Youth Recreation and Resiliency: Putting Theory Into Practice in Fairfax County

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Youth recreation programming is increasingly focused on developing resilience among participants. Because of this emphasis on developmental program outcomes, youth programmers could benefit from adopting therapeutic recreation practices to more effectively deliver their services. Theories of therapeutic recreation practice, as well as specific skills developed in TR professionals, can be integral to effective youth programming. The Fairfax County (VA) Department of Community and Recreation Services provides an example of a teen center program that has been integrated with TR services, strengthening the department's approach to youth services. Implications of increasing the role of TR in youth development programming for practitioners and researchers are presented.

KEY WORDS: Outcomes, Resiliency, Therapeutic Recreation, Teen Centers, Youth

Municipal recreation providers are increasingly interested in providing recreation programs that do more than provide "fun and games" (Caldwell, 2000). This interest has lead to significant advances in defining how recreation service providers can be key players.

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in youth development (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992; Witt & Crompton, 1997) and prevention initiatives (Caldwell, 2000). The challenge has come in identifying mechanisms for best designing and delivering community-based recreation programs that target specific outcomes benefiting youth who are considered “at-risk.” Therapeutic recreation (TR) offers an important solution to this challenge.

Therapeutic recreation practices and philosophies provide a framework upon which recreation programming for at-risk youth can be effectively developed, implemented and evaluated. Since TR practice is often outcome-based, with the goal of developing self-reliant and competent individuals (e.g., Stumbo & Peterson, 1998), the application of TR practices and philosophies in community recreation settings has the potential to lead to more comprehensive and effective youth programming. The purposes of this paper are to argue for applying a TR framework to youth development programming in community settings and to examine a community recreation setting in Virginia where such an initiative was successfully attempted. We maintain that youth programming in recreation settings can be strengthened by the integration of TR philosophies and practices with developmental theory in the design and delivery of programs and services for youth who are considered at-risk.

We begin by reviewing literature that has examined the relationship between recreation and youth development and make the suggestion that youth recreation programs become increasingly outcome-based. A review of TR literature reveals the possibilities by which TR practice can be used as a framework to develop outcome-based youth programs. The teen center program run by the Fairfax County, Virginia, Department of Community and Recreation Services (CRS) provides an example of such a model of service delivery. By merging TR and teen center divisions, CRS has been able to better meet the needs of “at-risk” youth and increase attendance by more diverse groups in their programs. We conclude with suggestions for implications for research and practice in the evolution of youth recreation programming through integration of TR philosophies and practices.

**Youth Development, Resilience, and Recreation**

Municipal agencies increasingly want to move beyond recreation programming for youth based on just the provision of facilities and equipment for traditional sports activities (e.g., drop-in basketball) to the development of programs that target specific outcomes that benefit youth. This approach has been advanced by the Benefits Based Movement (e.g., Allen, Stevens, & Harwell, 1996; Hurtes, Allen, Stevens, & Lee, 2000) and by a national initiative to design and evaluate recreation programs for at-risk youth (the National Consortium on Recreation and Youth Development).

Several authors have noted the shortfalls associated with traditional youth programming in community recreation settings (e.g., Baker & Witt, 2000; Baldwin, 2000; McLaughlin, 2000). McLaughlin, for example, suggested that “too many community-based opportunities are ‘gym and swim’ recreation centers” (p. 8), designed to keep kids busy and off the streets. Staff in these programs often do little more than supervise participants to maintain a safe environment. The problem with these programs is that these traditional activities do not provide the “challenges” necessary to promote development in participants (Kleiber, 1999). Further, traditional, drop-in sports-based activities appeal almost exclusively to male athletes. Females are often left to be observers and recognize the programs as little more than informal social gatherings (Fairfax County Department of Community and Recreation Services, 2000).

In particular, recreation professionals have focused increasingly on the role of recreation programs and services to address problems faced by “at-risk” youth. In a national study of public recreation providers, Schultz, Cromp-
ton, and Witt (1995) asked youth programmers how they define at-risk youth. Behavioral problems, family risk factors (e.g., single parent family), economic environment factors (e.g., low income areas), and academic failure were perceived to place youth at risk. Numerous longitudinal studies (e.g., Cowen, Work, & Wyman, 1992; Werner & Smith, 1992) have identified specific risk factors and negative outcomes in each of these categories. Over the past several years, the National Consortium on Recreation and Youth Development, a national group of universities and youth service providers, has focused on the development and evaluation of recreation programs designed to address the problems faced by at-risk youth. The emphasis has been on positive youth development.

According to Larson (2000), youth develop positively when they are involved in activity that is intrinsically motivating, engaged with their surroundings so that there is “devotion of thought and effort” (p. 172), and participate over a period of time. Recreation programs that facilitate this type of development are designed to give participants the ability to function independently in social situations, a skill assumed to generalize to society at large.

Youth development and prevention practice models are based on the premise that several factors (e.g., negative attitude toward the future) can place youth at risk. Likewise, other factors or the “opposites” of risk factors (e.g., positive attitude toward the future) can protect youth from these same risks (Caldwell, 2000). The risks (and assets) can be within the individual or the context within which the live (e.g., family, neighborhood). This consideration of both the strengths and needs of individuals is aligned with TR approaches to intervention and service delivery. The focus on individual competencies and outcome development is a large part of TR practice, but also has important applications to youth development programming.

Recognition of what is meant by “risk” and the differential factors that place youth at risk is seen as a necessary first step in the design of recreation programs for youth (Caldwell, 2000). As Caldwell suggested, understanding risk helps service providers determine who will benefit best from the provision of what type of service or program. From a research and/or theory based perspective, it is important to understand under what conditions and for whom certain interventions work. (p. 5)

Additionally, a focus on positive youth development transcends an illness or deviance model of service delivery that is consistent with deficits-based social programming and instead focuses on building the capacities or assets of youth (Caldwell, 2000; Roth, 2000). A central premise in this process is the involvement of youth themselves in the design and implementation of programs. Healthy and positive development of youth inherently promotes the development of protective factors leading to resilience, which can be a major focus of recreation programming.

Social theorists and reformers (e.g., Jane Addams) argued that positive recreation experiences can lead to healthy adjustment and development (Godbey, 1999). Overall, recreation participation in itself has a strong role in development across social-psychological domains (Kleiber, 1999). More recently, several leisure and youth development theorists have integrated developmental and resilience-based theories to demonstrate how leisure experiences can be enhanced to further promote development (e.g., Kleiber, 1999; Larson & Kleiber, 1993; Larson, 2000; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). In particular, youth professionals in recreation as well as other fields of practice (e.g., education) have focused on fostering resiliency as a key developmental outcome.

In a review of existing resilience literature, Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000) defined resilience as “a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity” (p. 543). From this per-
spective, resilience is doing well in the face of problems. Resilience—adaptation despite the presence of risk factors—is a commonly targeted outcome of youth recreation. The key to building resilience may lie in the attainment of protective factors, defined as assets that mitigate the negative effects of adversity. For example, the Search Institute (Benson, 1997; Scales & Leffert, 1998) identified 40 protective factors, which they called “assets,” arranged into eight domains: commitment to learning, positive values, social competency, positive identity, support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. Witt and Crompton’s (1997) Protective Factors Framework outlined 10 specific protective factors in four domains (social environment, perceived environment, personality, and behavior) that can be enhanced by structured recreation participation. These protective factors are comparable to those targeted as outcomes in traditional TR interventions.

To guide recreation programmers in designing resilience-based programs, Allen et al. (1996) developed a benefits based programming model for youth development. The model’s implementation begins with the identification of target issues, or the protective factors to be addressed by the program. The second step of the model is an activity component, creating program objectives and implementation strategies that effectively address the target issues. The third component, benefit outcomes, involves an assessment of whether the program met the target issues previously identified. Because of the model’s emphasis on protective factors as target issues, resilience is the overall benefit or outcome of youth programming through this model. This model is compatible with processes used in the design and implementation of many traditional therapeutic recreation programs. In fact, traditional TR practice, as defined by Peterson and her colleagues (Peterson & Gunn, 1984; Stumbo & Peterson, 1998), is based on facilitating the development of skills, knowledge and awareness that lead to greater independence.

In summary, recreation and leisure participation promote youth development in several ways. Leisure professionals have capitalized on this in their design and implementation of youth programs that are intended to build protective assets that foster resilience. Lobo and Olson (2000) claimed “it is imperative that leisure programming include elements which are designed to stimulate cognitive, emotional, and social growth” (p. 14). The process of including such elements, according to Lobo and Olson, involves educating and developing skills within youth. Closer examination of these outcomes and processes of youth programming suggests that a TR based approach could be effective in the delivery of such services.

Youth Development and Therapeutic Recreation

The potential for therapeutic recreation to offer many important contributions to programming in community recreation settings for at-risk youth has recently been noted (Baldwin, 2000; Caldwell, 2000). For example, Baldwin suggested that assessment practices used in therapeutic recreation could aid in better defining the personal, familial, and contextual risk factors youth may be experiencing. The application of assessment practices used in therapeutic recreation to designing recreation programs for at-risk youth “will enable more concentrated program designs, and therefore, enhance specific program outcomes” (p. 26). In addition, Baldwin noted that professional practice in community recreation settings could benefit from adopting therapeutic recreation practitioners’ person-centered approach to service delivery. Caldwell noted that several recreation professionals who were recent contributors to the Journal of Park and Recreation Administration’s special issue on youth development (cf. Baker & Witt, 2000; Baldwin, 2000; Caldwell, 2000; Carruthers & Busser, 2000; Devine & Wilhite, 2000) maintain connections to therapeutic recreation. These researchers are leading practice
and theory-driven efforts to develop community recreation programs that are “more than just fun and games.”

Caldwell (2000) argued for the application of theory to practice in the delivery of recreation programs intentionally designed to foster positive youth development. She named this Beyond Fun and Games (BFG) Approach 2. She suggested that systematic application of theory to program design, more comprehensive levels of planning and strategic use of implementation strategies (e.g., processing techniques) distinguish programs that may be designed to variously benefit any participant (BFG Approach 1) from those programs that are specifically designed to build competence, interests, and deepen skills (BFG Approach 2).

Individuals who advocate BFG Approach 2 suggest that the goals of programming should include a deliberately educative approach to actively help youth navigate developmental tasks, learn living skills (e.g., decision making and conflict resolution), learn personally meaningful leisure interests, academic skills, and/or how to deal with stress. (Caldwell, p. 3)

The BFG Approach 2 advocated by Caldwell is consistent with TR philosophies and practices and with her call for therapeutic recreation practice to become increasingly theory-based.

As evidenced in the description of Allen et al.'s (1996) benefits based programming model and the BFG Approach 2 described above, youth development and therapeutic recreation programming have numerous similarities. These similarities in both processes and outcomes are further indicated in a recent special series on TR practice models presented in the Therapeutic Recreation Journal. While varying in process, intent and even philosophy of TR, each of the presented models was outcome-based. Targeted outcomes ranged from concepts of overall “wellness” or “health” (Austin, 1998; Van Andel, 1998; Wilhite, Keller, & Caldwell, 1999) to specific functional improvements (Dattilo, Kleiber, & Williams, 1998). Several models have specific components that are compatible with processes and outcomes utilized in youth programming.

The Leisure Ability Model (Stumbo & Peterson, 1998), the Health Protection/Health Promotion Model (Austin, 1998), and The Aristotelian Good Life Model (Widmer & Ellis, 1998) each emphasize the increase of client independence and responsibility in relation to the therapist. This concept relates directly to resilience in youth. Fostering self-responsibility and self-directed leisure engagement is also a focus of programs directed at promoting resilience. For example, the Self-Determination and Enjoyment Enhancement Model (Dattilo et al., 1998) emphasizes increasing the client’s intrinsic motivation and sense of control as a means to enhanced well-being and functioning. From this perspective, some TR models and youth development program models are compatible. In fact, Dattilo et al.’s model could be viewed as a resilience-based model in that it presumes that enhancing internal assets within an individual leads to successful coping and adaptation. Resilience is understood as successful adaptation in the face of adversity; similar outcomes are posited in TR models.

Further, specific outcomes sought by TR programs often are similar to those identified by youth development programs. As indicated previously the protective factors believed to benefit youth at risk (e.g., competency, constructive use of time) are comparable to those targeted through TR assessments and interventions. For example, a leisure competence measure (LCM) developed by Kloseck, Crilly, Ellis, and Lammers (1996) was designed to aid TR practitioners in assessing client outcomes predictive of independent leisure functioning in seven domains. While several of these domains are leisure-specific (e.g., leisure awareness, leisure attitude), others are predictors of resilience as well. For example, the social appropriateness domain of the LCM, reflecting
one’s ability to behave according to social norms, is related to the social competence and behavior domains of the developmental assets (Scales & Leffert, 1998) and protective factors frameworks (Witt & Crompton, 1997), respectively. Social contact, community participation, and group interaction skills, other domains of the LCM, are also related to resilience (Kumpfer, 1999). While the LCM is not necessarily representative of all TR outcomes for all populations in all settings, it demonstrates that outcomes related to general practice models of TR are often congruous with those attained by youth development programs. This congruence illustrates the practical possibilities of implementing TR perspectives into youth programming.

Putting Theory Into Practice: The Fairfax County Department of Community and Recreation Services

This section will provide an example of one public agency that sought to integrate youth recreation programming with TR models of practice. The Fairfax County, Virginia, Department of Community and Recreation Services (CRS) emphasizes the “community services” component of their name, going past the traditional provision of recreational activities to view leisure as a realm for the achievement of developmental outcomes by all its constituents. In December, 1997, CRS merged two of its divisions, Therapeutic Recreation Services and Teen Centers, because they saw the similarities in process and outcomes for the two divisions. The resultant Division of Therapeutic Recreation and Teen Centers (TRTC) had the following mission:

To provide individuals with physical, mental, and developmental disabilities an opportunity to acquire, restore, or apply leisure skills, knowledge, and abilities; to promote inclusion in community activities; and to foster community awareness and sensitivity for acceptance of individuals with disabilities. And to provide safe and drug free centers where Fairfax County teens can participate in a variety of social, recreational, and community activities that facilitate the establishment of healthy and positive leisure participation patterns; develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for center activities; and develop the values and ethical behavior that enable productive and responsible community citizenship. (Fairfax County Department of Community and Recreation Services, 2000)

Prior to the merger, Fairfax’s teen centers were primarily open gyms, catering mostly to male athletes interested in playing pick-up basketball. The centers offered little in the way of other structured activities and participant involvement in the programming process. A change in programming was deemed necessary, however, due to increasing concern about “at-risk youth.” CRS leaders, with the support of city officials and citizen groups, felt they had a unique opportunity to deal with the problem in its programs. Leaders within CRS reviewed youth development publications (e.g., Carnegie Council, 1992) that claimed that structured programs regarding youth as resources—providing them meaningful roles in the program’s development and implementation—were key to the development of healthy and resilient youth.

Based on the developmental assets outlined by the Search Institute (Benson, 1997), TRTC staff addressed four key components of resilience in teen center program design: social competence, problem solving, autonomy, and sense of purpose/belief in a bright future. Each of these outcomes was derived from youth development and resilience literature, especially the assets-based research of the Search Institute (Scales & Leffert, 1998). The target outcomes were addressed through the program’s design; youth-directed program planning was deemed essential to the development of each of TRTC’s resilience domains.
TRTC staff theorized that the development of social competence is positively affected when youth represent others and set agendas when developing programs. Participating in the programming process allowed youth to refine problem-solving skills. The staff believed that autonomy was enriched by giving participants control over and ownership of the program. Finally, programmers hoped that, by entrusting youth with decision making responsibility and through youths' success through participation, participants will develop positive expectations for the future.

Five service areas comprised the teen centers' programming: (a) personal and social skill building (e.g., character education, cooperative play, leadership, teamwork development), (b) exploration of recreation interests (e.g., arts and crafts, sports, outdoor and nature activities, music, dance), (c) prevention activities (e.g., drug and alcohol awareness, conflict resolution, anger management), (d) tutoring and homework support, and (e) career development and service learning (e.g., volunteering, resume writing and interviewing workshops, job training). Also, teen centers offer incentive programs for youth who exhibit character while participating in center activities. Youth can earn “Character Points” and apply them to attend teen center field trips free. For example, a teen who earns a significant amount of points from volunteering could apply the points to a ski trip. Although an emphasis is placed on all the components, CRS has focused on youth volunteering in the community. CRS theorized that by giving back to the community and feeling a sense of belonging, youth develop resilience skills. The teen centers have monthly prevention and recreation themes around which each center plans. Specific programming is also designed for females and males, providing opportunities to focus program aspects on the specific goals and objectives unique to each group.

There is a teen center in each of the nine magisterial districts of Fairfax County; therefore, participants go to the center in their own community. A full-time director and several part-time staff members and volunteers manage each center. Their roles include being “facilitators,” and aiding and guiding participants in the implementation of programs. Most centers are set in schools and most are open Friday and Saturday nights during the school year and Tuesday through Saturday nights during the summer. Participants are given community service opportunities, character building programs, dances, athletic programs, art programs, and more. There is no participation fee, but youth must register and have a parent’s permission. Males and females in seventh through twelfth grade (approximately 12–18 years old) are allowed to participate. The defining quality of a CRS teen center, however, is the planning meetings attended and run by participants. To foster youth-direction within the program, CRS embraces the development of committees and planning groups to decide on programming directions and strategies for each center. Participants at these meetings are charged with representing their peers and making the major programming decisions for their respective center.

The similarities in teen center operation and TR practice models were evident from the start to CRS leaders. Leisure independence, articulated by Peterson and her colleagues (Peterson & Gunn, 1984; Stumbo & Peterson, 1998) as the key to successful TR practice, is also seen as the outcome of CRS teen centers that facilitates the acquisition of other protective factors. By providing opportunities for youth direction, the teen center staffs attempt to foster self-determination and empowerment within their participants. If staff determine individuals have problems participating independently, they offer individualized programs, such as leisure education or social skills development. Also inherent in both TR and youth development program practice is the need to intensely analyze activities and populations to ensure that programs are effective at social, cultural, and developmental levels.

Fairfax County CRS administrators also recognized that the emphasis on outcomes was a major commonality between their teen center
and TR programs. Additionally, they believed that involving TR staff in the teen centers would strengthen the programs and services offered because they operate conceptually from programming and practice models that are congruent with the outcomes and methods identified for the teen centers. TR professionals are extensively trained in identifying and programming for outcomes. Many are experienced and trained in working with individuals, developing assertiveness training programs and other individual service plans. CRS officials believed these skills to be essential when working with youth. A number of teen center participants have been judicially referred. Also, as mental health services for youth have become more extensive and available, more have participants diagnosed with learning, emotional, and/or attention and hyperactivity disorders has increased. TR professionals, trained in university curricula in goal and objective setting for individuals, are well prepared for working with these populations.

TR professionals possess other skills that have contributed to their integral role within the teen centers. For example TR curricula often stress working in multidisciplinary health care teams. Teen centers often function in a similar fashion, referring participants in need of other human services. Teen center directors can work with other service providers to develop effective and comprehensive plans for referred youth; TR training is viewed as beneficial to those working in this capacity.

CRS prefers to hire teen center staff trained or with experience in TR. When the teen center structure was redesigned, the center director positions were upgraded in position and salary. This enabled CRS to recruit individuals who had the preferred qualification of being therapeutic recreation specialists. In fact, individuals who are certified are paid at a higher rate than those with general recreation degrees. Currently, the teen centers employ six Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists, including the TRTC branch manager. CRS leaders believed TR professionals have the requisite focus on outcomes and understanding of the processes and programming principles that make youth development programming effective. In effect, CRS treats youth programming (at least at the teen center level) as a branch of TR practice.

A study of the CRS teen centers provided evidence of the program's effectiveness (Ellis, 2001). The results indicated that, when compared to a traditionally run community center teen program, the teen center participants developed a greater sense of self-efficacy. Further, through this development of self-efficacy, the participants attained a sense of voice, defined as the perception that one's opinions are heard and respected by others (especially adults) in the community. Observations of the program indicated that through achieving success in making programming decisions (i.e., youth direction led to self-efficacy), participants felt more confident that they were respected by program leaders and other adults in the community (i.e., they had voice). The Carnegie Council (1992) argued that youth should be treated and recognized by adults as community resources. The results presented by Ellis suggest that CRS participants actually feel as if they are treated as resources.

Other assessments of Fairfax County teen centers, based on annual participation rates, show positive trends for the program. For example, participation in teen councils, service projects, and other "alternative" activities increased from 30% from 1999 (Fiscal Year) to 2000 (attendance at such activities in 1999 was 47,894; in 2000, it was 62,201); this exceeded the projected increase of just over 20%. CRS staff attributed this surge in participation to the spread of information from participants pleased with the changes in teen center structure. Staff members that believed in the effectiveness of their programs enthusiastically promoted them. In 2000, the teen centers met their objective of diversifying the types of programs offered (i.e., at least 70% of all activities are non-basketball). As more youth participate in new and diverse activities, they talk about them to their friends and classmates, and more youth become involved. Also, as youth have
had a say in teen center programming, it is assumed that the activities have become more attractive to area youth. The changes made to the once basketball-only program appeal to a much wider audience. For example, female participation increased 10% increase from 1999 to 2000. Overall participation increased 23% (the projected growth was 15%) from 1999 to 2000, after increasing 14% from 1998 to 1999. In 2000, the average daily participation rate was just over 72 teens per center. Special events attracted over 250 youth on average.

TRTC also projected a 13.3% increase in the number of teens referred by police and courts served by the teen centers. Such teens receive individual assessments and Individual Service Plans are created for them. Reflecting a growing respect accorded the teen centers by local crime enforcement officials and the courts, referrals increased from 15 in 1999 to 65 in 2000. There appears to be a great deal of support for and belief in the effectiveness of the teen center program by youth-serving officials in referring agencies.

**Conclusion: Implications of Youth Development Programming for TR Practice and Research**

Results of a study of inclusion services by Devine and Kotowski (1999) indicated that a majority of public recreation administrators feel their staff need more training to provide services (e.g., behavior modification) often considered within the purview of TR professionals. While this survey was based on inclusion services for people with disabilities, the results have implications for youth service providers as well. As has been demonstrated in this paper, TR and youth development have similar processes and theory. Having staff well trained in TR practice and principles would benefit the myriad populations served by recreation programs and services, including youth. Nonetheless, according to Devine and Kotowski, most agencies' administrators believe their staff lack these skills. Greater training in TR would enable recreation leaders to feel better prepared to intervene appropriately in the development of skills and competencies of their young constituents. Such preparation would allow recreation agencies to more effectively develop and implement outcome-based programs for youth.

For example, leisure education should be essential to developmental youth programming. Popularly cited statistics claim that over 40% of youth's time is discretionary; much of it occurs during the after-school hours (Carnegie Council, 1992). Many youth programs' goals are directed toward assisting participants in learning to use leisure time in healthy ways (Ellis & Riley, 1999). Independent leisure participation is one of CRS's stated objectives for teen centers. By using recreation as a tool to develop youth's life-long leisure habits, CRS believes that participants will be successful in managing other aspects of their lives as well. Providing youth empowerment and control within recreational activities is posited by CRS staff to influence future leisure experiences as well as to develop resilience. Having youth workers trained in leisure education principles would greatly increase the effectiveness of programs in meeting this goal.

Whereas outcome-based programming has always been central to TR programs and services, many public youth-serving recreation agencies had not adopted such practices until recently. The benefits movement (see Allen, 1996) has provided the education and momentum necessary for many, including Fairfax County CRS. Adapting TR processes for youth development can aid recreation agencies to assess important issues, design and implement programs to meet specific outcomes, and evaluate outcomes. As indicated previously, CRS sees youth development recreation as a form of TR. Many of the principles and practices involved in outcome-based youth programming and TR are similar. Efforts to merge TR and youth services, or at least adopt a TR perspective in the provision of youth services, can serve to strengthen both fields.

Further research and theory development is
required in the area of outcome-based developmental programming. To begin with, more evaluation of youth program outcomes is needed to create comprehensive descriptions of current program outcomes and "what works" in program design. Existing literature has shown that a wide variety of recreation programs have met intended resilience-based outcomes. A more extensive body of knowledge must be developed, however, to explain what it is about these programs that develops such assets. Program process evaluations focusing on participant-staff relations, implementation procedures, and other tangible and intangible aspects of programs can benefit greatly the youth development programming field.

Development and evaluation of TR-based interventions (e.g., behavior modification, leisure education) for youth targeted at building resilience, preventing negative behaviors, and promoting healthy development in youth are necessary. Elaboration and testing of a youth development TR practice model would be a valuable resource to guide youth programmers and researchers. While Allen, Stevens, and Harwell (1996) created a useful practice-based model, a more extensively theory-based model is needed. For example, tying together the development of autonomy through youth-direction in recreation with resilience and other developmental factors could enlighten practitioners and academics alike as to the processes by which to implement youth recreation.

Qualitative research along the lines of Henderson and King's (1999) study of teen center participants could provide evidence of youths' perceptions of teen programming. Lines of research could focus on the meanings participants attach to programs, observable changes in participants over the course of programs, and so on. Together, these efforts directed at research and theory development will contribute to ensuring the ongoing viability and efficacy of both public recreation and TR services for youth.

References


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