

Therapeutic Recreation Programming: Theory and Practice. C. Sylvester, J. E. Voelkl, and G. D. Ellis. State College, PA: Venture Publishing, 2001. (www.venturepublish.com)

In 2000 the population shifts occurring in California resulted in a situation in which no one ethnic group was in the majority. Rather than an aberration, this movement toward an increasingly multicultural society is spreading throughout the United States. It is estimated that by 2015 one-third of those living in the United States will be from “so-called minority” groups. Edginton, Jordan, DeGraaf and Edginton (2002) reported that by 2050 the sum total of all those in “so-called minorities” will surpass the “Anglo” majority, and the “term minority will essentially lose its meaning” (p. 430). As well, society increasingly recognizes other diverse groups based on language, socioeconomic status, gender and sexual orientation. While the United States is moving toward a more diverse society the therapeutic recreation profession, for the most part, has defined its practice through a narrow ethnocentric context.

Through this text Sylvester, Voelkl and Ellis (2001) begin a long overdue dialogue on how therapeutic recreation can shed its monocultural shell and embrace a broader worldview. The authors’ treatment of this topic goes beyond the chapter on “Multicultural Considerations” and is interwoven throughout the text. Programmatically the authors include multicultural considerations in such areas as assessments, counseling, and leisure education. On a more conceptual level both professional ethics and therapeutic recreation practice models are examined through a multicultural lens, an examination that has been noticeably absent in the therapeutic recreation literature. *Therapeutic Recreation Programming: Theory and Practice* makes a valuable contribution to the therapeutic recreation field for its treatment of multiculturalism.

The text, however, also provides practitioners and students with a therapeutic recreation programming information that goes far beyond the technical “know how tos” and addresses the more substantive area of programming. The authors successfully combine theory and practice constructs to accomplish their goal, which is “to enable students {and practitioners} to exercise the most important and difficult of all competencies—intelligent action ethically applied to the needs and problems of a culturally diverse society” (p. xiv).

The authors succeed by first examining the purposes, or “know what”, of therapeutic

recreation practice. While time-consuming and sometimes painful, professions, and thus professionals, need to continually reassess their ideals, values, and reason for being. Next, the text provides a review with critique of the various therapeutic recreation models to furnish practitioners and students with a theoretical understanding of professional practice. Without such, therapeutic recreation specialists will continually need to explain and justify their profession to other service providers. A chapter on professional ethics is included to enable practitioners and future practitioners an opportunity to develop the moral judgment necessary to act as ethically grounded professionals. Rather than just an esoteric discussion the authors furnish case studies so that readers can apply ethical reasoning gleaned from this chapter. The authors' inclusion of multiculturalism supplies practitioners and students with a greater understanding of the diverse nature of clientele served by therapeutic recreation. Far from a homogeneous group, therapeutic recreation serves individuals of all races, ethnicities, genders, religions, ages, socioeconomic strata, and sexual orientations.

While presenting a deeper contextual framework for therapeutic recreation practice the authors also systematically detail the development of comprehensive and individual programs. One of the most difficult subject areas for many therapeutic recreation students to grasp is how a comprehensive program flows to the specific program plan and then is actualized through individual care plans. By covering the development of comprehensive and specific programs in the same chapter the authors nicely show the continuity between the two. In an effort to reinforce the reader's understanding the chapter on *Therapeutic Recreation Program Planning* provide examples from three diverse settings.

In the final chapter the authors present individualized care plans, covering many of the important aspects of program development. The authors specify how goals and objectives are developed to address client's needs that were identified through client assessments. While activity analysis and developing individual care goals and objectives are addressed, the authors might have gone into more detail, especially on writing measurable objectives. Students, for the most part, have a difficult time understanding and thus writing measurable objectives. An expanded discussion of measurable objective development with subsequent examples from the various domains would have contributed to a greater understanding of the subject matter. Nonetheless, the care plan examples are useful in showing the overall concept of care plan development.

The chapter concludes with a brief summary of documentation and the various methods utilized by practitioners. Even though the authors cover major elements of documentation, including healthcare abbreviations and symbols and an example of a critical pathway, a more in-depth treatment would greatly benefit students and beginning practitioners. Internship supervisors frequently comment that student interns lack the competency to properly document and therefore require far more supervision in this area. Therapeutic recreation programming texts require a far more comprehensive explanation of documentation to better prepare future practitioners.

Therapeutic Recreation Programming: Theory and Practice significantly contributes to the therapeutic recreation literature, if only for its seminal treatment of multiculturalism as related to therapeutic recreation programming. The text, however, also grounds its presentation of therapeutic recreation programming in a theoretical discussion, many times missing from basic "how to" texts. A richer multicultural flavor would have resulted from programmatic examples that included more culturally diverse groups. But as the authors state, readers should not treat this text "as the final word on therapeutic recreation programming" (p. xiv). The responsibility now rests with therapeutic recreation professionals to move this work forward. The authors deserve

gratitude from professionals in the field for initiating this discussion on multiculturalism relative to therapeutic recreation practice.

References

Edginton, C. R., Jordan, D. J., DeGraaf, D. G., & Edginton, S. R. (2002). *Leisure and life satisfaction: Foundational perspectives (3rd Ed.)*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

Sylvester, C., Voelkl, J. E., & Ellis, G. D. (2001). *Therapeutic recreation programming: Theory and practice*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing.

For an interesting read on health care and multiculturalism see Fadiman, A. (1997). *The spirit catches you and you fall down: A Hmong child, her American doctors, and the collision of two cultures*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. [A special thanks to Patty Irvin for telling me about this great book.]

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