Jordan, D.J. (1996). *Leadership in leisure services: Making a difference.* State College, PA: Venture.

Reviewed by

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Biographical Information

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No matter how diversified the field of recreation becomes, the art and skill of leading people is of primary importance. This is true whether the activity takes place on a playground with children or with seniors at a resort. Someone provides opportunities for individuals and groups and those opportunities require a leader. What does it take to be a good leader? What is leadership and how does it effect leisure?

Jordan undertakes the task of explaining leadership in her text *Leadership in leisure services: Making a difference.* She does so by guiding the reader through the maze of information and theories surrounding the concept of leadership while allowing the reader to explore those explanations that best fit their own developing definition of leadership. The focus, throughout the text, is on acquiring the information on being an effective leader and then practicing and honing those skills over time. It is stressed that leadership is a process not a product and that both the experience of the individual and the task at hand impacts the style and behavior of the leader.

The book is divided into 13 chapters set in three sections. Each of the three sections can stand alone in terms of information, or can work in concert with the other sections to provide a basis for developing and understanding leadership skills. Theoretical information, practical skills, and social/ professional issues impacting leadership are the focus of the three sections. Each section is clearly written and provides a wealth of information from which the reader can draw conclusions.

In Section I of the text, the reader is invited to explore the concept of leadership by examining a variety of concepts, models, and definitions. This section serves as the theoretical foundation and background for the examination of leadership. The first chapter provides an explanation of the difficulty in defining a concept such as leadership. This is done by identifying alternative definitions of leadership skills and traits such as creativity, integrity, and technical skills that may be present in leaders. It also points out some criteria society uses in identifying individuals as leaders.

How individuals have been identified as leaders, historically, is the primary concern of Chapter 2. Various theories of leadership (i.e. Great Man) are presented in the context of observed leadership qualities. The chapter points out that since leadership is most often performed in front of others, it is often described as how people lead (i.e. autocratic) or ascribed personal characteristics (i.e. charisma). The chapter concludes with a discussion of current theories defining leadership and a framework for "Choosing an Appropriate Style of Leadership."

Section I concludes with a review of core concepts in human development presented in Chapter 3. The theoretical views of Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg offer explanations of physical, emotional, and intellectual development. The chapter points out that leadership styles and traits must be adapted and modified depending on a group's developmental level. This chapter does an excellent job of tracing developmental tasks across the lifespan and relating them to leadership skills and expectations. How do I become an effective leader? What do I do, how do I do it, and will it work? These are the questions answered in Section II. Jordan identifies the people skills that are necessary for any group process to be successful. She includes discussions of leader and follower behaviors that positively and negatively impact group functioning. This section provides basic knowledge on leadership skills and stresses the importance for the practice of these skills in order to become a more effective leader.

Some groups seem to be effective when "...each group member is linked to all other group members" (p. 113). Understanding the reasons people belong to groups and what processes evoke interdependence among group members is the primary focus of Chapter 4. The discussion of various roles individuals play within a group assists the student in identifying those behaviors in the group that are beneficial to group functioning and those that inhibit effectiveness. The sequencing of the chapter directs the student to first identify desired group member skills and then through a discussion of power and team building focuses the attention on those processes that will most likely produce positive group skills.

Communication is not only what is said and how it is said, but also how a receiver interprets information. Verbal, written, and body language are presented in Chapters 5 & 6. According to Jordan, "Communication is used to manage conflict, create and maintain relationships, persuade others, understand groups and group dynamics and transmit cultural norms" (p. 163). Cultural differences in communication are presented throughout these chapters in reference to a variety of communication skills and patterns. Facial expressions, eye movement, and other visible behavior can color the interpretation of a message and change the intended meaning. This can lead to hurt feelings and conflicts that can limit group effectiveness.

The issues of conflict and behavior management are developed to show how each can impact the functioning of a group. Jordan provides a comprehensive review of techniques that can be used to resolve conflicts (Chapter 7) and manage group behavior (Chapter 8). Together these chapters explain concepts of reinforcement, assertiveness,

mediation, and motivation. These skills, along with those in communication and group dynamics, comprise the "Essential Skills of Leadership" necessary for working with people in recreation and leisure programs.

"Synergy is a term used to describe the notion that the sum of the parts is larger, bigger, and more powerful than the whole" (p. 303). Jordan uses the third section of the text to present "...thought-provoking material to serve as a kind of fabric for leisure services leadership" (p. 303). This *fabric* consists of issues that are of concern in today's society, such as diversity, ethics, risk management/ liability, and other social and professional issues. The five chapters in this section allow the reader to explore and understand how these issues can result in changes in leadership style and techniques.

The concepts of inclusion and respect for differences, in Chapter 9, focus the reader on how some groups or individuals can feel disenfranchised by a leader's action or inaction even if it is unintentional. Core diversity factors such as age, gender, physical qualities, race/ethnicity, and others are central characteristics that can impact group functioning as well as the interaction between group members. The awareness of these factors and leadership procedures that can minimize possible negative outcomes are clearly presented. For example, the way directions are given to different age groups and the use of inclusionary language (i.e., partner) in place of the non-inclusionary term (i.e., spouse) when describing relationships, can facilitate positive group functioning.

Professional standards are the primary themes of the last four chapters in the text. From ethical decision making and risk management to direct leadership and professional issues, the role of the leader is clearly delineated. Protecting the individual dignity of group members during the decision making process is presented in Chapter 10. The use of case studies in this chapter provides the opportunity for students to practice making ethical decisions in a non-threatening environment. This is an invaluable experience and extremely important for all leaders today.

After protecting the individual rights for inclusion and respect, the leader must then ensure the physical security of the group. This is known as risk management and is detailed in Chapter 11. This chapter does not just focus on the issues of legal liability, that is so common in this society, but also on the responsible and professional behavior of the leader. Waivers and assumption of risk forms are two ways to limit legal exposure while still providing a desired recreation activity. The development of a risk management plan is detailed and stressed as a means of providing security for both the participants and the long term survivability of the agency.

Having a risk management plan and an understanding of the desires and skills of the individuals in a group prepares the leader for running the group. Writing goals and objectives, and setting the format of the activity to facilitate the success of the group are clearly presented in Chapter 12. Techniques to get the group involved and motivated are identified and the reasons for their usefulness is clearly explained. Probably one of the most underrated forms of leadership and most costly to an organization, in terms of

wasted work hours, is leading a meeting. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the skills necessary to lead a successful meeting. From the pre-meeting organization to the evaluation after the meeting and everything in between, the tools to run a meeting are well developed and valuable to everyone who may lead meetings.

As if leadership skills and concern for safety and inclusion of participants were not enough to concentrate on, our society has provided leaders with some other issues to be aware of during leisure programming. A major group of concerns involves abuse of participants. Physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual abuse have become an all too common part of our society and leisure programs are not exempt. Besides the identification and reporting of possible abuse, Jordan stresses that leisure leaders need to be aware of how their actions might be interpreted by an outside observer, given this climate of abuse. Chapter 13 concludes with a useful presentation of professional certification and organizations that may benefit the leisure professional.

Jordan set out to show how to "make a difference" through leisure service leadership and does so in a straightforward and useful way. Each of the three sections serve as building blocks for understanding the process of effective leadership and the milieu of personal, professional, and social issues that can impact it. The book can be used as a resource for seasoned professionals and as a text for introductory leadership courses. The text is long (495 pages) and that could be initially intimidating to introductory students even though the information is useful and readily available.

The use of "learning opportunities" at the beginning of each chapter sets the tone for the chapter and provides focal points to be aware of when reading. The summary issue presented in "The Front Line" at the end of each chapter assists the reader/student in reviewing a primary issue from the previous chapter. An instructor's manual that consists of some group exercises would be very helpful, especially for the skills presented in Section II. Overall, *Leadership in leisure services: Making a difference* is a welcomed and long overdue resource for the leisure educator responsible for teaching leadership.