internalized oppression. More specifically, the texts address theoretical constructs such as attitude theory (Dattilo, p. 14) (Smith et al., p. 33), stigma (Dattilo, p. 17-18), learned helplessness (Dattilo, p. 93-94), normalization (Smith et al., p. 25), and social role valorization (Dattilo, p. 178). Addressing theory in these instructional texts helps students become familiar with the "whys" of cause and effect. This insight can provide a strong foundation for decision-making as these students become leisure service professionals. Beyond this benefit, however, outlining theories that relate to inclusion can give researchers direction for developing new studies.

Both texts also use "real" examples that, although not data based, give a "case study" view into lives of people with disabilities. This information can provide more specific insight to potential areas of research for leisure professionals developing studies about people with disabilities. Smith et al. presents not only a full chapter on "Inclusive and Special Recreation Programs - Exemplaries" which describes seven exemplary inclusive programs, but also offers many examples of evaluative studies that illustrate how particular techniques worked. Examples of the latter include work by Perrin, Wiele, Wilder, and Perrin (1992) (Smith et al., p. 140) about methods for considering recreational needs of people with disabilities, as well as effective components of wilderness programs for people with disabilities (e.g., Hollenhorst & Ewert, 1985) (Smith et al., p. 208). Dattilo also uses this examples of programs and people, but less frequently than Smith et al. Dattilo effectively "spotlights" individuals to allow the reader a glimpse into their lives and how they negotiate the issues presented as topics in his text. These actual examples from both texts aid the reader in understanding inclusion from the perspective of the leisure service providers.

The two texts, while addressing similar topics, are formatted differently. Smith et al. use program planning as the underlying focus of the book. They address the barriers and issues of program planning followed by examining the different disciplines of wilderness, competitive sports, and the arts to illustrate need and examples of inclusion. Dattilo, on the other hand, addresses inclusion through a broader "how to" perspective of "developing awareness," "facilitating participation," and "considering individual characteristics."

In addition to the different design of presenting information, the texts complement each other in how and where they use research studies. For example, Smith et al. address terminology and attitudes relatively briefly in a single chapter. Dattilo's presentation of terminology and attitudes, however, is much more in depth throughout four chapters and addresses several related areas such as discrimination, stereotyping, and spread. Additionally, these chapters are strong regarding the use of research studies to support the major points. In another example of difference but compliment between the texts, Smith et al. presents a strong section on barriers and accessibility, giving particular detail to dimensions and techniques. Although they do not use a lot of research, the conceptual presentation of the types of barriers in particular details areas of consideration when planning for

and researching constraints to leisure pursuits. Dattilo's presentation of barriers is substantially shorter and has little data based research.

Few weaknesses can be found for either of these texts in terms of what they can offer students and researchers about the topic of inclusion and related issues. For some topics in both texts, however, more recent literature is available but not included. For example, in discussions of attitudes, sources of negative attitudes, and stereotypes are important in this type of text, but neither book brings in descriptive or current research about these particular areas. More research describing and explaining the effects of adaptations for various recreation experiences and equipment is warranted for both texts as well. Additionally, neither text presents much data based research regarding the benefits and downfalls of technology for people with disabilities. These areas would be greatly enhanced with additionally research studies to illustrate why and how these techniques and processes work for inclusion of people with disabilities.

Although not truly a weakness of a text such as these, neither text specifically outlines possibilities for future or related research. Researchers who study groups other than people with disabilities, however, can apply some of the principles of inclusion to other populations and environments. For example, both texts offer insight into overcoming barriers of accessibility and attitudes to facilitate the participation of people with disabilities in recreation programs. Topics raised in these texts such as the importance and benefits of persuasive communications, friendships, networks among professionals, or personal image, have much to offer other research or programs that address women, immigrants, or youth at risk, for example.

In closing, for professionals interested in research both book have merit. Dattilo uses and presents more actual data based studies to support points in text. Many of the studies are recent. In addition, he presents and documents many theoretical constructs which can be helpful in a number of pursuits. Smith et al., although not offering much in terms of data based studies, use evaluative and examples of real-life programs more effectively to make their points. Both books, however, have a lot to offer leisure researchers in addition to students and leisure service providers and should be considered resources for these purposes.

## References

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