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Perceptions of Programming Needs for Inclusive Leisure Services

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Executive Summary

Leisure involves people engaging in structured and unstructured activities in community settings. Despite the myriad benefits of leisure participation, some people do not have opportunities to use their free time in a satisfying manner. Although most professionals consider inclusion to be an important goal of leisure services, many agencies do not welcome or offer unwelcoming or inaccessible services to people who are mar-

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ginalized and/or oppressed as a result of various characteristics (e.g., ability, economic resources, age, gender, religion, ethnicity, race, sexuality).

There is a need for research that highlights facilitators to inclusive leisure services. This study is part of a larger initiative to identify best practices in structured inclusive leisure programs and to develop an accreditation process with standards that reflect evidence-based practices. To this end, a focus group allowed a team of professionals to share its knowledge and experiences with inclusive leisure services.

Focus group participants were eight members of the accreditation development team. The following lead request drove the discussion: *Please describe services you consider best practices for inclusive leisure services*. The focus group, lasting approximately three hours, was audio-recorded and transcribed. Following the constant comparative analytic framework, researchers identified patterns in data and relationships between concepts. Member check sessions providing opportunities for participants to provide input on codes, categories, and themes.

Seven themes emerged: (a) participation, (b) social connections, (c) enjoyment, (d) choice, (e) competence, (f) social responsibility, and (g) learning. The themes of participation and social connections are primary themes because of the extensiveness of examples and emphasis discussants placed on them. Although several participants have expertise associated with inclusion of people with disabilities, their expertise and comments during the focus group encompassed other characteristics that often result in challenges to leisure (e.g., economic resources, age, gender, religion, ethnicity, race, sexuality). Results encourage practitioners to deliver inclusive leisure services by making accommodations to ensure all participants regardless of characteristics experience leisure, and by intentionally fostering social connections to help participants develop meaningful relationships. Focus group members emphasized the importance of leisure service providers creating enjoyable experiences, encouraging all participants to make choices, instilling a sense of competence in participants, modeling and rewarding social responsibility, and teaching a variety of skills. By following these best practices, practitioners can actively promote social inclusion across various leisure experiences for all community members

Introduction

Scholars have addressed social inclusion and exclusion for decades (e.g., Duffy, 1995; Sayce, 2001; Stickley et al., 2016), and generally identify social inclusion as people participating fully in economic, political, and cultural life within the mainstream of society, sharing experiences, and developing appreciation for one another. There are benefits of leisure participation that relate to social inclusion. For example, based on a systematic literature review, Merrells, Buchanan, and Waters (2017) concluded that participation in recreation programs facilitates positive outcomes associated with social inclusion, such as enhanced wellbeing, increased quality of life, greater independence, and more positive community attitudes. Consequently, they suggested that

professionals accommodate participant differences so leisure services are inclusive, especially for individuals encountering difficulty accessing such services.

Inclusion and Inclusive Leisure Services

Inclusive services bring with them expectations that personnel and agencies meet the needs of diverse participants who vary relative to backgrounds and cultures, life experiences, and innate and acquired characteristics that have the potential to both enrich and limit a person (Westwood, 2017). If the notion of diversity extends beyond race and ethnicity and incorporates multiple considerations including factors such as family background, sexual orientation, ability, socioeconomic status, gender, and religion, then opportunities for inclusion are enhanced (Quinn, Gwede, & Meade, 2018). For this paper, inclusive leisure services are those that contain necessary support and flexibility to provide opportunities for people having diverse backgrounds, cultures, life experiences, as well as innate and acquired characteristics, to have choices on ways to experience leisure that contribute to their overall happiness and ability to flourish.

Inclusive communities provide a context in which everyone belongs and has the opportunity to experience leisure on their own terms in ways that are personally meaningful and fulfilling (Gomez, 2013). A consistent message by researchers and practitioners highlights a need for more research identifying facilitators to leisure engagement, reflecting the fundamental right to experience leisure in inclusive communities (e.g., Badia, Orgaz, Verdugo, & Ullan, 2012). Research has begun to identify practices and principles that professionals might follow to promote inclusion of all participants in leisure experiences. For example, Andrews, Falkmer, and Girdler (2015) conducted a systematic review of community integration interventions and concluded there is a need to develop programs in which staff facilitate friendships across diverse peers, consider participants' activity preferences, and accommodate their varying abilities.

The Leisure Experience

Leisure is complex and multidimensional, occurring across the lifespan and including a range of activities in various community settings, such as structured programs offered through agencies (e.g., YMCAs, JCCs, parks and recreation departments) and less structured experiences such as swimming at a community pool or walking at a park. Chances to participate in leisure result in individuals believing they have freedom to engage in an experience, finding their experience to be meaningful, being intrinsically motivated to engage in the experience, feeling that their experience contributes to their sense of identity, and becoming self-determined (Dattilo, 2017). Leisure contributes to human development as it creates a context for people to express talents, demonstrate capabilities, pursue their potential, and experience various positive emotions while participating in enjoyable and meaningful activities (Kleiber & McGuire, 2016).

Experiencing leisure has a significant positive effect on life satisfaction (Pagán-Rodríguez, 2014), and some people perceive leisure as a useful coping resource (Nimrod, Kleiber, & Berdychevsky, 2012). As people of all ages participate in leisure, they increase their confidence, skills, and self-esteem (e.g., Patterson & Pegg, 2009), and perceive benefits to engaging in leisure such as developing friendships, having fun, and being active (e.g., Fernandez, Ziviani, Cuskelly, Colquhoun, & Jones, 2018). Participating in naturally occurring, spontaneous leisure as well as structured community leisure programs contributes to overall quality of life, providing people with opportunities

to engage with others, enjoy the moment, and have control and choice (Dahan-Oliel, Shikako-Thomas, & Majnemer, 2012; King et al., 2014).

Leisure Participation Patterns and Social Justice

Regrettably, many people across the lifespan (e.g., people who live in poverty, have disabilities, are recent immigrants, and/or whose ethnicity, race, or religion are not typically shared by the dominant culture) have few chances to experience leisure. For example, some people encounter loneliness, boredom, and anxiety brought on by an abundance of unstructured free time and a lack of knowledge about ways to take control of their free time (Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2014). Even when people express a desire to increase engagement in leisure pursuits, many do not possess skills required to adapt to new challenges and solve related problems (Tullis et al., 2011). Unless services facilitate supportive relationships and meaningful, enjoyable leisure engagement, "... the goal of full inclusion in the community will remain unrealized" (Duvdevany, 2008, p. 228). Based on viability of using social justice as a guiding paradigm for conducting leisure research (Allison, 2000), Brown, Outley, and Pinckney (2019) argue that historical and modern ways of engaging in leisure are often rooted in social justice.

Some leisure service providers and researchers are committed to social justice that stems from the need to end oppression and marginalization related to gender, race, ethnicity, sexual identity, ability, and socioeconomic status within leisure-related contexts (Stewart, 2014). Stewart (2014) indicated that focusing on leisure as a context for social justice addresses myriad social challenges with youth development, race and ethnicity, sexual identity, homelessness, disability, tourism, environmentalism, gender, and spirituality. Further, Glover (2015) identified social justice as ". . . a laudable goal that embodies explicit conformity and commitment to values aimed at enabling individuals, irrespective of their social identities, to strive within a just society" (p. 3). Development of inclusive services, such as inclusive tourism that is "a response to tendencies toward social, economic, and spatial exclusion in tourism" (Biddulph & Scheyvens, 2018, p. 585), helps leisure professionals reduce social inequities and discrimination and, ultimately, promote equity and social justice (Stodolska, Peters, & Horolets, 2017).

Leisure Service Delivery Patterns

Historically, there has been oppression within the context of leisure that underscores the imperative for practitioners to challenge injustice and provide inclusive leisure services (Theriault, 2018; Theriault & Mowatt, 2018). Despite numerous benefits that participants gain from leisure experiences, many community agencies continue to offer services that are unwelcoming, segregated, and inaccessible (Schleien, Brake, Miller, & Walton, 2013). Schleien et al. (2013) described a cohort who reported that other people ignored and patronized them, and they rarely felt welcomed to join community leisure services of their choice as active members. Exemplifying this trend, community members interviewed by Hall (2017) reported primarily participating in segregated recreation activities. Following examination of policies associated with leisure service agencies, Lenneis and Agergaard (2018) concluded that characteristics including gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion and nation intersect in restrictive policies that involve forms of injustice, such as oppression, marginalization, and segregation.

Various conditions influence a lack of inclusive services. Agencies offering community leisure programs differ substantially regarding types of participants, organizational will and sense of responsibility to be inclusive, resources to accommodate a

range of participants, and administrative support (Schleien, Miller, Walton, Roth, & Tobin, 2017). Unfortunately, negative attitudes toward individuals who differ in various ways from people in authority (e.g., religion, abilities, age) contribute to an unwillingness of some service providers to be inclusive (e.g., Shields & Synnot, 2016; Swift, Abrams, Lamont, & Drury, 2017; Van Tongeren, Green, Davis, Hook, & Hulsey, 2016). In other cases, service providers may not feel equipped to promote inclusion. For example, using focus groups with leisure services providers and participants, Anderson and Heyne (2000) concluded that service providers lack awareness, acceptance, and information about inclusive leisure, and they need assistance facilitating social inclusion. Although many leisure service providers are not equipped to promote inclusion, inclusion skills (i.e., openness to serving all members of the community) is one of the most desired competencies of municipal recreation staff, as reported by managers (Fulthorp & D'Eloia, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

Based on literature reviews, various authors provide guidelines to help promote diversity and develop inclusive leisure services, including becoming culturally competent working with youth of color (Outley & Witt, 2006) and providing supports and opportunities for positive youth development for transgender and gender nonconforming youth (Gillard, Buzuvis, & Bialeschki, 2014). In addition, following principles to guide inclusive recreation plans at a national level identified by Pegg et al. (2000), Pegg and Compton (2003) articulated five critical issues for global action resulting in inclusive leisure services. Building on these writings, this study is part of a larger initiative to identify best practices in inclusive leisure programs and to develop an accreditation process based on standards and criteria reflecting evidence-based practices. Following recommendations to examine perceptions of inclusion (e.g., Ferdman, 2014), a focus group was used to provide an opportunity for researchers and practitioners to share their knowledge of and experiences with inclusive leisure services. In a related article, researchers analyzed data and presented results specific to inclusive camp settings (Siperstein et al., 2019). This paper contains expanded results relevant to a range of leisure services, since many practices discussed in the focus group are applicable to a variety of service providers. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to understand perceptions of programming considerations in promoting all types of inclusive leisure services for all types of participants who may vary based on factors influencing their identity, such as ability, gender, age, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic situation, and religion, to name a few. We designed this study to respond to recommendations by Allison and Hibbler (2004,) who stated, "If the recreation profession is to overcome and eradicate organizational behaviors to inclusion, systematic research and programmatic analyses must begin to elucidate issues and problems and suggest directions for future success" (p. 278).

Methods

Focus Group Discussants

The focus group discussants were eight members of the accreditation development team with a range of perspectives on and experiences with inclusion. Two discussants are full-time practitioners who hold leadership roles in agencies providing inclusive leisure services. One has been the director of an inclusive summer day camp program for 13 years serving 120 participants (ages 8-12) annually; the other was an inclusion

specialist for five years and for the past three years has been the director of a community recreation center conducting year-round inclusive programming for over 1,000 youth (aged 2-18) annually. Another discussant works for an organization with the mission to promote inclusive leisure services and is responsible for providing inclusion training and support to practitioners. Another discussant is a chief administrator of an organization dedicated to promoting inclusion. Four discussants are professors at universities who have conducted research on inclusion and taught at the graduate level to prepare future leaders in their respective fields for an average of 35 years each. Discussants' areas of specialization include developmental psychology, inclusive leisure services, therapeutic recreation, adapted physical education, and special education. Though discussants had various experiences providing inclusive leisure services, much of their expertise focused specifically on the inclusion of people with disabilities.

This study followed principles espoused by Northway (2010) and employed by Walton, Schleien, Brake, Trovato, and Oakes (2012), which involved communicating consistently with discussants at all stages of the iterative research process, as well as producing and disseminating useful knowledge to help change practice. Based on suggestions by Probst (2016) and others to gain an insider's perspective, the eight discussants were members of the research team (participant researchers) throughout the study, including the lead researcher who facilitated the focus group. This approach to research is consistent with recommendations to promote inclusion and cultivate empathy by adopting the perspective of "us" rather than "them" (Cikara, Bruneau, & Saxe, 2011). The team also included two researchers who did not participate in the focus groups but were involved in various aspects of data collection and analysis, as described below.

Data Collection

Interview guide. The lead researcher developed a draft of an interview guide following guidelines by Troutman-Jordon, Nies, and Davis (2013) after asking focus group discussants to generate questions they believed important to answer regarding inclusive leisure services. The guide contained the following lead request: *Please describe services you consider best practices for inclusive leisure services.* A series of probing questions were identified but were not used since discussants were eager to respond to the lead question. A possible limitation of this study is that discussant selection of interview questions may have prevented the discussion from moving in unexpected directions, thus reducing the chance of generating unanticipated insights. Although the research team contributed to interview guide development and the lead researcher asked about best practices associated with inclusive leisure services generally, discussant experiences of developing services specifically for people with disabilities likely influenced their contributions (e.g., using words such as "campers" and "kids" in their comments). Discussants had various experiences with inclusion of people encountering challenges as a result of limited economic resources, religion, and ethnicity, to name a few, but the discussants' specific background and expertise related to people with disabilities is a limitation of the study.

Focus group procedure. The lead researcher conducted the three-hour focus group following guidelines by Krueger and Casey (2009) to include a welcome, overview, ground rules, and questions. Similar to Heinz et al. (2013), discussants were encouraged to raise questions and make comments. The lead researcher followed a semistructured approach using the lead question and asking probing questions based on

discussant statements to have them elaborate. The lead researcher kept the discussion focused and managed involvement of discussants by ensuring all had opportunities to contribute. A limitation is the degree of involvement of the lead researcher, since by attempting to keep discussants focused; the discussion may have been restricted. There was extensive data generated from the discussion. Given challenges bringing discussants residing in different parts of the United States together, the researchers agreed that effort and resources would be expended using member checks to clarify data. There were two face-to-face interviews, including the initial interview and first member check session, and then another member check session conducted via tele-conference.

    Audio recording and transcription. The focus group was audio-recorded using two recorders to increase the ability to capture all conversations. A research assistant then uploaded the interview into Word Macro to permit transcription analysis via NVivo and reviewed transcripts for accuracy by selecting 25% of the transcript excerpts while listening to recordings.

    Procedure fidelity. Based on procedural fidelity practices (Shek & Lu, 2013), the lead researcher was aware of the value of encouraging discussants to express their views throughout the focus group. One individual who was not a member of the research team and did not participate in the focus group observed to ensure protocol adherence and procedure fidelity. This individual concluded that achievement of protocol adherence and procedure fidelity occurred.

Data Analysis

    Framework. Using the constant comparative analytic framework (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), data patterns were identified to discover relationships between concepts. To complete a thematic content analysis, the lead researcher and research assistant initially used open coding to capture intent and shades of meaning. Next, a focused coding strategy produced patterns and relationships among codes and illuminated meaning from emerging categories and themes.

    Coding. The lead researcher and research assistant read the focus group transcript separately prior to development of codes (Heinz et al., 2013) and then individually coded data. To help increase reliability, the two researchers then shared and reviewed codes and agreed on application of codes. Next, the researchers examined relationships between codes to determine how codes clustered and identified these clusters as categories. Once the researchers created these categories, they generated overall themes.

    Member check session one (focus on codes and categories). The lead researcher conducted two member check sessions with the other seven focus group discussants. The first session obtained reactions to codes and categories and the second session solicited reactions to themes. During the first member check, the lead researcher asked discussants to help assess validity of the codes and categories and then organized and conducted a discussion to collect discussants' input. The session lasted approximately one hour and was audio-recorded, transcribed, and checked for accuracy following the same procedures used with the initial focus group. After analysis of these data, it was determined that although discussants largely confirmed existing categories, they provided input associated with revising existing categories that led the researchers to return to the data for further analysis.

Following input from discussants and further data analysis, a list of 32 codes clustered into two major categories was generated. The first category was associated with actions that occur in the programming process, during either planning or implementation. The second category represented the importance of empowering both participants and staff. The lead researcher and research assistant collaboratively developed a codebook that facilitated data entry into Nvivo to assist further data analysis.

Thematic analysis phase one. Next, the lead researcher and research assistant individually examined codes and categories and generated themes that cut across the data. These two researchers worked together to agree on themes with accompanying illustrative quotes.

Member check session two (focus on themes). Once the lead researcher and research assistant identified themes, the lead researcher conducted a second member check session with the other seven focus group discussants. The goal of this second member check session was to return to the original discussants and share the specific themes generated to obtain their reactions. The lead researcher asked discussants to help assess validity of the themes during a teleconference discussion, lasting approximately one hour that was audio-recorded, transcribed, and checked for accuracy following the same procedures used with the initial focus group. The subsequent results, discussion, and figure present the themes and illustrative quotes supported by discussants across the focus group and member check sessions.

Findings

Seven themes associated with best practices for providing inclusive leisure services emerged across the data: (a) participation, (b) social connections, (c) enjoyment, (d) choice, (e) competence, (f) social responsibility, and (g) learning (see Figure 1). Based on the extensiveness of examples provided and emphasis placed on certain themes, the researchers identified the themes of participation and social connections as primary themes and the remaining five themes as secondary themes. Each theme contains (a) actions that leisure service providers could (and do) take to facilitate inclusion, and (b) outcomes of inclusion for participants. Samples of data supporting each component under each theme appear in the following sections.

Participation

The theme discussants spent the most time addressing and appeared most passionate about was the importance of all individuals' active leisure participation. A discussant identified the importance of participation to inclusion: "I think of the concept of participation is big when wrapped around inclusion. If everybody's feeling like they are able to participate within kind of the constructs of the activity, and how the instructions are laid out, if participation is felt throughout the whole group, I think that's very important." Discussants consistently identified benefits of participation in community leisure and explained that individuals should have opportunities to participate actively in equitable and enjoyable leisure experiences. To illustrate, one discussant stated, ". . . we design things perhaps even universally, so that everybody can ultimately participate and have a good experience." Another discussant responded, "It's just creating safe space for everybody to participate, as a whole team, in the activity." Yet another shared, "[I am a] big believer in the kids staying engaged in activities no matter what."
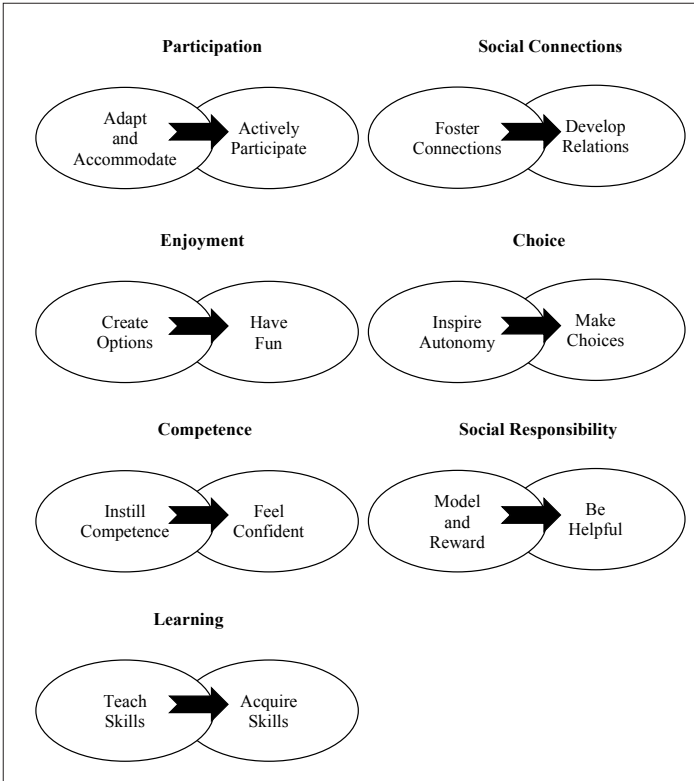
Figure 1. Inclusion themes for leisure service provider actions and participant outcomes

To facilitate this level of engagement, discussants highlighted the need to accommodate people's diverse skill levels and make adaptations to promote their inclusion. As an example, one discussant stated, "It's very important that you accommodate people of varying abilities, but we are not looking to overrun or overwhelm your agency, your programs, or your staff. I think it's a very good start. A different discussant reported, ". . . we think about all learners and design activities, goals, equipment and material, and other strategies, not...not in a reactive way around a particular individual and his or her needs, but in a proactive way where we are prepared to accommodate a lot of different types of people." Another discussant shared "...we would have kids... had a hard time processing information, so the coach would approach them differently rather than saying they can't play..." One discussant described a particular strategy to promote inclusive leisure, when she said, ". . . if you plan for the highest level of need with the intention of including everyone, it's more successful than doing the opposite."

Social Connections

Discussants continuously described the key aspect of inclusion to be social. They identified the importance of participants developing meaningful relationships such as friendships and connections with peers. To exemplify the importance of social connections, one discussant described a situation involving two participants who were

different in many ways: "So Justin needed John just as much as John needed Justin. I think that's the goal, they were never assigned to each other, it wasn't, you know, an 'I help you' type relationship, but they were genuinely friends with each other. Another discussant stated, "It really does come down to in general what we've seen that families really want, and that is that social connection." Yet another discussant indicated the value of social connections to inclusion: "That's taking ownership that I'm a member of a team, and you're a member of my team, and I don't want you to be excluded."

To achieve this outcome, discussants advocated that practitioners focus on fostering social connections among all participants regardless of their characteristics. As an example, a discussant shared, "You can help them connect, and then you can see where the friendship grows." Another discussant described, "Social skills instruction needs to be coupled with social support by the counselor." Further, another discussant talked about the value of giving diverse participants opportunities and space to engage in spontaneous interactions: "We are allowing the unintentional interaction with the campers to take place, but also being supervised."

Enjoyment

Another aspect of inclusive leisure services identified by focus group discussants is the importance of program participants experiencing positive emotions, such as enjoyment, while engaging in activities. To illustrate, a discussant noted that all participants understand that they are very diverse, yet they are all attending a program to enjoy themselves: ". . . they're here to have a good time; they know there are kids with disabilities, they get to ride some horses, we have lots of social activities." Another discussant suggested that a critical element of inclusion is having diverse participants "doing more activities that they enjoy."

To promote such positive emotions, discussants identified the value of creating activities for participants to enjoy. A discussant explained that to help all participants enjoy an activity, "We're going to plan for the kid who's going to have the most difficulty participating, because everybody else can participate in that environment and it doesn't hurt them to have more support." Another discussant provided a different explanation of how to create enjoyable contexts that are inclusive: "Let's start with those activities that are more conducive to cooperation and socialization and learning skills rather than beating the heck out of each other. And then, maybe, we can get the others on board a little later on . . . the key for me is, the cooperative nature of an activity versus competitive. And, to me, that's just about the most important element in order to be accommodating..."

Choice

A fundamental aspect of leisure engagement identified by discussants was freedom of choice, such that participants feel free to make choices. To demonstrate, a discussant identified, "It's important to have opportunities to choose, it could just be an opportunity to choose I'd rather swim than go to the gym or I'd rather go to the gym than swim." In describing the importance of offering choices that accommodate all participants and promote inclusion, one discussant added, "It goes back to choices, and different levels, and different options, that's how . . . you can make it work." Yet another discussant simply stated, "The first thing I think of with programming is choice." The discussion of choice extended beyond choice within and between activities as discussants often mentioned the importance of each participant, regardless of characteristics,

being able to choose with whom to participate. One discussant quoted a program participant to make a point about the value of choosing with whom to participate: "If I'm going to have to do this activity, which sometimes you do have to, at least I get to pick who I do it with."

Discussants explained that it is incumbent on service providers to encourage participants to be as autonomous as possible. As an example, a discussant commented, "If we're trying to empower the participants, the staff have to sit back away, but they're focusing and observing. The point of staff observation is a really important point." Another discussant exemplified how to accommodate participants with various interests and abilities: "We started with this child didn't want to swim, so we had something special for that child to wear. Now we have three different stations, so all the children have some choices, and all the children can be, "Well, if I don't feel like swimming today, I can do this..." To create an inclusive environment, a discussant suggested providing participants with "opportunities to choose what they want to play and who they want to play with. It still starts with the routine of an introduction of these are the options today, this is what I would encourage you to try to do today, play a game that you haven't played before, play with someone you haven't played with before, and there's expectations set out." After describing ways to provide all participants with choice, a discussant noted, "It worked very well inclusion-wise because it allowed kids to have input and shine in a variety of ways. . ." Another discussant spoke to the importance of choice in promoting inclusion within a sports context, ". . . and so from a youth sports perspective having a recreation level where there's no cuts and everybody has a chance to participate all the way up to more competitive teams by having choices then it'd be easier to include children who have different abilities."

Competence

Building on the discussion of autonomy, discussants explained that in addition to participants feeling free to make choices, it is important that they have the confidence in their skills and understanding to take advantage of their choices. To illustrate this area, one discussant stated, "When I initially think of competence, I almost break it down into two stages. The first stage of competence being pre-skill. So, it's, a pre-activity. But, wondering, 'I don't even know if I can do this.' And then, maybe after, it's a realization, 'Yes, I can do this.' In addition, another discussant identified the need to focus on developing competence especially for participants who are less skilled: "Going back to the beginning of the process of self-confidence and sense of competence, the child has always been the one who is the last person picked."

Discussants concluded that to facilitate engagement in leisure, service providers should help instill in all participants a sense of competence so that each person says, "I can do this." Representing the importance of instilling a sense of competence in promoting inclusion, a discussant identified the value of developing in all participants' social competence, regardless of their situation: "I think it's easy to talk about activity-driven and skill-driven competence, but there is certainly a big realm around social competence when we're talking about all these things." In support, another discussant stated, ". . . when I think of competence I think of helping children reframe what their definition of success is."

Social Responsibility

Another theme emerged associated with social justice, as discussants emphasized the significance of engaging in virtuous behaviors consistent with inclusion. Discussants highlighted the importance of everyone within the leisure context (i.e., participants, service providers, family members, administrators, volunteers) being responsible for contributing to the inclusive nature of a program. Consequently, they communicated that one goal for participants should be to demonstrate ethical, helpful, accepting, and respectful actions. For instance, a discussant stated, "The little girl who, playing soccer, and her teammate falls down. She was the first one over to that teammate, to help her up. Then, the coach responded to that and focused on it."

To encourage such positive behaviors, discussants suggested service providers model socially responsible behaviors and promote and reward participants' social responsibility. A discussant commented, "You are training your staff, more apt to be good role models." As the conversation progressed, two discussants described the importance of allowing acts demonstrating social responsibility to emerge. As one discussant said, "Allowing that to happen without me saying, 'Hey, [name], why don't you invite [name] over, he's by himself.' I think there's more power in you deciding to do that on your own. It won't always happen, but maybe it is that staff preparedness to let them be able to recognize that that could also happen." The next discussant elaborated on this point: "Instead of me jumping right in and saying, 'Why don't you go ask...?' just observing for a second and see if you'll get there on your own." One discussant identified the value of teaching participants how to be socially responsible and to promote inclusion: "Preparation of peers to be accepting...and, not to, you know, when you see someone sitting out, encourage them and bring them back in the group." Another discussant identified the importance of working with staff to plan and recognize when actions indicative of social responsibility occur so that inclusive leisure services are provided, "How do we promote social acceptance, social things? You have to plan it, and you have to recognize it when you see it."

Learning

Discussants reported that leisure is ideal for participants to learn and grow because it offers enjoyable and meaningful opportunities facilitating connections with others who differ from them in some way and instills competence. Discussants associated learning with skill development and identified skills that participants might learn that are indicative of an inclusive context. One discussant stated, "It's a huge self-esteem builder for kids to learn to ride bikes."

To achieve the goal of learning, discussants encouraged practitioners to provide all participants with various opportunities to increase knowledge and practice skills. As an example, one discussant compared an inclusionary practice to one often resulting in exclusion: "I want you to practice. If you're looking at skill development...the worst thing you can do is have kids sitting out. Because they're not developing skill. . ." Another discussant described a situation contrasting different types of offerings: "What these highly competitive coaches did at the Y[MCA], and the JCC, when they ultimately got it, were they designed additional programs. So, they were not only running their highly competitive sports teams, but they developed skills-based programs…" Another discussant commented on ways to create an inclusive environment, "Let's start with those activities that are more conducive to cooperation and socialization and

learning skills." After identifying the value of teaching participants to be accepting of differences, a discussant stated, "I believe that most people, at any age, need to learn specifically how to be a good friend to somebody who's very different than you are."

Discussion

Building on research interviewing recreation professionals about issues and barriers to leisure for citizens who encounter oppression and marginalization (e.g., Allison & Hibbler, 2004), this study focused on interviewing professionals who identified best practices that address such barriers and promote inclusion. From the focus group, it is clear that leisure service providers can learn and benefit from researchers and practitioners with expertise in social inclusion. Some examples of best practices made by discussants were specific to camp and after-school programs—structured programs offered by community agencies. Since leisure encompasses a broad range of experiences, best practices highlighted by discussants also apply to more unstructured leisure situations (e.g., going to a fitness center or bowling alley).

All leisure service providers are responsible for creating socially inclusive environments so people of varying abilities, ethnicities, languages, and resources, to name a few, can reap benefits of leisure and share in these experiences. To achieve this goal, practitioners must go beyond focusing strictly on the average person and work to accommodate people who often exist on the fringes of our communities and frequently have limited leisure opportunities because of acts promoting their marginalization (Shenkman, Ifrah, & Shmotkin, 2017). Therefore, although the themes in this study (participation, social connections, enjoyment, choice, competence, social responsibility, and learning) are considerations for leisure services generally, they were culled from discussions about ways they could be achieved for all citizens, especially those experiencing exclusion (i.e., Mowatt & Schmalz, 2014; Wesselmann, Wirth, & Bernstein, 2017). For example, although active participation and developing relationships are important goals for all leisure service providers, making adaptations and accommodations as well as systematically fostering connections between participants do not occur consistently for people experiencing oppression, making these particularly important best practices to promote inclusion (e.g., Kardys, 2015; Mackenzie, Alfred, Fountain, & Combs, 2015; Thomas et al., 2015).

Although participation is a typical goal of recreation agencies, in describing participation, discussants identified the need to remove barriers for people currently not included; such sentiments are consistent with the National Recreation and Parks Association (2018) Parks for Inclusion initiative. Emphasizing equitable participation, Long and Robertson (2010) discouraged removing participants from activities unless attributable to a legitimate reason (e.g., excessive fatigue, cultural restrictions). Relatedly, Brannan, Arick, Fullerton, and Harris (2000) discovered that when staff encourage participants, use peer assistance, allow alternative communication, and provide adaptive equipment, participants increase their self-esteem, communication, and independence; if participants experience challenges, accommodations to requirements, equipment, space, and communication can be made to address challenges.

The importance of social connections is consistent with the emphasis on social inclusion found in the literature (Siperstein, Glick, & Parker, 2009). Participants benefit socially from inclusive experiences by making new friends, building interdependence,

learning about people's similarities, developing interpersonal skills, and accepting others (Miller, Schleien, & Lausier, 2009). Though social connections are widely valued, there is a need to develop concerted efforts to create opportunities for participants who experience isolation to make social connections (e.g., Rossetti & Goessling, 2010). For example, based on recommendations made by a sample of older adults for developing leisure services, Lorek et al. (2017) encouraged service providers to help older adults to access services and, once they engage in programs, to promote and support social connections. Another way to move beyond simply offering activities is to promote positive social interactions by using a buddy system that creates activity partners of varying abilities (Boyd et al., 2008). By recruiting peers to be supportive, leisure service providers increase all participants' social skills, encourage peer relationships, and reduce the need for one-on-one supports (Maich, Hall, Rhijn, & Quinlan, 2015). Practitioners promote social connections as they facilitate positive social interactions among participants during structured and unstructured activities by encouraging participants to help each other, suggesting that they share equipment and materials, helping to initiate conversations among them, and encouraging them to engage collaboratively in recreation activities and share leisure experiences (Siperstein, Gildea, & Spolidoro, 2018). Purposeful promotion of social interactions reduces social anxiety and results in participants valuing each other (Devine & O'Brien, 2007; Kaboski et al., 2015).

The theme of enjoyment complements sentiments of Siperstein et al. (2018), who identified positive emotions, such as fun, as critical to bringing together participants who differ in their abilities and resources. Positive experiences of fun, challenge, independence, and achievement correlate with opportunities for making choices between and within leisure (e.g., Kanagasabai, Mulligan, Hale, & Mirfin-Veitch, 2018). Therefore, a way to increase the chance participants, especially those who experience limited opportunities for leisure, enjoy services is to offer choices among different activities and during activities, such as between different equipment/materials, locations, and partners/group members. Though choice is an important goal for any recreation program, discussants recognized that a variety of people who experience oppression often do not receive such choices (Rossow-Kimball & Goodwin, 2018). For example, Spracklen (2015) clarifies that choice connected to leisure is influenced by many factors including our class, gender, nationality, sexuality, and race that are bound up with histories of domination and control resulting in certain individuals and groups having choices restricted.

One theme central to creating inclusive leisure services is that of social responsibility. This consideration is critical to inclusion because it connects service providers who not only model behaviors that promote inclusion but also reward participants for helping others. In this way, practitioners create programs and environments that encourage all staff and participants to become responsible for, and contribute to, conditions that foster inclusion.

Some existing models and training programs offer guidance for inclusive leisure services. Two are directed to camps including youth with disabilities (Roswal, Dowd, & Bynum, 1997; Siperstein, Pociask, & Barnes, 2009) and two present a framework for educating service providers to develop inclusive services for all participants regardless of characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, race, economic resources, religion, ability, age) (Dattilo, 2017; 2018; Ferdman, 2013). The C.A.M.P. model (Roswal et al., 1997) identifies rules for campers and staff: (a) ask campers what accommodations they need, discuss

minimum participation qualifications, and get all campers involved by exploring ways to adapt activities; (b) have a positive attitude; and (c) modify programs when needed and do not assume certain people are unable to participate. The Let's ALL Play training program (Siperstein et al., 2009) has three components: (a) equip programs implementing or expanding inclusive services, (b) provide activities demonstrating that all children can play, and (c) use staff training emphasizing inclusion, connecting children, making respectful accommodations, and managing challenging behaviors. The model developed by Dattilo (2017; 2018) highlights strategies designed to reduce or eliminate social, psychological, and physical barriers to experiencing inclusive leisure, and the multilevel analytic framework proposed by Ferdman (2014) provides a list of inclusive behaviors, organizational policies, and practices focused on workplace diversity (Ferdman & Deane, 2014). Each model, however, is based on a review of the literature and reflections of lines of research described by one author. Although these training programs and models contain helpful suggestions, there is a need to assess perceptions of multiple practitioners and researchers to develop a more comprehensive approach to planning and implementing inclusive leisure services for all members of our communities. The current study aimed to address that need.

Much of the existing research on inclusive leisure services examines unique needs of specific groups, such as people who have disabilities, are immigrants, are older, live in poverty, are homeless, and are members of LGBTQ community, as well as those members of a religion, ethnic group, or race not embraced by the dominant culture. Actions addressing distinct needs of people with certain characteristics are useful, such as creating times when a swimming pool is available exclusively for girls and women to be respectful of religious beliefs or providing private and family dressing rooms to welcome people who are transgender or require assistance.

There is a need for continued research to understand ways individual members of groups who often encounter oppression and discrimination experience leisure, as well as effects of strategies designed to assist them in achieving leisure (Stodolska, Shinew, & Camarillo, 2019). For example, Hutchinson and Fenton (2018) interviewed 10 community mental health coordinators and identified four promising practices including barriers and solutions to participation, characteristics of welcoming and supportive environments, leadership characteristics, and program characteristics. Similarly, Forde, Lee, Mills, and Frisby (2015) interviewed 10 staff and managers at a community sport and recreation program to identify key organizational practices fostering immigrants' inclusion.

Using the goal of inclusion of all people as a means to achieve social justice, rather than for specific groups, researchers work to avoid creating "knowledge silos" by examining commonalities across marginalized groups to discover their mutual challenges. Therefore, it is helpful to consider inclusion broadly; that is, inclusion involves making accommodations to address unique needs of specific people so they participate, learn, acquire skills, and feel confident, and inclusion consists of creating welcoming contexts in which all participants have fun, make choices, and contribute to creating inclusive situations. This is consistent with promoting the universal design for learning framework focused on creating learning environments functional for the largest number of learners possible (e.g., Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2017; Owiny, Hollingshead, Barrio, & Stoneman, 2019). Using the universal design framework and inclusive strategies sug-

gested by our discussants, service providers are encouraged to develop social, learning, and physical environments that include diverse participants regardless of cultural, socioeconomic, and ethnic background as well as gender, ability, or other characteristics (Curry, Cohen, & Lightbody, 2006) so everyone engages in leisure together.

We suggest further research to address limitations of this study. Since discussants' involvement in development of interview questions may have prevented the discussion from going in unexpected directions and identifying unanticipated insights, researchers might conduct an initial focus group without discussants' prior input on question selection. It would also be helpful to conduct a focus group with discussants who predominately have inclusion expertise beyond people with disabilities. Unlike the lead researcher in this study who attempted to keep discussants aligned with the interview questions, other researchers may approach focus groups in a more exploratory way allowing discussants greater freedom to ruminate and extrapolate.

Another study limitation is that the intention of the focus group was to solicit information on best practices that promote inclusion; therefore, we did not address the complexity of situations resulting from implementing inclusive best practices. Practitioners are encouraged to consider the possibility of resistance to inclusion by various staff, participants, and community members. For example, given research identifying backlashes to programs affirming sexual orientations and gender identities (e.g., Kumashiro, 2002), Hill (2009) suggested promoting inclusion and safety in organizations based on three principles: "difference is a fundamental human right that must be recognized in all organizational venues; justice, equity, and fairness are about 'inclusion for all,' not preferential treatment; and diversity . . ." embraces not only "minorities". . . but also welcomes 'non-minorities'—those who are from dominant and historically dominating groups" (p. 48-49). Leisure service providers may consider communicating these principles to everyone to minimize backlash to inclusive leisure services.

Conclusion

Results of this study primarily encourage practitioners to: (a) make accommodations and adaptations to ensure all participants actively engage in equitable and enjoyable experiences, and (b) foster social connections by supporting all participants to develop meaningful relationships. Secondly, it is helpful if leisure service providers create opportunities for positive experiences so participants feel enjoyment, fun, and satisfaction. Further, practitioners are encouraged to promote autonomy by providing opportunities for participants to make choices. It is useful for professionals to instill a sense of competence in participants so they become confident in their skills and understanding. Another consideration is for service providers to model and reward social responsibility to encourage participants to be ethical, helpful, and respectful. Finally, professionals should teach people skills to empower them to participate successfully in meaningful and rewarding activities. Following these best practices, leisure service providers are in a position to promote actively social inclusion in a range of programs and services, ultimately helping to create communities that accept and accommodate all people and their diverse needs.

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