

Stumbo, N. (2002). *Client Assessment in Therapeutic Recreation Services*. State College, PA: Venture. 324 pages. ISBN 1-892132-32-X, \$34.95.

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This text is aimed at improving an important, and frequently deficient, component in the field of therapeutic recreation – client assessment as it relates to program planning, delivery, and evaluation. As the author stated, “While most therapeutic recreation specialists excel at designing and delivering programs, the programs often have little connection to a solid assessment of client need, and therefore are not aimed at specific measurable client outcomes” (p71).

The initial chapters introduce the reader to basic measurement terminology and challenge the student to purposefully apply the knowledge toward improving methodological standards as practitioners. The content is intended for those with little, or very basic, exposure to research methods and design, and works to establish functional knowledge through deliberate and progressive development of foundational principles.

The book embarks on a brief and selective journey through the foundational concepts and rationale of therapeutic recreation services, including brief explanations of leisure lifestyle, the Leisure Ability Model, and a longer, detailed account of the Therapeutic Recreation Accountability Model (TRAM). TRAM was developed initially to assist the specialist in grasping the interdependence of model elements and how those links are “crucial to providing clients with goal-oriented, outcome-based interventions” (p. 81), thereby establishing a “justification for inclusion in a health care treatment plan.” Aware that this is a major issue for those working as practitioners in therapeutic recreation, I was surprised that it was not dealt with more directly as a monumental impetus for improving general knowledge of methodology.

The text delineates (chapter four) a clear boundary between assessment planning and implementation for purpose of acknowledging the time intensive preparations that occur before implementation takes place. The mid section of the book is dedicated to the closer evaluation of the two issues. An overview of planning process central elements is given, while selecting and developing an assessment tool is covered in detail by chapters five through seven. A similar configuration applies to implementation. The general overview, given in chapter four, leads the way for detailed review of implementation techniques, specifically interviewing and observation in chapters eight and nine.

Selection of an appropriate assessment tool can prove to be a complicated task. A nearly comprehensive list of commercial assessments is given, concurrently with information for critiquing such assessments. The information would certainly function as a reference resource for therapeutic recreation professionals. Clearly, therapeutic recreation specialists face barriers and issues (illuminated in chapter ten) such as lack of an adequate number of assessments for the variegated population served, deficient numbers

of high quality assessments available and further issues related to the specialists knowledge and resources. It stands to reason that these deficiencies often lead practitioners to feel there is not an option to developing their own assessment strategy or, as unfortunate as it may be, making decisions without the assistance of a valid assessment tool.

Certainly there must be an acknowledgement of time expenditure in developing a tool. The author is quick to point out divergent opinions on whether practitioners *should* be doing so due to possible statistical and methodological limitations. Conversely, the argument can be made that practitioners are likely to develop their own assessment tool and therefore need to be appropriately trained during the course of their studies. This text, paired with good instruction and knowledge application experience, can fill that void effectively.

The implementation processes of interviewing and observation each garnered an entire chapter. Like other facets of assessment, client interviews take a great deal of practice to reduce error. The chapter is complete in outlining types of interviews, questions, as well as the actual interview structure. The application of principles, in the form of practice assignments, is found in the appendix of student exercises in the rear of the book. The student exercise portion gives discussion questions, sample test items and the answers, as well as sample assignments for each chapter of the book. The student exercise section of the book should prove most helpful to both student and instructor.

On the whole, the charts and tables included in the text were of aid in summarizing the content presented, though on occasion, graphs appeared a bit redundant and overly simplistic (Table 1.7, p. 15) as representations of points that the chapter had explained clearly and thoroughly in the preceding paragraphs. The flow was logical and easy to read. The content itself moved in easy progression building on the material of previous chapters, though sporadically bordered on repetitive, as items established early in the book were re-introduced in the context of the larger picture. The repetition, though a bit tedious in the short term, may actually work as an advantage to the student when reading the material over a longer period of time.

Unquestionably, there is a need for more prevalent understanding of client assessment among practitioners. That goal is not addressed well by devoting a single chapter in a text, but is possible through the focused and comprehensive information of a text dealing solely with assessment. Through better methodological training for practitioners, clients will be more accurately served and the effectiveness of interventions and programs further empirically substantiated.

In conclusion, the text honestly confronts the frequent deficiencies of methodological resources and skills many practitioners face, while not straying too far towards idealism or philosophical. There is a constant thread of awareness that assessments happen in the "real world" with populations that are incredibly diverse. The book is an excellent guide for undergraduate, master's students with little methodological training, and practitioners that are concurrently engaged in classroom and application learning.