

Adding a Diversity Component to a Recreation and Tourism Curriculum

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Abstract

This paper describes a core curriculum course that surveys a range of general and leisure-related issues relevant to diverse populations. The development of the course is considered, followed by a discussion of the format of the course, its style, organization, the print and human resources that support delivery of course content, and the evaluative components used.

Key words: Recreation, Leisure, Tourism, Course Content, Special Populations, Diversity

Biographical Information

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Introduction

A recreation coordinator working in the Phoenix area recently told the following story at an Arizona Park and Recreation Association Youth/Teen Services Section meeting: A teen dance was being held one evening during the summer of 1994 at a community center operated by a municipal recreation department. Shortly after the dance started, a group of about eight cross-dressed youth entered the center. As the coordinator told it, the center staff "lost it," apparently not having encountered such a situation previously. Staff members approached the youth, asking them to leave. One of the youth responded by saying that yes, he and his friends were cross-dressed, and yes, they were gay. But, he continued, they were not being disruptive and they had as much right to recreate as anyone else at the dance.

While anecdotal, this exchange points to an issue that is likely to become more prevalent in leisure services as demographic profiles in the United States become more disparate and as diverse groups continue to become more vocal in asserting their rights under the law. This issue centers on the need for professionals to become more capable of (and in some cases, more willing to engage in) serving the needs of culturally, physically, emotionally, mentally, religiously, and demographically diverse populations.

The purpose of this paper is to describe one educational strategy aimed at accomplishing this goal: the development of an undergraduate core curriculum course that focuses on recreation and tourism for diverse populations.

To the extent that the SPRE *Curriculum Catalog* (1994) is a bellwether, baccalaureate programs in leisure services do not appear to have kept pace with diversity trends in the general social fabric of our lives. Of the 110 programs described in the 1993-1994 *Catalog*, only three—California State University, Northridge, Old Dominion University, and Utah State University—have undergraduate course titles listed that clearly reflect a focus on multiple diverse populations.

Several caveats are in order here: first, not all leisure services curricula are listed in the SPRE *Catalog*—diversity courses may exist in some of these curricula; second, some listed programs may have revamped their curricula to include diversity courses since the *Catalog* was published; third, several programs have courses that deal with issues relevant to particular population groups (e. g., Women, Work, and Leisure at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill [SPRE *Curriculum Catalog*, 1994]; the series of leisure courses centered on gay/lesbian issues at New York University [Grossman, 1993]); finally, programs with courses that focus on diversity may not reflect this content in their titles. Of the 110 programs in the 1993-1994 SPRE *Catalog*, 50 list one or more courses with content directed toward “special populations.” Some of these courses may contain diversity content beyond the traditional focus on persons with physical, mental, or emotional disabilities. The *prima facie* evidence gleaned from the SPRE *Catalog*, however suggests that diversity issues may not currently be addressed by our curricula to the extent warranted by life in contemporary society. Accordingly, a course aimed at imbuing students with content relevant to diversity is described below.

At least two theoretical issues are relevant to the development and content of a course focused on recreation and tourism for diverse populations. First is the justification of the need for this type of course. Second is the issue of the efficacy of diversity courses in terms of how such courses affect students’ perspectives about diverse populations.

Grossman (1993) provided arguments relative to the first of these issues in a discussion of the development of a course intended to educate leisure studies students about gay/lesbian issues. These arguments included a) the fact that minority groups suffer from unjustified negative attitudes and/or actions from the dominant population (Allport, 1958, cited in Grossman, 1993), b) prejudice (Allport, 1958, cited in Grossman, 1993), c) stigmatization (Goffman, 1963, cited in Grossman, 1993), and d) isolation (Dodson, 1962, cited in Grossman, 1993; Martin, 1982, cited in Grossman, 1993). As Grossman argued, the benefits available through leisure cannot be realized by all unless recreation professionals are educated regarding the psychsocial issues facing groups such as gay and lesbian people that suffer negative attitudes and actions at the hand of the dominant social group.

The issue of course effectiveness in increasing students’ awareness and understanding of diverse populations has also been addressed in the literature. Grossman (1993) observed that his course resulted in both cognitive and affective changes in students (p. 58). In a description of a case study of high school students who read and discussed cultural factors affecting adolescents, Phelan and Davidson (1994) observed a move from a) a focus on how these factors affected their own lives to b) an examination

of how these factors affected other cultural groups to c) how stratification existed among students in school settings. Hoopes (1979) proposed a continuum of learning stages that results from cultural awareness education. This continuum moves from ethnocentrism to awareness to understanding to acceptance/respect to appreciation/valuing to selective adoption to assimilation/adaptation/bi-or multiculturalism. Wurzel (1988) noted that multiculturalism can be seen as a set of principles by which people act that can be defined and learned through awareness. Wurzel also suggested that “educational interventions can contribute to the amelioration of cultural conflict and the development of a multicultural perspective.” (p. 7)

Course Development

As a result of a curriculum review undertaken for NRPA/AALR accreditation, several factors related to the development of diversity issues in the curriculum surfaced. First, the faculty agreed that the curriculum in general should reflect the purpose of ASU West to “prepare students to be successful in the global society of the 21st century by engendering a responsiveness to change and an appreciation of intellectual, cultural, gender, and generational diversity.” (Arizona State University West *Guide to Programs, Services and Facilities*, 1994) Second, it was agreed that the required core curriculum in particular should be designed to ensure that all students enrolled in the program were both cognitively and affectively educated about issues surrounding diversity. Third, the emphasis on professional preparation in the curriculum dictated that courses blend a theoretical and basic grounding of material with content relevant to application of knowledge in leisure services settings. Fourth, while some diversity issues tend to be somewhat unique to certain populations (e. g., “English-only” movements in portions of the Southwest as a concern of Spanish-speaking U. S. residents) many issues—particularly those such as affirmative action and equal access to programs that affect professional leisure service settings—tend to cut across multiple populations. Finally, it was felt that all required courses should be taught by resident faculty.

These last two factors, coupled with the reality of a small (4.5 FTE) faculty, suggested that the best approach to dealing with diversity issues would be to develop a single, survey-type course that considered the delivery of leisure services (including both recreation and tourism) to diverse populations. As with all other courses developed for the major, a single faculty member took responsibility for developing a draft of the course syllabus¹. The new course was reviewed/revised by a departmental curriculum committee of the whole and then channeled through the College and Campus curriculum review process. Once approved, the faculty member responsible for the course developed the course structure, content, and support materials (e. g., bibliography, speakers). The resultant course is described below.

Course Description

The platform for the course was an existing “Recreation for Special Populations” course imported from ASU Main prior to the separate campus accreditation of ASUW. The revised course, “Recreation and Tourism for Diverse Populations” carries a 300-level

designation. [ASUW is an upper division campus that does not offer 100- or 200-level coursework.] The course, which is part of the required core, is offered each fall semester and all new students are advised to take it during their first year in the major.

The course attempts to make students aware of issues relevant to diverse populations and how leisure services affect and are affected by these issues. The catalog description for the course is “The role of recreation and tourism in serving the needs of culturally, physically, emotionally, mentally and demographically diverse populations.”

The course focus, which is included in the syllabus, is:

One of the most fundamental responsibilities of recreation and tourism professionals is to understand the needs, preferences and orientations of all populations—including those populations whose recreation and tourism interests are not being served by present delivery systems.

This course develops understanding of the differentiating effects of gender, race, culture, class, religion, ethnicity, age, and physical, emotional, and mental ability upon desired recreation and tourism experiences. It also develops understanding of the methods for creating initiatives in recreation and tourism management that are responsive to the recreation and tourism needs of all populations.

Course objectives are:

- 1) to build appreciation for the variation of desired recreation and tourism experiences across diverse populations;
- 2) to build the ability to promote, advocate, interpret, and articulate the role of recreation and tourism services in contributing to the life quality of all populations;
- 3) to build appreciation of the concepts of leisure lifestyle development and management as culturally bound phenomena;
- 4) to build awareness of strategies for ensuring that all aspects of recreation and tourism administration, planning, programming, and evaluation reflect responsiveness to the needed and desired recreation and tourism experiences of all populations;
- 5) to build appreciation for the physiological, psychological, sociological, technological, political, environmental and economic challenges among diverse populations; and
- 6) to create foundational understanding of the philosophical, psychological, sociological, physiological, and historical significance of the field of therapeutic recreation service.²

Course Organization

Course Style

The student population at ASUW—which is an urban, commuter campus—is relatively non-traditional. Most students are older (average age is 30 years), and work part- or full-time. Accordingly, most courses tend to meet once a week for three hours rather than for multiple shorter times. This model lends itself well to achieving the goals of the diversity course which include increasing students' awareness of and appreciation for issues facing diverse populations relative to leisure and the delivery of leisure services.

The approach used to effect these goals is to a) schedule a specific topic (e. g., Affirmative Action; cultural diversity; gay/lesbian issues) for a particular class period; b) assign, in advance, the relevant readings from the reserved readings list (see Figure 2), c) schedule a guest speaker with expertise in the subject topic (e. g., the director of the University Affirmative Action Office; a social worker with an expertise in gay/lesbian rights) for an introductory portion of the class (typically one hour), d) show a videocassette recording (or portions of recordings) related to the topic (see Figure 1—Film Resources), and e) conduct a discussion based on a) the introductory lecture/comments by the guest speaker, b) the videocassette recording, and c) the assigned readings. This discussion is oriented primarily to the personal aspects of leisure and the professional aspects of leisure services delivery relevant to the subject topic and is intended to address all of the course objectives with the exception of number five.

Figure 1. Film resources.

Course Topic	Film
Introductory Class	I have a dream. (1986). Oak Forest, IL: MPI Home Video. [Dr. M. L. King's speech; 30 min.]
Diversity	Diversity: The face of hospitality. (1993). East Lansing, MI: E. I. Video Productions. [Managing diversity in the hospitality industry; 18 min.]
Affirmative Action	Diversity dilemmas, Vol. 7. (1994). Pittsburg, PA: Ambrose Publications, Inc. [Discusses workplace conflicts precipitated by diversity; 30 min.]
Sensitivity I	Tongues untied. (1989). San Francisco, CA: Frameline, Inc. [Deals with derogatory accusations, judgments, and jokes about black, male, and gay identity; 55 min.]
Sensitivity II	The point. (n.d.). Los Angeles, CA: Murakami Wolf Productions. [Animated feature film about a round-headed boy in a world populated by people with pointed heads; 90 min.]

- Service Delivery** *Leisure service delivery for Americans of cultural diversity.* (1991). Arlington, VA: National Recreation and Park Association. [Considers leisure choices of culturally diverse populations; 80 min.]
- Ethnic Issues** *Color schemes.* (1989). New York: Third World Newsreel. [Portrays racial stereotypes, prejudices, and attitudes in the U. S.; 29 min.]
- Gender Issues** *The pinks & the blues.* (1988). Stamford, CT: Vestron Video. [Depicts gender expectations and sex-role stereotyping; 60 min.]
- Aging Issues** *I'm pretty old.* (1993). Chicago: Terra Nova Films. [Focuses on decreases in independence associated with aging; 20 min.]
- Prison Issues** *Hard time.* (1980). Northbrook, IL: MTI Teleprograms. [Illustrates the realities of life in a maximum security prison; 27 min.]
- Youth Issues** *Option for at-risk youth.* (1991). New York: New York State Recreation and Park Society. [Dramatizes of recreation specialists dealing with at-risk youth; 27 min.]
- Gay/Lesbian Issues** *Gay bashing.* (1990). New York: Ambrose Video Publishing. [Portrays activities of AIDS activist group ACT-UP in Boston; 40 min.]
- Disabling Conditions** *The ADA video.* (1991). Arlington, VA: National Recreation and Park Association. [Discusses disabilities, legal and enforcement aspects of ADA, adaptation, and compliance; 104 min.]

Print Resources

Electronic literature searches were conducted that linked leisure and/or recreation and/or tourism and/or play with any of the following terms: affirmative action, minority, diversity, disadvantaged, disability, handicap, Americans with Disabilities Act, therapeutic, stereotype, aging, elderly, senior, ethnic, Hispanic, Latino, Chicano, Mexican-American, African-American, Black, Asian-American, women, female, feminist, men, male, gender, gay, lesbian, prison, incarcerated, and at-risk youth. While a wealth of resources surfaced, no single textbook addressed the intended content of the course. Thus, a collection of required readings was placed on reserve in the ASUW library. An attempt was made to include citations in the reserved reading list that, collectively, addressed all six of the course objectives. These citations are shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2. Required readings, annotated by topic.

- Anderson, S. (1991). Corrections. Chapter 17 in D. Austin & M. Crawford (Eds.), *Therapeutic Recreation: An introduction*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. [Incarcerated populations]
- Calloway, J. (1991, November). Leisure and Youth—Make the connection. *Parks & Recreation*, 26(11), 56-61. [At-risk youth]
- Cross, G. (1990). *A Social History of Leisure Since 1600*. State College: Venture. [Women's Issues/Youth Issues/Aging issues]
- Godbey, G. (1991). Planning for leisure in a pluralistic society. Chapter 11 in T. Goodale & P. Witt (Eds.), *Recreation and leisure: Issues in an era of change* (pp. 137-148). State College: Venture. [Multiculturalism]
- Grossman, A. H. (1992). Inclusion, not exclusion: Recreation service delivery to lesbian, gay and bisexual youth. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance*, 63, 45-47. [Gay/lesbian populations]
- Henderson, K., Bialeschki, D., Shaw, S., & Freysinger, V. (1989). *A Leisure of One's Own: A Feminist Perspective on Women's Leisure*. State College: Venture. [Women's issues]
- Horna, J. (1987). Leisure and ethnic minorities. In A. Graefe & S. Parker (Eds.), *Recreation and leisure: An introductory handbook* (pp. 189-195). State College: Venture. [Ethnic issues]
- Kelly, J., & Godbey, G. (1992). *The sociology of leisure*. State College: Venture. [Leisure cultures and ethnicity, Chapter 11; Gender and leisure experience, Chapter 22; Leisure and retirement, Chapter 27]
- Kennedy, D., Smith, R., & Austin, D. (1991). *Special Recreation: Opportunities for persons with disabilities* (2nd ed.) Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown. [Disabling conditions, Chapter 3; Design of accessible and usable recreation environments, Chapter 5; Community resources, Chapter 11]
- Kraus, R. (1990). *Recreation and leisure in modern society* (4th ed.). Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman. [Recreation for special populations, Chapter 12]
- National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (various dates). NICHY Fact Sheets. Washington, D.C. [Descriptions of various disabling conditions]
- Pollitt, K. (1985, December 12). *Hers*. *The New York Times*, C2. [Women's perceptions in public spaces]

Ryan, J. (1991, October). Breaking the circle of destruction. *Parks & Recreation*, 26(10), 46-48, 74. [At-risk youth]

Stensrud, C. (1993). A training manual for Americans with Disabilities Act compliance in parks and recreation settings. State College: Venture. [ADA]

Stewart, J. B. (1994, June 13). Gentleman's agreement. *The New Yorker*. [Gay rights/Affirmative Action]

National Recreation and Park Association. (1987). Therapeutic Recreation Journal XXI(1): Special Issue: Papers submitted to President's Commission on Americans Outdoors. [Various populations]

In addition to the reserve readings noted in Figure 2, the literature searches resulted in a bibliography for distribution to students. The bibliography is divided into sections based on population (e. g., 40 citations on women and leisure; 20 citations on gay/lesbian issues) and tends to be somewhat more research-oriented than the reserve readings. This bibliography is intended to serve as a beginning reference point for students to use in the development of the required term paper, described below. Developed as it was by linking diversity and therapeutic terms with leisure, recreation, and tourism terms, the bibliography is primarily intended to address objectives one through four and six.

Finally, a limited number of recommended citations were also placed on reserve. These resources include *Special Recreation: Opportunities for persons with disabilities* (Kennedy, Smith, & Austin, 1991); *A Leisure of One's Own: A Feminist Perspective on Women's Leisure* (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1989); *A Social History of Leisure Since 1600* (Cross 1990); and Volume XX(1) of the *Therapeutic Recreation Journal* (1987), a special issue containing papers focused on disadvantaged populations submitted to the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors.

Human Resources

The resource speakers for the course are drawn from both the academic and professional community. During the fall semester of 1994, topics included diversity, Affirmative Action (workplace issues such as harassment and hiring practices), African American, Native American, Hispanic American, and gay/lesbian issues, perceptions of persons with disabilities, women's and gender issues, aging, incarcerated populations, at-risk youth, institutional therapeutic recreation, community therapeutic recreation, activity/facility adaptation, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and technology and communicative devices available to assist persons with disabilities. The primary intent of the use of those guest speakers with topical—rather than leisure services—expertise is to introduce students to general issues and concerns facing particular populations (e. g., language barriers facing non-English speaking persons; physiological and economic issues associated with the aging process). These speakers are the primary source of information directed toward objective five (i. e., appreciation for the physiological, psychological, sociological, technological, political, environmental and economic challenges among diverse populations). Guest speakers from within the leisure services

profession are selected for their expertise in service provision to selected populations (e. g., incarcerated populations; at-risk youth) or for their expertise in dealing with a particular topic (e. g., Americans with Disabilities Act; facility and program adaptation for persons with disabilities). In the case of therapeutic recreation professionals, these speakers are the primary source of information directed toward objective six. Professionals asked to speak about leisure services delivery to at-risk youth and incarcerated populations focus primarily (for these populations) on objectives one, two, and four.

Course Requirements

In addition to in-class participation, three primary evaluative criteria are used in the course. These assignments include weekly reaction papers, an event paper, and a research paper.

Weekly reaction papers. For each of the sixteen weekly class sessions (excluding the introductory first week), students are asked to prepare a brief collection of their thoughts on and reactions to what they experience during the class in question. Students are informed that these papers are not to be “reports” of what happened; rather, the papers are expected to reflect students’ ideas and feelings about and reactions to what occurred in class. These papers are due at the beginning of the class session subsequent to the one about which they have written. The primary purposes of this assignment are to facilitate students’ ability to come to terms with what they identify as issues surrounding personal aspects of belonging to a particular population group as well as to help students begin to gain an appreciation of the impact leisure services have on these populations. Accordingly, this assignment is focused primarily on objectives one, two, three, five, and six. These papers are evaluated based on how well students articulate the issues they select, support their positions with logical arguments, and address how the field of recreation and tourism should respond to the issues they raise. Students are encouraged to either agree or disagree with perspectives presented in class and then to defend their position.

Event paper. An event paper is intended to provide students the opportunity to gain an understanding of strategies for ensuring that recreation and tourism programs are responsive to the needs of a particular population. For this assignment, students are asked to a) identify a recreation and/or tourism related program that will provide leisure opportunities for one or more of the populations studied in the class. Students may choose either events for a general population and discuss how their chosen population is included or events directed primarily toward a particular population and discuss the implications and appropriateness of such activities (e. g., segregation; a sense of belonging), b) attend the event, c) arrange—either before, during, or after the event—to speak with someone responsible for developing/conducting the event, and d) speak to at least two participants attending the event who represent the population selected. Based on what students learn in a-d above, they are asked to develop a paper that describes a) the event and population, b) how and why the event was developed, c) problems encountered during the planning and conduct of the event (and how these problems were addressed), d) what participants thought of the event, and e) the student’s reaction to and critique of the event. This assignment is directed primarily toward objective four, with a secondary

emphasis on objectives one and three and is evaluated on depth of critical analysis and synthesis of information.

Term paper. The term paper, which is research-based, focuses on recreation and/or tourism implications for one of the populations studied in class. For this assignment, students a) select a population studied in the class other than the one chosen for the event paper (this restriction is intended to ensure that students gain in-depth exposure to at least two populations addressed by the course), b) conduct a literature search that considers the implications of some recreation and/or tourism issue (e. g., accessibility; discrimination in hiring practices; barriers to participation, program opportunities; challenges for professional program providers) for the population, c) identify and speak to at least one recreation/tourism professional who works with the population selected, and d) speak to at least two individuals who represent the population. Based on what the students learn in a-d above, they are asked to develop a research paper that develops their topic in depth. The paper should a) describe the population, b) identify the recreation and/or tourism issue(s) chosen as a focus, c) develop a referenced-based review of the issues involved, and d) provide a summary/conclusion based on their research. This assignment is directed primarily toward objectives three and four and is evaluated on thoroughness of the review of relevant literature, depth of critical analysis, and synthesis of information.

Discussion

This paper has considered the development of a course that focuses on the implications of leisure and leisure services delivery for diverse populations. While content relative to one or more such populations is currently present in one form or another in many recreation-related curricula, a few aspects of the approach to content delivery merit discussion.

First, and perhaps most importantly, the diversity course at Arizona State University West is part of the core curriculum required for all students. Indeed, given the advising strategy of directing students into the class during their entry semester, the diversity course is most likely to be students' introduction to the major (except for the small percentage of students who transfer into the program at mid-year). This strategy affords the faculty the opportunity to stress the importance of diversity issues in subsequent courses without having to dedicate substantive class time to the particulars of the subject.

In addition to the opportunity to introduce students to diversity issues early in their upper division education, the fact that this course is required ensures that all students will be exposed to diversity issues. The way the course is structured permits students to consider a) the general issues and concerns facing diverse populations, b) the personal implications of leisure for these populations, and c) the professional ramifications of and strategies for leisure services delivery to these populations. Whether this approach is, in fact, effective in meeting its stated goals needs to be evaluated over several semesters. Renwick (1979) provides a thoughtful guide to evaluating courses such as the one described in this paper.

In a related vein, the course addresses a broad spectrum of diverse populations rather than focusing on a single population. Given the small size of the ASUW Recreation and Tourism Management faculty, the opportunity to focus exclusively on, for example, ethnic minorities or gay/lesbian populations in separate courses is simply not feasible. While the depth of content for a particular population is not available in a survey course such as this one, an initial exposure is provided. While in-depth consideration of a particular population (e. g., at-risk youth; the elderly) is useful for students with a particular interest in a given population, such consideration may not be appropriate in a core course. Certainly it would be impossible to study each of the populations included in this course in separate core courses. Moreover, with counsel from their faculty advisors, students who have or develop an interest in a particular population can take coursework in other relevant departments (e. g., gerontology, women's studies) and count these credits as related area coursework for their major—as opposed to general education requirements—on their plans of study. Indeed, many of the guest speakers teach coursework related to the population they discuss with the class, which affords them a recruiting tool and provides students a contact with whom to pursue further interests in the content area.

As Grossman (1993) had it,

Through educational processes embracing diversity and understanding, gay and lesbian people and members of other minority groups, can experience freedom, equality, and pride through leisure—a possible first step toward experiencing the same rights in other educational and social service delivery systems. (p. 59)

This philosophy is one that leisure educators should embrace for all diverse populations. While most of us probably subscribe to this sentiment currently, it is not safe to assume that all our students share this perspective or have a firm purchase on the range of personal and leisure-related issues facing diverse groups. Thus, an educational focus on these issues should be folded into our curricula as substantively as, say, programming or management. How this focus is best addressed is open for debate; hopefully, the approach described in this paper will spark such discussions.

Footnotes

¹The original draft of the diversity course syllabus was developed by Richard Knopf.

²This last objective was included partly as a response to NRPA/AALR accreditation standard 8.12 and partly to provide an introduction to therapeutic recreation for students potentially interested in such careers.

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