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GUEST CONTRIBUTION

Recreation for all: providing leisure and recreation services in multi-ethnic communities

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The goal of this paper is to provide an overview of the multiple roles leisure and recreation play in the lives of ethnic and racial minorities, to examine constraints that affect minorities' participation in leisure and their use of recreation resources and to provide strategies for recreation providers working in multi-ethnic communities. The review shows that leisure and recreation provide a number of benefits to minorities, including facilitating interracial/intergroup contacts, creating opportunities for learning and cultural exchange, helping to strengthen bonds with ethnic communities and families, facilitating preservation of ethnic culture, fostering socio-economic advancement and improving physical and mental health. Simultaneously, minorities are constrained by factors related to socio-economic status, including lack of time, money and overwork, limited access to quality recreation environments and resources, discrimination, lack of information and certain culture-related constraints. This paper provides a number of suggestions recreation providers who work in diverse communities can follow to provide culturally appropriate and sensible recreation services to their constituents.

Keywords: leisure; recreation; ethnic and racial minorities; immigrants

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, ethnic diversity and migrations are a global phenomenon. Today, the USA, Canada, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand are more diverse than ever before. According to the latest Census, more than one-third of the US population were classified as racial or ethnic minorities (U.S. Census, 2013). Between 2000 and 2010, minorities accounted for 91.7% of the US population growth (Passel, Livingston, & Cohn, 2012), making the nation's diversity likely to increase in the future (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). Similar trends are observable in Canada, where in the last two decades the number of visible minorities has increased from 5% to 19% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2013). In 2013, 12% of the UK's population were immigrants, mostly originating from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, the Caribbean and Africa (Peters, 2014; PEW Research Center, 2013). In Germany and in the Netherlands, approximately 12% of the population were immigrants primarily from Turkey and Morocco (Peters, 2014; PEW Research Center, 2013). Refugee crises sparked by wars in the Middle East, Africa and South and South East Asia also have led to major population movements. The number of overseas-born Australians (28%) and New Zealanders (25%) have reached nearly record highs, with the main migratory flows coming from China (PEW Research Center, 2013; Tsai, Cushman,

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Gidlow, & Toohey, 2014). Immigration figures, although remarkable, do not reflect the true diversity of these countries' populations, as they fail to take into account millions of second, third and subsequent generations' ethnics.¹ China itself is experiencing what has been described as the biggest internal migrations in the history of mankind. It is estimated that just in 2012, 163.36 million migrant workers left their hometowns in search of work in other provinces (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2013). Such large scale population movements lead to cultural change both among the migrants and the host populations, and create problems related to the integration of immigrants, border security and "legalization" of undocumented newcomers. They also lead to labour market concerns and pressure on health care, housing and education systems in host communities. These, in turn, give rise to major realignments in voting patterns, as well as racial tensions and nationalistic sentiments among the local populations (Abrajano, 2014; PEW Research Center, 2013). At the same time, ethnic minorities provide important contributions to cultural, economic and political lives of their host countries.

In this context, issues of leisure among ethnic and racial minorities have been studied for the last 40 years. While the early research documented the differences in recreation participation among non-Hispanic Whites and African-Americans (e.g., Mueller & Gurin, 1962), more contemporary scholarship has examined a variety of other topics, including interracial relations in leisure, constraints on leisure faced by minorities, the roles of leisure in the adaptation of immigrants, physical activity among minority populations, the use of natural environments for leisure, as well as the unique meanings and motivations for leisure. This paper is intended to (1) provide an overview of the multiple roles leisure and recreation play in the lives of ethnic and racial minorities, (2) examine constraints that affect minorities' participation in leisure and (3) provide strategies recreation agencies can use to maximize the benefits and alleviate constraints on the use of recreation resources by ethnic and racial minority members.

The roles of leisure and recreation in the lives of ethnic and racial minorities

Leisure and recreation play important roles in the lives of ethnic and racial minorities. They provide a number of benefits, including facilitating interracial/intergroup contacts, providing opportunities for learning and cultural exchange, helping to strengthen bonds with ethnic communities and families, facilitating preservation of ethnic culture, fostering immigrants' socio-economic advancement and improving their physical and mental health.

Facilitating intergroup contacts, providing opportunities for learning and strengthening bonds with ethnic communities and families

Leisure, recreation and sport provide opportunity for minorities to familiarize themselves with the culture of the host society and to establish and strengthen bonds with people outside and within their ethnic enclaves. Research has shown that by observing leisure engagements of the host population and the way people celebrate holidays, or by taking part in more intimate interactions with the mainstream, immigrants familiarize themselves with the history and culture of their new country and embark on the complex process of cultural adaptation (Peters, 2010). Leisure activities can also help build bridges between ethnic and mainstream communities and promote cultural understanding (Kim, Heo, King, & Kim, 2014; Tirone & Goodberry, 2011). Through watching television, reading books and local newspapers, playing basketball, tennis, and taekwondo, visiting bars, and attending leisure

events, immigrants establish contacts, learn the local language and interact with members of the mainstream in non-stressful settings (Allison & Geiger, 1993; Heo & Lee, 2007; Kim, Dattilo, & Heo, 2011; Kim, Kleiber, & Kropf, 2001; Stodolska, 2000).² Similarly, attending school-sponsored sporting events of their children helps immigrant parents develop new contacts and friendships (Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). Leisure not only plays critical role in establishing bonds with new communities, but also in retaining contact with families and communities of origin. Transnational leisure activities, such as sending photos and videos, online chats and phone/Skype conversations, help immigrants maintain links with families and friends they left behind (Stodolska & Santos, 2006).

Immigrants who have experienced downward socio-economic mobility, especially in the immediate period after their arrival, often use leisure and sport to reestablish their sense of worth, personal value and status within the community (Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). Leisure also provides an important communication platform in interracial/interethnic and immigrant marriages. It helps couples develop multiple interests, create family traditions and learn about each other's culture (Sharaievskaya, Kim, & Stodolska, 2013). It provides a mechanism to release tension in a prejudicial environment (Hibbler & Shiner, 2002), an opportunity to bond with children who struggle with acculturative stress, and to preserve contacts with people with whom they share common culture and experience (Stodolska, 2007; Stodolska & Yi, 2003).

Preserving ethnic culture and reducing acculturative stress

As Pieper (1963) argued, culture depends for its very existence on leisure and leisure, by allowing people to be free, expressive and creative, is the carrier of culture. Thus, leisure and recreation have been recognized as critical forces in the process of preservation (and sometimes even invention – see Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1984) of ethnic traditions. Research has shown that such functions of leisure can be particularly important for immigrants in the immediate period following their arrival, for older minority members, and for those who desire to pass on ethnic traditions to next generations. For new immigrants who miss comforts of their home and who are immersed in an alien culture of the host society, leisure helps to reduce stress, provides a sense of familiarity and allows to retain connection to their culture and former way of life. Immigrants use leisure to maintain contact with their families back home, watch movies, listen to traditional music, eat ethnic cuisine and celebrate their heritage (Allison & Geiger, 1993; Kim et al., 2001; Stodolska, 2000; Stodolska & Santos, 2006). Older minority members often find it particularly difficult to adjust after immigration and are at a higher risk for depression and other mental health issues (American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Immigration, 2012). Reading ethnic newspapers, watching news from the home country, planting traditional vegetables and relying on social support of other members of the community helps them alleviate home sickness, prevent loneliness and ward-off negative effects of acculturative stress (Allison & Geiger, 1993; Kim et al., 2001; Walker, Halpeny, & Deng, 2011). Transnational leisure activities also help to stay connected to the cultural, social and political events in the home country and to maintain their ethnic and national identities (Stodolska & Santos, 2006; Stodolska & Tainsky, 2015). Participation in ethnic leisure can also help maintain ethnic traditions among subsequent generations and foster ties among multigenerational ethnic families (Huang, Norman, Ramshaw, & Haller, 2015; Tirone & Goodberry, 2011). Additionally, genealogical travel to the home country has been shown to play important role in helping one-and-a-half, second and third generation ethnics

familiarize themselves with their heritage, learn their ethnic language, reconnect with their roots and, in the process, shape their ethnic identity (Cohen, 2004; Conway, Potter, & Bernard, 2009; Day-Vines, Barker, & Exum, 1998; Duval, 2004; Kim & Stodolska, 2013; Stephenson, 2002).

It needs to be noted that the preservation of ethnic traits is not equivalent to the absence of assimilation. During the adaptation process, most minority members retain elements of their traditional cultures while adopting certain traits of their host society (Nagel, 1994). They frequently embrace values of their host communities, work in mainstream workplaces and engage in the political process but, at the same time, retain selected elements of their traditional culture, such as unique holiday celebrations, preference for food or family values (Keefe & Padilla, 1998). In fact, as Isajiw (1990) claimed, leisure activities, such as preparing traditional foods and celebrating ethnic holidays are often retained the longest (even past third generation) among immigrants who have otherwise been fully assimilated to the mainstream culture. Such ethnics frequently have little understanding of the original meaning of these pastimes and traditions, which often take form of “symbolic ethnicity” (Gans, 1979).

Promoting socio-economic advancement

Studies have shown that leisure activities in which immigrants participate and the ethnic composition of their leisure networks can have an important effect on their economic success after arrival. In particular, the phenomenon of ethnic enclosure in leisure – a tendency of minorities to maintain social networks primarily within their own ethnic group and to use ethnic community resources to facilitate leisure (Stodolska, 2007) – is likely to play a role in their economic achievement. For instance, in Stodolska, Marcinkowski and Yi-Kook’s (2007) study, Korean immigrants who socialized with their non-Korean co-workers during lunches, visits to bars, and socials organized by employers, earned more than those who avoided contacts with non-Korean colleagues. Such activities were helpful in promoting friendships within the workplace and, in some instances, were considered a prerequisite for professional success. Moreover, Korean immigrants who spent leisure time with mainstream Americans derived such benefits as being able to develop social networks helpful in securing jobs, polish their English language skills and familiarize themselves with the mainstream culture, which, in turn, was helpful in obtaining better employment.

When it comes to the socio-economic advancement within ethnic communities, however, leisure can often play the opposite role. Portes and Bach (1985) and Portes and Zhou (1993) argued that for lower-status immigrants, economic opportunities may be available only within their ethnic enclave and relying on ethnic networks may be necessary for socio-economic advancement. As Stodolska and Alexandris (2004) showed, leisure and recreational sports, such as golf and tennis, can strengthen community bonds among ethnics and help immigrants establish contacts and network with those with whom they share common culture and experience. Leisure interactions help them find jobs within the ethnic labour market, obtain credit and promote business contacts (Kim et al., 2001).

Improving physical and mental health

Issues of health and obesity have garnered attention of leisure researchers in North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, Latin America and Africa (Marinho & Reiss,

in press; Naidoo, in press; Tsai et al., 2014). A large body of research links recreation, and physical activity in particular, to physical and mental health (Bocarro & Edwards, in press; Caldwell, 2005; Godbey, Caldwell, Floyd, & Payne, 2005; Godbey & Mowen, 2010; Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000; Payne, Ainsworth, & Godbey, 2010). For example, physical activity has been reported to lower the incidence of cardiovascular diseases, reduce the risk of certain cancers, prevent osteoporosis, reduce stress and improve mood (Edwards & Casper, 2012). The role of leisure time physical activity (LTPA) in obesity prevention has been particularly well documented (Goran, Reynolds, & Lindquist, 1999; Hu, 2008; Lee, Djousse, Sesso, Wang, & Buring, 2010; Seo & Li, 2010; Wareham, van Sluijs, & Ekelund, 2005). LTPA is of critical importance, as the prevalence of overweight and obesity has increased dramatically not only among minorities in the developed Western countries (Health United States, 2012), but throughout most of the world, including China and Africa (Levine, 2008; Naidoo, in press; Reynolds et al., 2007; World Health Organization, 2010). However, in the USA and beyond, participation in LTPA among ethnic minorities is exceedingly low. For instance, in 2011, only 17.9% of adult African-Americans and 15.4% of Latinos in the USA met the aerobic and muscle strengthening physical activity guidelines established by the federal government (for comparison, the same was true for 21.4% of non-Hispanic Whites). Such low rates of LTPA contributed to high prevalence of overweight and obesity among African-Americans (70.2% among males and 80.3% among females) and Mexican Americans (81.8% among males and 79.2% among females) and other negative health outcomes (Health United States, 2012).

Low rates of participation in physically active leisure among minorities usually begin early in childhood and have been shown to be associated with acculturation, although findings of research in this area are inconclusive. For instance, while Crespo, Smit, Carter-Pokras, and Andersen (2001) and Berrigan, Dodd, Troiano, Reeve, and Ballard-Barbash (2006) reported that physical activity among Latinos increased with acculturation, Marquez and McAuley (2006) found that acculturation among Latinos was related to occupational physical activity, but not to LTPA.

Public spaces, such as urban parks, are the primary context for physical activity among minorities, as they could be accessed at little to no cost and accommodate their larger, on average, families (Floyd, Taylor, & Whitt-Glover, 2009; Gobster, 2002; Shores & West, 2008). Moreover, research shows that minorities of lower socio-economic status often cannot easily travel to suburban areas because of lack of cars, inability to afford gas, lack of driver's licence, lack of time and often a perception of not being welcome in White communities (Stodolska, Shinew, Acevedo, & Izenstark, 2011; West, 1989). At the same time, the use of natural environments and other public spaces for physical activity in minority urban communities is often constrained by overcrowding, poor maintenance, safety concerns and racial tensions (Stodolska & Shinew, 2010).

Constraints that affect minorities' participation in leisure and the use of recreation resources

Socio-economics: lack of time, money and overwork

Despite economic gains in the last several decades, ethnic minorities in the developed countries of the West are still generally overrepresented in the lower socio-economic strata (Macartney, Bishaw, & Fontenot, 2013; Ward, Lelkes, Sutherland, & Tóth, 2009). For instance, in 2010, the median household income for non-Hispanic Whites in the USA was \$54,620, compared to \$37,759 for Hispanics and \$32,068 for African-Americans

(U.S. Census, 2011). These socio-economic disparities have been exacerbated by the 2008 economic downturn that disproportionately affected people of colour (Murdock, 2014). The constraining effects of low socio-economic status on leisure are multifaceted and may relate to lack of resources for leisure, lack of time, overwork, living in impoverished urban communities, and lack of socialization to certain pastimes. Inability to afford recreation equipment, sign up for programmes and pay entry fees to recreation facilities are a direct result of lower purchasing power among many minority groups. Such constraints often result in lower participation rates among minority adults and children in sport and recreation programmes offered by local recreation providers (Shores & West, 2008). Even if programme fees are relatively modest, many minorities who need to support larger, on average, families are priced out of participation in organized sport and leisure. In the USA, such constraints have been exacerbated by the commercial approach to service delivery adopted in recent years by many park and recreation agencies that strive to generate revenue through fees and charges, and by the privatization of some leisure services (Scott, 2014).

As a result of the lower socio-economic status, minorities are also often forced to hold several low wage, but physically demanding jobs and thus have less free time available for leisure than mainstream Whites. Lack of set work hours prevents people from participating in many organized sport or recreation activities, and the low-skill jobs that they hold make them unable or unwilling to take any extended time off (Stodolska, 2000; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). Moreover, physically strenuous employment often results in minorities' having little desire or stamina to participate in physical activity in their leisure time (Crespo, 2000). Such constraints are particularly pronounced among immigrants during the first several years after arrival, when they often struggle to find employment that matches their skills and abilities, and need to cover additional expenses related to establishing their lives in the host country (Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004; Tsai & Coleman, 1999). Transnational migrants who reside in the host country only temporarily and who remit much of their financial resources to their communities of origin often experience heightened economic constraints during the entire duration of their stay abroad (Stodolska & Santos, 2006). Economic constraints are intensified for undocumented immigrants who fill the lowest paying jobs and who struggle with low job security in the host country (Burset & Stodolska, 2012). Economic constraints also often have an indirect effect on leisure among minority children who are not socialized to participation in certain pastimes, such as resource-intensive, outdoor activities and sports that require costly equipment, use of expensive facilities, specialized coaching and travel (Gobster, 1998a).

Limited access to quality recreation environments and resources

It is quite common in Western countries for many ethnic and racial minorities to reside in underprivileged inner-city communities, which brings with itself an additional array of constraints. Limited park space, inferior quality and scarce recreation facilities, racial divisions in neighbourhoods, crime and conflict over "proper" use of recreation lands and resources often constrain minorities' leisure. Studies show that minority communities in the USA have less access to green spaces (Floyd et al., 2009; Garcia, 2013) and that less acculturated immigrants have less access to resources conducive to active recreation (Harrolle, Floyd, Casper, Kelley, & Bruton, 2013). The existing parks and facilities are often of poor quality and instead of providing benefits for communities and their

residents, they are eyesores and sites of illicit activities (Gobster, 1998b; Stodolska et al., 2011). Minority neighbourhoods are also more likely than others to be surrounded by highways, railroad tracks and other physical features that hinder access to nearby parks and open spaces. In cities with high degree of racial/ethnic segregation, park visitation is also constrained if it requires crossing gang boundaries or invisible “racial lines” that divide neighbourhoods (Gobster, 1998b; Stodolska, Shinew, Acevedo, & Roman, 2013). The very fact that a park or a recreation facility is labelled as “Hispanic” or “Black” – depending on the background of most of the staff and users – can deter members of other minority groups from visiting (Fernandez & Witt, 2013; West, 1989).

Crime is also a serious problem in many urban areas where minorities reside. As Loukaitou-Sideris and Eck (2007) argued, “Living in neighborhoods with high physical and/or social disorder generates stress and fear. Physical incivilities (e.g., deteriorated or abandoned buildings, litter, graffiti) or social incivilities (e.g., public drunks, beggars, panhandlers, homeless) produce feelings of risk and fear” (p. 382). Studies have shown that on many occasions local parks are overrun by gangs and used as hangouts and convenient places to sell and use drugs. Fights over control of the gang territory lead to drive-by-shootings that oftentimes involve innocent bystanders and produce feelings of fear among the local population. As some of the interviewees in Stodolska, Acevedo, and Shinew’s (2009) study described, gang members “hijack” the entire neighbourhood and make it unsafe to play, walk, or bike on the street, or travel to the park. Research has found that Latino youth who express greater fear of crime engage in significantly less physical activity and outdoor recreation (Shinew, Stodolska, Roman, & Yahner, 2013). Crime prevents children from visiting parks and other places that require crossing gang boundaries. Moreover, it restricts their participation in outdoor recreation after dark and increases their preference for indoor, adult-supervised recreation (Stodolska et al., 2013).

While many minorities choose to spend their leisure time in more distant, safer and better maintained suburban natural environments, access to such places may be constrained by problems with transportation or association with past or current incidents of discrimination (Erickson, Johnson, & Kivel, 2009; West, 1989). Problems may also arise when undocumented immigrants are considered trespassers who have no right to use municipal park and recreation facilities. In some North American communities, Latino immigrants have clashed with park and recreation officials regarding access to recreation fields and proper use of park lands (Bursset & Stodolska, 2012).

Discrimination

Difficulties accessing quality recreation resources and environments can be exacerbated by interracial conflict and discrimination from other park users, staff of recreation centres, police and park rangers (Blahna & Black, 1993; Fernandez & Witt, 2013; Gobster, 1998b, 2002; Livengood & Stodolska, 2004; Sharaievska, Stodolska, Shinew, & Kim, 2010). Studies have shown that many members of minority groups are viewed with suspicion, and subjected to verbal and physical harassment, or hate stares when they visit park and recreation facilities (Blahna & Black, 1993; Flood & McAvoy, 2007; Livengood & Stodolska, 2004; Sharaievska et al., 2010). African-American, Latino and Native American recreationists have reported being denied or offered substandard service at restaurants, pools and recreation centres, told that they “don’t belong” in a certain area, and being followed by police and park rangers (Blahna & Black, 1993; Feagin, 1991; Fernandez & Witt, 2013; McDonald & McAvoy, 1997).

Recreationists have been shown to adopt a number of strategies to respond to such discriminatory treatment, including invoking their middle class status (Feagin, 1991), researching the location in advance of the visit (Hibbler & Shinew, 2002), recreating in larger groups (Livengood & Stodolska, 2004) or responding verbally to harassment (Sharaievska et al., 2010). Unfortunately, the most common response was either avoiding certain areas where they expected mistreatment or had heard of past incidents of discrimination (Erickson et al., 2009; Fernandez & Witt, 2013; Gobster, 1998a; Johnson, Bowker, English, & Worthen, 1998; West, 1989), leaving the area or facility after the discrimination had been encountered (Blahna & Black, 1993; Feagin, 1991), or deciding to remain and contend with decreased quality of experience (Flood & McAvoy, 2007; McDonald & McAvoy, 1997). While the issues of White privilege has garnered considerable attention from leisure researchers (Arai & Kivel, 2009; Kivel, Johnson, & Scraton, 2009; McDonald, 2009), it is only recently that studies considered institutional and structural forms of discrimination (Erickson et al., 2009; Glover, 2007; Scott, 2014).

Lack of information and culture-related constraints

Ethnic and racial minorities, and immigrants in particular, often lack information and knowledge about recreation resources and opportunities, as recreation agencies tend to rely on traditional information channels such as print brochures or Internet websites that some minorities cannot easily access. At the same time, many people of colour obtain information about community events through means different than traditional advertising, such as word of mouth, recommendation of community leaders, ethnic radio and church events. Moreover, most of the information regarding recreation opportunities, even in diverse communities, is distributed in the language of the mainstream that many newcomers have difficulties understanding (Casper & Harrolle, 2013; Stodolska et al., 2011; Yu & Berryman, 1996).

Cultural factors may also contribute to why some ethnic and racial groups are constrained in their use of recreation resources. Oftentimes activities traditionally offered by recreation agencies, municipalities, workplaces and schools are seen as irrelevant to the interests and needs of minority groups. In recent years, some American communities with large concentrations of Latinos have made great strides to expand their recreation activity portfolio to feature soccer in addition to traditional American football, baseball/softball and basketball leagues. Other locales, where the population demographics are shifting rapidly, are only beginning to appreciate the needs of their new customers and to learn how to provide them with culturally appropriate services. This requires not only understanding of the demographic shifts of the population and their recreation preferences, but also more nuanced appreciation of the group's culture that may influence its leisure choices and styles. For instance, numerous studies have documented constraints faced by female Muslim recreationists who cannot wear revealing clothing while participating in sport or leisure and take part in activities in mixed-gender groups (Stodolska & Livengood, 2006; Tirone & Pedlar, 2000; Walseth & Fasting, 2003). In other cases, even individual leisure activities in friendship circles may be constrained for Muslims due to Islam's restriction on consumption of alcohol and non-halal foods (Stodolska & Livengood, 2006).

Culture-related constraints on leisure may also stem from childcare functions among women and young girls, emphasis on family oriented recreation and recreation styles that are incompatible with facility design. Alvarez and Bean (1981), Clark (1979) and

Hutchison (1987) pointed out that factors such as machismo, or male dominance, emphasis on respect for elders, subordination of youth and restrictions on social contacts of unmarried females can constrain leisure activities among Latino recreationists. Irwin, Gartner, and Phelps (1990) and Gobster (2002), on the other hand, argued that considering Latinos' tendency to recreate in larger groups, the design of most American campgrounds and park facilities can constrain their outdoor recreation. Adherence to strict Confucian values has been shown to constrain recreation behaviour among immigrants from China and Korea. Collectivistic orientation, strict hierarchy within the group, respect for the elderly, and a preference for intellectual, passive activities over active recreation can impose constraints on immigrants who desire to engage in individual active leisure pursuits (Ap, 2002; Schutte & Ciarlante, 1998; Stodolska & Yi, 2003; Walker, Deng, & Chapman, 2007). Regardless of the cultural background, however, most immigrants are constrained by a set of factors related to their newcomer status such as language difficulties, lack of knowledge of recreation sites and opportunities and lack of partners due to limited social networks in the host country (Casper & Harrolle, 2013; Doherty & Taylor, 2007; Harrolle et al., 2013; Heo & Lee, 2007; Rublee & Shaw, 1991; Scott, Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2006; Stodolska, 1998; Stodolska & Santos, 2006; Tsai & Coleman, 1999; Yu & Berryman, 1996).

Strategies recreation agencies can use to maximize the benefits and alleviate constraints on the use of recreation resources by ethnic and racial minorities

Recreation providers who work in diverse communities or whose communities are likely to undergo a major demographic shift in the near future could follow a number of steps to prepare themselves to provide culturally appropriate and sensible recreation services to their constituents:

- (1) Know your constituents and what their needs, preferences and constraints are when it comes to recreation participation. Conduct surveys and focus groups, reach out to local leaders through community centres, churches and support groups. Make sure to obtain the necessary information not only from the existing users, but more importantly, from the non-users and non-visitors. Their feedback will help you understand the constraints that prevent people from visiting your facility or from taking advantage of the community recreation resources.
- (2) Be open to new activity offerings and be flexible when it comes to established rules and regulations. Those rules and regulations may concern membership/entrance requirements, appropriate attire and facility rental procedures.
- (3) Think of the ways to alleviate potential constraints and encourage participation. Examples may include providing childcare services, encouraging women to participate with their children and providing activities for entire families. Be sensitive to constraints related to demanding work schedules, limited finances, possible food restrictions, mixed gender interactions, temporary residence (some of the participants might be seasonal migrants), limited social networks, shyness due to language difficulties and concerns related to undocumented status.
- (4) Be mindful of who is employed in your agency – do your employees understand the culture, speak the language and are welcoming to the

- newcomers? Consider hiring local community residents who not only have a good understanding of the needs of the local population, but can serve as liaisons to the diverse population of your community.
- (5) Be mindful of the history of the community where you operate and possible interracial/ethnic tensions that existed in the past. They may affect how local residents relate to each other, how they interact in recreation settings, and the extent to which they make use of local recreation resources.
 - (6) Have a good understanding of the relations among different stakeholders in the community. Do local residents feel confident in their elected leaders? Are their relations with local school boards and law-enforcement officials based on trust and understanding or, conversely, rife with tension and conflict?
 - (7) Remember that your immigrant constituents may come with histories and baggage related to their refugee experiences or ethnic conflicts they experienced in the past that will affect their trust in local stakeholders and relations with other ethnic groups in the area.
 - (8) Think of the ways leisure and recreation can be used creatively to break down barriers, build bridges among different members of the community and help newcomers adapt to the new environment. Develop activities that involve intergroup contact, culture sharing and learning.
 - (9) Develop collaborations and partnerships with other community stakeholders. You cannot do it alone – schools, churches and other community organizations may jointly leverage resources, including staff, facilities and funding to serve the community better.
 - (10) Learn to communicate effectively. Employ culturally sensitive marketing – distribute information through a variety of means and in languages that are understood by the diverse groups of residents. It is important that promotional materials targeting a particular group are designed with the needs of this group in mind, feature visuals that these groups may find appealing and are representative of their community.

Notes

1. Unlike the USA and Canada, many countries do not collect data on the ethnic and racial background of their residents and only record immigration flows. It makes it exceedingly difficult to estimate the number of non-immigrant ethnic and racial minorities.
2. It needs to be noted, however, that sport also promotes competition and introduces a possibility of inter-ethnic/racial conflict which may negatively contribute to interethnic interactions (Walker et al., 2011).

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