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ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL NEEDS FOR CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

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by
Millee Martin-Walton
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ABSTRACT

This study is designed to explore and describe what the social and recreational needs of children and teenagers with developmental disabilities. A needs assessment survey was conducted with parents of children with developmental disabilities. The data collected will be used to assist in the identification and prioritizing of client needs. The survey is important from an administrative view, as it will be used as a means of developing policy for social and recreational services. It is equally as important from a community planning viewpoint. It will result in a knowledge of individual need, as well as identification and allocation of appropriate community resources. The ultimate goal of this research study is to provide the opportunities for developmentally disabled youth to participate in social and recreational activities of their choice, utilizing integrated community resources. It is hoped that through increased choices and opportunities for social and recreational experiences, children with developmental disabilities will not only develop individual interests and skills, but also the opportunity to establish friendships with nondisabled peers.

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INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Throughout history, society has perceived the disabled in two ways. One perception is the feeling of pity. It is believed that through no fault of their own the disabled were born this way, and it is society's responsibility to improve these individuals' lives. The other view labels the disabled as deviant, with no functional use in society (Wolfensberger, 1972). Previous ideologies have implied lack of value on the part of individuals with developmental disabilities, and their inability to successfully contribute to the greater society. Society's conception on the lack of worth and weakness of the disabled has determined the quality of life, or lack thereof for individuals with developmental disabilities.

According to Heal (1988) perceptions based on Social Darwinism have been reinforced within our society, particularly for individuals with disabilities. This ideology maintains that low status is genetically determined, and that the environment is not an important factor in determining one's status or position in society. The movement to segregate devalued populations from the rest of society originated from this ideology.

Institutionalization of these populations was performed for their own protection, as well as for the protection of the general public. One of the significant concerns with the practice of institutionalization was the dehumanizing conditions individuals were subjected to, such as overcrowded facilities and lack of privacy. It was also during the post 1900's that individuals with mental retardation were used as human guinea pigs for new methods of medical treatment and research (Scheerenberger, 1987).

In the 1960's, during President Kennedy's administration the rights and concerns of the mentally retarded, and other oppressed groups were brought to attention. This was the beginning of planning services designed specifically for the mentally retarded, and included responsibility of implementation and facilitation of legislation. In the 1970's the federal authorization of the Developmental Disabilities Services and Facilities Construction Act, PL 91-517 defined a change in social perception of concern and response towards individuals with developmental disabilities. The enactment of state councils to develop and coordinate provision of services was established. The purpose of the councils were also to provide advocacy and protection of rights to the disabled (Braddock ,1988).

A second ideology, as explained by Heal (1988) values the disabled. Although the perception of value is associated there is still an underlying premise that weakness still persists within the population. This is due to the additional or charitable supports awarded to the disabled, resulting from the pity society places on the population. Pity is seen as the primary reason compensation and discrimination has occurred. An example is the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, PL 94-142. In PL 94-142, students are labeled handicapped and although they are seen as having a right to education, the educational service provided typically occurs in a segregated classroom. The devaluing of this population has been reinforced through the practice of segregation, perpetuating the ideology that individuals with developmental disabilities are weak, and unable to be contributing members of society.

Problem Focus

Currently, human service agencies that work with individuals with developmental disabilities are experiencing a shift in paradigm (Braddock 1988, Heal 1988). This shift is a result of public legislation, as well as public outcry from the individuals being served. Human service agencies attempting to adhere to the change of focusing from regulatory methods to a more person centered approach are the Regional Centers in California. The Regional Center system provides case management, diagnostic, advocacy, education and other related services. One area of focus has been the social/recreational needs of individuals with developmental disabilities, specifically children. In the past, leisure interests for this population have been limited to passive activities such as listening to music, or segregated activities involving only people with developmental disabilities. The paradigm shift asserts that the social and recreational opportunities for this population should occur within existing community activities, and not be contained in a program solely for individuals with developmental disabilities.

In the Regional Centers' endeavor to support the paradigm shift, the provision of supports that are specific to consumer needs is being attempted. One such effort to meet individual needs has been to provide appropriate social and recreational supports for youth with developmental disabilities. Haring and Breen (1992) indicate that parents, individuals with developmental disabilities, and advocates of this population are requesting services which promote participation in community settings that include nondisabled peers, and provide opportunity to develop friendships. Heal (1988) explains that integration views all individuals as being equally valued, with the same rights and responsibilities. With this view follows the belief that individuals with developmental disabilities are entitled to "normal patterns of daily living", or "normative pathways". Normative pathways are defined as typical and often unpredictable events in one's life that help to develop and support one's identity (Udistkdy, 1993; Wolfensberger, 1972).

A positivist methodology will be used to explore and describe what parents of children with developmental disabilities believe to be important for their children, in the way of social and recreational opportunities. The purpose of carrying out this research study is to determine what the needs of this population are. This research study is important from an administrative standpoint. Regional Center administration is attempting to become more sensitive to the needs of the population they serve. In order to make a successful transition towards a more desired person centered approach, the needs of the population must be identified. This research study will provide Regional Center administration with first hand information directly from the individuals and families, on what they believe the social and recreational needs of the population are. The data collected will also provide information necessary for the development of policy regarding social and recreational services, for children with developmental disabilities.

This study will also be important from a community planning position. The information collected from this research study will be important in the development of support services for children with developmental disabilities and their families. The information can be used to promote opportunities for community inclusion, where individual interests can be pursued, and the potential for friendships and belonging can be realized.

Literature Review

Historically, children with developmental disabilities have not been provided the normative pathways nondisabled children experience (Heal,1988). Normative pathways for children include play, which helps them to develop socially and creatively. Barnett (1990) explains that play is critical to the cognitive development of a child. It is believed that there are important functions of play that relate to a person's problem solving ability. Through play experiences, one learns valuable practices in dealing with problem situations. Erickson's theory of personality development characterizes play as an important contributing factor to a child's social development (Specht & Craig, 1987). The drive for autonomy is directly related to the feeling of self competence. It is through play and social integration that children learn to establish and maintain relationships with other individuals (Barnett, 1990).

The denial of normative pathways for children with developmental disabilities, subjects them to a life of segregation (Heal, 1988; Duets, 1993; Wolfensberger, 1972). Without typical opportunities such as play they will not learn the process of forming friendships, or pursue activities of interest. As a result of their disability, they will not be afforded the opportunity to experience the celebration of sharing, playing, or encouragement from a friend (Uditsky, 1993).

In order to promote acceptance for individuals with developmental disabilities, the person has to be portrayed as a worthwhile human being (Heal, 1988; Uditsky, 1993). Bak and Siperstein (1987) found that nondisabled individuals were more likely to interact with disabled peers if they could perceive positive qualities in the individual. This is not likely to occur if the individual does not have opportunities to interact with nondisabled peers. It would seem that community inclusion would be one of the most natural and likely methods of providing opportunities for nondisabled and individuals with developmental disabilities to interact (Blaney & Freud, 1993; Heal, 1988; O'Brien & O'Brien, 1993; Uditsky, 1993).

Much of the most recent literature supports the idea of inclusion, particularly in terms of community use (Blaney & Freud, 1993; O'Brien & O'Brien, 1993). Community inclusion for individuals with developmental disabilities provides them with another pathway, such as discovering locations where interests and abilities can be developed (Uditsky, 1993). It is through community inclusion where children with disabilities can demonstrate their own strengths, as well as similarities shared with their nondisabled peers (Blaney & Freud, 1993). It is also through community inclusion that the possibility of association and belonging may occur (Blaney & Freud, 1993; O'Brien & O'Brien, 1993).

Past research on integration between disabled and nondisabled teenagers has focused primarily on social skill training (Strain & Odom, 1986; Staub & Hunt, 1993). Previous research on leisure interests for individuals with developmental disabilities has also focused on skill training (Hayes, 1973). The weakness in these studies is that the focus was on the individual's disability. The purpose of the studies was to provide appropriate skill training (Hayes, 1973; Staub & Hunt, 1993; Strain & Odom, 1986). The focus was to change the individual, to make him or her more acceptable to nondisabled peers.

Previous literature is limited because of an emphasis on what is unacceptable in a person in terms of behavior deficits, or a lack of social skill (Haringer & Lovinger, 1989). The studies have determined what the individual needs training in, attempting to correct what was wrong with the individual by modifying their behavior (Hayes, 1973; Staub & Hunt, 1993; Strain & Odom, 1986). Although previous research has provided useful information, it has perpetuated the oppression of individuals with developmental disabilities. The oppression has continued through the belief that with assessment and training individuals with developmental disabilities can become accepted by society (Braddock, 1988; Heal, 1988).

The shift in paradigm from viewing the disabled as deviant, and nonfunctional to that of being equal to typical or nondisabled individuals is not merely a trend; it is a more humane way of allowing individuals with disabilities to have control over their lives (Braddock, 1988, Heal, 1988). This shift in paradigm suggests that we do away with regulatory methods and program models that promote segregation of individuals with developmental disabilities. Many existing regulated services such as sheltered workshops and residential programs occur in a segregated context. It is believed that such resources infer weakness in the individual, which in turn encourages the devaluation of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Heal (1988) explains that the ideology of egalitarianism promotes equality of opportunity, and the lack of differential value on individuals with and without disabilities. This belief advocates for society to include all individuals into the community, whereby individual strengths can be maximized for the benefit of the all. This ideology promotes equal opportunity and access for all people to participate within their community. It is through this shift in paradigm that standardized program models will not take precedence over individual choice. Through the use of a more person centered approach individuals with developmental disabilities will have equal and individualized opportunities to develop friendships, interests, and other experiences that they have not been previously afforded.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to complete a needs assessment of the social and recreational interests for children and teenagers with developmental disabilities. This study will use an exploratory and descriptive approach to gather information on the interests of youth with developmental disabilities. This study was done in cooperation with Inland Regional Center. The information gathered will provide the Regional Center with data that will be important in the identification and prioritizing of client needs, as well as with the development of resources to meet these needs. The long term focus of this study will not only be to provide appropriate client services, but to also provide opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities to access community resources and to integrate with nondisabled peers.

Research Question

One use of a needs assessment survey is to identify the needs of a particular target group. This study will not begin with a hypothesis, but rather will aid this researcher in understanding what the social and recreational needs and interests are for youth with developmental disabilities. A positivist methodology will be used to explore and describe the following question: What are the social and recreational interests and needs of children and teenagers with developmental disabilities? The goal of the needs assessment survey will be to identify services which are specific to consumer needs.

Sampling

Inland Regional Center serves approximately 10,000 individuals, within San Bernardino and Riverside counties. The large percentage of youth that make up the total number of consumers served precluded sampling the entire population. This researcher spoke to the case managers, and parents of children with developmental disabilities and found that social and recreational opportunities were extremely limited for this specific population, particularly for those who reside in the city of Moreno Valley. Moreno Valley is considered a very fast growing community, however parents indicate that the same cannot be said for the services developed for youth with developmental disabilities. Due to this researcher's knowledge of the limited social and leisure opportunities available for this group a targeted sampling was chosen. The population of interest included parents of children who have a developmental disability. The sampling frame used was a computerized list of the sample population. The sampling frame included a total of 113 families that live in the city of Moreno Valley. Additional eligibility criterion included the child being between 6-16 years of age, and the family had to be currently receiving case management services through Inland Regional Center.

Instrument

The data collection instrument utilized in this research was a survey questionnaire designed for this study (see Appendix C). A survey questionnaire was chosen because this method is considered the most direct and efficient method for completing a needs assessment of a target population (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). This researcher choose a mail survey because it is a quick and effective way to gather information from a large sample population. A letter of explanation (see Appendix A) was included with the survey, informing the participant that the purpose of the survey was to identify the social and recreational needs of youth with developmental disabilities. The letter also explained the importance of their participation, and how it might affect the social and recreational services that their child may receive.

The survey itself began with demographic data such as age, gender and ethnicity. This demographic data was important because it gave this researcher information on who was represented in the sample. The demographics reflected the diversity of the population being surveyed. The data also assisted in determining whether the population was representative of a specific group, in terms of gender or socioeconomic class.

One possible limitation in the method is that the respondent may not understand, or may misinterpret a question. To limit misinterpretation a pretest was conducted involving two different groups. The first pretest was performed by professionals who work with individuals with developmental disabilities. The second pretest was completed by individuals who met the survey eligibility criterion of being a parent to a child with a developmental disability. The pretest helped to validate the instrument's clarity and relevance to the subject.

The strength in a mailed survey is that it can be the least intrusive method a researcher can use to engage respondent's participation (Hudson, 1988). The responses from the survey were anonymous so that the participant's privacy will be maintained. Anonymity was insured so that respondents would answer questions as honestly as possible.

Procedure

Surveys were mailed out at the same time to all potential respondents. As previously mentioned, each survey contained a letter of explanation. This letter of explanation clarified the survey's purpose, in determining the social and recreational needs of youth with developmental disabilities. Respondents were given two weeks to complete and return the survey. When the survey was first mailed out it was coded with the client's state assigned identification number. This identification number was used to track nonresponses. Those that did not respond within three weeks received a follow-up mailing, which included a second copy of the letter of explanation and survey. The surveys were completed and returned to this researcher within three to six weeks of being received by the sample population.

Protection Of Human Subjects

Included with each questionnaire was an Informed Consent, which explained the purpose, procedure and benefits from participation in the study. The respondents were asked for their signature on the Informed Consent as means of giving their consent to participate, as well as attesting to their understanding of the study. The Informed Consent (see Appendix B) stated that participation was completely voluntary, and that responses would remain confidential. Respondents were also assured that participation would in no way affect the services currently being received through Inland Regional Center.

As each questionnaire was received by this researcher a second identification number was coded onto the Informed Consent and questionnaire. The second identification number was used for data collection purposes only. The Informed

Consents were then detached from the surveys, and separately maintained.

DATA ANALYSIS

As this is a needs assessment there was no hypothesis to test. Statistical analysis utilized quantitative data obtained from the survey questionnaires. The survey contained nominal variables such as age, and ethnicity. Ordinal variables were also included which provided rank ordered data on the individual's opportunity to develop friendships and interests. The variables were first generated to produce univariate statistics. Valid percentages for each variable were computed through the use of frequency tables, and frequency distributions. The variables were then comparatively summarized using descriptive statistics.

To explore relationships between variables bivariate analysis was conducted to determine whether subgroups within the participants exist who may share a particular interest, or whether there are any barriers for certain groups which prevent social or recreational participation. Such variables may affect consumer service outcome that will result from this needs assessment. Cross tabulation of bivariate analysis assisted in determining whether association existed between certain key variables. The Chi Square statistical test was applied to assess whether a significance in association occurred between key variables. The 0.05 level of probability was used to test significance.

RESULTS

Description of Respondents

The sample population included 113 individuals. Of that, 56 participants responded to the questionnaire, resulting in a 49 percent response rate. The respondents completing the questionnaire were primarily the mothers of the children. Of this group, the females were predominantly white with a median age of 33. Within the sample the most dominant family profile consisted of a white married couple with an income of 25,000 to 30,000 a year. The annual income of the respondents varied from 5 receiving under 10,000 per year, to 10 receiving over 50,000 per years. The ethnicity of the sample included 29 Caucasians, 13 African Americans, 5 Hispanics, 2 Native Americans, 3 Asians, and 4 who did not specify ethnicity.

The children involved in the sample population included 34 males and 22 females. The childrens' ages ranged between 6-16, with a mean age of 10. Of the sample, 39 were between the ages of 6-11, and 30 were between the ages of 12-16. The prevailing disability within the sample was cerebral palsy. Of the participants, 18 had a combination of cerebral palsy, mental retardation, and epilepsy, and another 12 had a combination of cerebral palsy and mental retardation. The sample contained 7 children with a single disability of cerebral palsy, and another 7 had cerebral palsy and epilepsy.

The second predominant disability was mental retardation, with 42 participants having some degree of mental retardation, and 14 with no mental retardation. A break down of the varying degrees of mental retardation included 19 mild, 14 moderate, 8 profound and 1 severe. The sample also included 4 children with Down Syndrome, 15 with epilepsy and 4 with autism. Within the population there were individuals who had other combining disabilities which included 4 with mental retardation and epilepsy, 1 with mental retardation and autism, 1 with epilepsy and autism.

Identification of needs

The questionnaire was comprised of several components which assisted in the identification of the social/recreational needs and interests for youth with developmental disabilities (see Appendix E for raw data). Evaluative questions utilized a rating scale of either "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", or "very important" to "of no importance". The first component of the survey included questions which determined the population's view of social/recreational opportunities, and whether there was a belief that such opportunities were in fact needed. The data reflects that 100 percent of the sample agreed that appropriate social/recreational opportunities were important for their child, and that their child would benefit from such a service. The sample was also overwhelmingly in favor of their child having the opportunity to utilize community recreation services (94%).

<u>What would the purpose be for the child to participate in a social/recreational service?</u>

Table 1 lists the primary purposes identified for social/recreational services in descending order of importance.

<u>Table 1</u>
PRIMARY PURPOSE FOR PARTICIPATION (N=56)

Purpose	Important	Not Important
Utilize Community Resources	55	1
Develop Hobbies/Interests	54	2
Learn Appropriate Social Skills	53	3
Develop Friendships	52	4
Increase Self Esteem	51	5
Improve Behavioral Skills	48	8
Receive Day Care	37	19

The samples' responses were reflective of the paradigm shift, which promotes community inclusion and development of relationships with individuals that are non disabled. Of the population 55 found it was "important", or "very important" for their child to utilize community resources; and 54 agreed that it was "important", or "very important" for their child to develop friendships. There were 37 respondents who "agreed", or "strongly agreed" that day care was an important factor in receiving a social/recreation service. However, of all the questions in this section of the survey day care was the least important reason chosen by respondents.

What types of recreational activities would children be most interested in?

Activities that parents saw as being of the most interest to their own children included: team sports, swimming, arts and crafts, bicycling, and utilizing playground equipment. The responses that were not seen as important were in descending order of, 1) dance class, 2) aerobics, 3) gymnastics, and 4) tennis. These activities may require a high level of skill and good motor skills, which some of the children may not currently possess. The sample did see a variety of activities where the child would have the opportunity to develop a skill as being important.

This section also contained a comment section for the sample to identify other activities not addressed on the survey. Comments included such activities as performing theater, fishing, trips to the snow, motorized equipment (i.e. go carts), karate, bowling, skating, therapy, music and singing, and cooking.

What settings would be appropriate to specific needs?

The majority of respondents felt that community recreation departments (87%) and school clubs/organizations (64%) were settings that would best meet their child's needs. Other settings that the sample deemed important were Boy/Girl Scouts (64%), and YMCA (64%). The sample was asked for additional comments on appropriate settings, and responses included: playgrounds, malls, being around groups of people, small group settings, and Inland Regional Center sponsored activities.

What are the barriers to participation in a social/recreation program?

Using a scale from 1 (most important) to 6 (least important) the sample ranked barriers which prevented their child from participating in a social, or recreational activity. Table 2 identifies the samples' responses of the number one barrier to their child's participation. (For a complete ranking see Appendix E.)

Table 2
BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION (N=56) No. 1 Barrier

Barrier	Number of Responses
Lack of Services	32
Lack of Finances	17
Fear of Not Being Accepted	6
No Transportation	5
Child has Serious Medical Problem	4
Child has Serious Behavioral Problem	4

The sample was provided with a comment section to address additional barriers. The comments were more often related to individual needs of the child such as being deaf, nonverbal, or having specific medical needs.

Important Activities and Appropriate Settings

Table 3 summarizes activities that the sample ranked in order of importance.

Table 3
ACTIVITIES THAT THE CHILD WOULD BE INTERESTED IN (N=56)

Activity	Important	Not Important
Playground Equipment	48	8
Swimming	44	12
Arts and Crafts	43	13
Team Sports	40	16
Aerobics	29	27
Gymnastics	27	29
Dance Class	27	28
Bicycling	39	17
Tennis	16	39

Table 4 illustrates what settings the population believed were most important in meeting the needs of their child.

Table 4
APPROPRIATE SETTINGS TO MEET CHILD'S NEEDS (N=56)

Setting	Important	Not Important
Community Recreation Dept.	49	7
School Clubs/Organizations	43	13
Boy/Girl Scouts	36	20
YMCA	36	20
Health Clubs	30	26

The samples' responses reflect that activities involving nonsegregated sites such as recreation departments and school settings are most appropriate to meet their child's social and recreational needs. In reviewing the data outlined in Table 2 and Table 3 there was no significant differences found in the importance across gender, ethnic groups, or disabilities.

At the end of the survey respondents were given the opportunity to include any additional comments. One theme found within the comments was the parents' gratefulness for the interest being taken in their child's social/ recreational needs. Another theme involved parents' experience of having their child being excluded from recreational services that children without disabilities utilize. One individual comment stated, "Integration is all well and good, educating the nondisabled children is greatly needed."

IDENTIFIED SUBGROUPS

Disability and Purpose for Participation

The purpose in participation chosen for children with autism was to improve their social skills (Yates=0.82 p=0.05). Due to characteristics associated with autism children are often perceived as a behavioral problem. Although no statistical significance was noted parents of children who have autism appear to place greater importance on improving behavioral and social skills then parents of children with other developmental disabilities.

For children with epilepsy a significant relationship was noted between their disability and developing friendships (Fisher exact p=0.05). The parents of these children believed that the purpose of their child participating in a social/recreational service is to increase the child's opportunity to develop friendships. The reason most often reported by parents for the participation of children with mental retardation in social/recreational services was to receive day care services. However, the relationship between mental retardation and day care was not statistically significant.

Disability and Appropriate Settings

A significant relationship was found between mental retardation and choosing of services from the community recreation department (Yates=0.81 p=0.05). Parents of children who have mental retardation believe that community recreation departments are appropriate settings that can meet their child's needs. A significant relationship was noted between disability and whether parents would pay for any fee or tuition that may be required for their child's participation in an activity (Yates=0.82 p=0.05). The parents of children with autism, cerebral palsy and Down Syndrome were more willing to pay for any monetary fee that maybe required for their child to participate in a social/recreational activity, than parents of children with mental retardation.

A significant relationship was also determined between children with cerebral palsy and community recreation department (Yates =0.81 p=0.05). A trend was found in school clubs/organizations being an appropriate setting for children with cerebral palsy. Although not statistically significant, parents of children with Down Syndrome chose Boy/Girl Scouts, and the YMCA as services which would meet their child's needs. Similarly, respondents with children with epilepsy saw importance in the YMCA as an appropriate setting, however importance was not statistically significant.

Trends in Social/Recreational Activities

For children with mental retardation and Down Syndrome a trend was noted in bicycle riding as an activity that they would find interest in. There was also a noticeable trend in children with epilepsy and the use of playground equipment. It is also important to point out that there were a total of 15 children who had epilepsy and of that number 10 were between the ages of 6-11. The use of playground equipment may be more appropriate for children this age, than for children who are in their teens. The sample also chose playground equipment as an important activity that children with cerebral palsy would be interested in. Children with cerebral palsy may have been over represented in this research study. Therefore, the list of activities rated "of no importance" by parents of these children included activities that are very physical in nature, and may not be appropriate for this population.

Trends in Gender, Disability and Barriers to Participation

The population reported that more males then females do not participate in a social/recreational service, as a result of behavioral problems. Interesting is the finding that there were less males than females reported to have autism, which is a disability often associated as having more behavioral problems. A trend was also observed with females who have not been afforded participation in social/recreational activities due to medical problems. More parents of females reported medical conditions which created a barrier to their child's social/recreational participation, than did parents of males. The findings actually show more males than females with a diagnosis of epilepsy and cerebral palsy. These are disabilities which are often associated with having more chronic medical conditions. No statistical significance was determined between gender and behavioral problem, or medical problem however, the data does reflect a trend between gender and these two variables. The findings indicate that gender may be a potential determinant in what parents perceive are the barriers to their child's participation in social and recreational activities.

A trend was also observed between children with autism and the fear of not being accepted by others. One reason parents of children with autism gave for participation in a social/recreational service was to improve social skills. Although no statistical significance was determined, improvement of one's social skills may be a method parents believe important towards gaining acceptance from others.

As previously reported, children with cerebral palsy were not truly represented in this needs assessment. An apparent trend was reflected in the responses parents of children with cerebral palsy gave. The responses indicated that many of the suggested activities were not seen as important in meeting the needs of children with cerebral palsy.

DISCUSSION

In conclusion, what has been determined from this study is that parents are supporting the movement towards community inclusion. The activities identified as being important currently exist within community recreation departments, and other community resources. The responses are in keeping with the movement towards community inclusion. The parents hope is for their child to develop interests and relationships in the same settings where children that are nondisabled use to recreate. These samples' responses are consistent with earlier indication that utilization of community resources, development of interests, and development of friendships were the purpose for their child's participation in a social/recreational service.

This study has also helped not only to identify appropriate settings, and activities, but also the barriers which have precluded previous participation. This researcher is more sensitive to the specific needs of particular disabilities. It is evident from the data analysis that individuals with cerebral palsy were over represented in the population. Although the purpose for individuals with developmental disabilities participating in social/recreational services maybe similar, such as the opportunity to access community resources, or develop individual interests, the resources will vary with each individual, as does their disability. Careful planning must be done to ensure that the services provided to the children meet their purpose for participation, as well as being specific to their individual needs and abilities. Without ensuring that both physical and emotional needs are provided for then the barriers to participation will continue to exist.

Limitations

This research study was limited to the families of children with developmental disabilities that receive case management services through Inland Regional Center, and reside in Moreno Valley. Due to the narrow scope of the sample there were many families of children with developmental disabilities that were not included in the study. By including all families of children with developmental disabilities that receive case management services through Inland Regional Center greater input on the social/recreational needs of this population would have been obtained. In addition, the clients themselves may be a useful population to sample. Involvement from the children will ensure that development of resources are client oriented.

Implications for Research and Practice

This study was an attempt to identify what the social/recreational needs are of youth with developmental disabilities. Individual personal insights from the clients are important factors that should be addressed in future research studies. In addition, it would be useful to know what, if any, social or recreational activities the sample is currently involved in, and whether relationships with peers that are nondisabled already exist. As services begin to develop and consumers increase their access to community resources a study would be of benefit on these specific services, exploring what outcomes have occurred as a result of consumers participation. Questions to be posed for future study may be: having received such a service is the individual able to independently maintain participation in social and leisure settings, and having received such a service is the individual successful in establishing relationships with nondisabled peers, within these social and recreational settings?

Due to the overrepresentation of individuals with cerebral palsy, the question of children with this disability were actually overrepresented in the study, or whether there are just more children with cerebral palsy living in the Moreno Valley needs further examination. If indeed there are more children with cerebral palsy living in this geographical area then a separate study would be warranted to determine specific needs, and barriers for this population.

The results from this study demonstrate that parents want their children to have opportunities to develop interests, and have meaningful relationships with others. Perceived areas of interest for the children included swimming, arts and crafts, team sports, school clubs, and recreational settings. Trends were also identified for certain disabilities and activities, such as bicycling being of interest for children with mental retardation and Down

Syndrome. In determining what the needs of the population are not only were various settings and activities identified, but it was concluded that specialized programs to promote social and recreational opportunities are not needed. This was determined by the 55 respondents who agreed that the use of community resources was the primary purpose for their child's participation in a social/recreational service. The development of resources, in particular segregated services is not determined as a need for youth with developmental disabilities, but rather to encourage and support participation within existing social and recreational situations.

The implication for social workers who work with individuals with developmental disabilities is to promote opportunities for the individuals to develop and recognize their own interests, and capabilities. It is important for professionals to understand that it is not enough to just include, and expose these individuals to community activities. The responsibility lies with the professional to empower the individual to seek participation, and sense of belonging within settings and associations of their own choosing.

CONCLUSION

Evidence that community inclusion is an important component of social and recreational opportunities was obtained through the implementation of this needs assessment. Specifically, 90% of the sample agreed that the purpose for their child's participation was to increase self esteem, develop interests/hobbies, and develop friendships.

Many barriers to participation were also identified. Although no statistical significance was determined there appeared to be a possible relationship between gender and barriers to participation. The findings showed evidence of gender related stereotypes as having an effect on the parents' perception on barriers which have precluded their child's involvement in social and recreational settings. The data indicated that males were seen as having behavioral problems which affected their participation in social/recreational activities, even though more females had a disability typically associated with behavioral problems.

Parents reported that females were more likely to have medical problems which prevented participation, however the data showed more males than females having epilepsy and Cerebral Palsy, which are often associated with medical conditions. Overall, parents did report equal importance and need for children of both sexes to have appropriate social and recreational opportunities.

The study found that parental aspiration is very much in keeping with the paradigm shift of community inclusion, increased choice, opportunity for growth and development of friendships. What these parents desire for their children is nothing more or less than what any parent would want for their child. It is apparent that normative pathways are important for children to learn to share, cooperate, make friends and other skills that will be needed when they become adults. What is also apparent is that children with developmental disabilities often lack opportunity for normative pathways.

It is hoped that through the development of supports for youth with developmental disabilities that they will have the opportunity to utilize community resources to explore and further develop hobbies, skills and interests. At present, the focus for development of resources is not one of forming friendships, or creating interests for the children. As past literature indicates many services developed for this population often focus on skill development and regulating what the individual should be doing, and with whom (Heal, 1988). However, who one chooses as a friend, or what a person finds interesting are all very personal choices. The shift in paradigm promotes individuality and opportunity for choice. The purpose in developing these services is to provide the child with the supports needed to explore and participate in activities of their choice. It is through these supports that the individual will be better prepared to access services in the community that they are interested in. By being involved in community resources, and activities it is believed that relationships will naturally develop through the individual's participation, and sense of belonging.

APPENDIX A

COVER LETTER

Dear Parent:

We invite you to join a very important research project. In cooperation with Inland Regional Center, an independent study is being conducted by Millee Martin-Walton, graduate student in Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino. The purpose of the study is to identify the social and recreational needs of children with developmental disabilities. We are requesting your permission to participate in this study. What we will learn from this study will help caseworkers, families, and community resources better meet the needs of children with developmental disabilities.

This study will involve the use of a survey questionnaire. An Informed Consent and survey questionnaire is enclosed. The Informed Consent explains that the survey is completely voluntary. The names of participants and all responses will be kept confidential. Your participation will in no way adversely affect the services currently being received through Inland Regional Center.

We support and encourage your participation with the survey questionnaire. Your input is critical to the identification of unmet needs. Please sign the consent form and complete the survey. The consent form and completed survey is to be mailed back in the enclosed envelope as soon as possible. The results of the study will be mailed to the individuals that participate. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Millee Martin-Walton at (909)370-0902, extension 559.

By agreeing to participate, you will be helping with an important job of increasing the social and recreational opportunities for children with developmental disabilities.

Sincerely,

Mary Lynn Clark
Client Services Programmer

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

The purpose of this survey is to identify what the social and recreational needs are, for children and teenagers with developmental disabilities. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There are no know risks that will result from your participation. Please be assured that your responses will remain confidential. Your participation will in no way affect the current services being received from Inland Regional Center.

I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate.

Participant's Signature ____________ Date ____________

Researcher's Signature ____________ Date ____________

APPENDIX C

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

This information to be completed about the individual completing the survey

1. Male   Female   2. Age ________

3. Relationship to child:
Parent
Grandparent
Sibling
Other (explain) ________________

4. Ethnicity: Caucasian   African American   Hispanic
Native American   Asian   Other (explain)_____________

5. Marital Status:
Married   Separated   Divorced   Single   Widowed

6. Annual Income:
Under 10,000   30,000 - 40,000
10,000 - 20,00   40, 000 - 50,000
20,000 - 30,000   Over 50, 000

This information is to be completed about the child

7. Male   Female   8. Age______

9. Disability: (Circle as many responses as necessary)
Mental Retardation (circle one)
Mild   Moderate   Severe   Profound
Down Syndrome
Cerebral Palsy
Epilepsy
Other (explain) _____________________

Read each question and circle the response which best describes your opinion using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = No Opinion;

4 = Disagree; 5 = Strongly Disagree

		SA	A	NO	D	SD
1.	It is important for my child to have appropriate social and recreational opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	My child would benefit from a service that provided social and recreational opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	A social/recreational setting that my child participates in should be integrated with nondisabled peers.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I would rate my child's opportunity to develop interests and hobbies as high.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I would rate my child's opportunity to develop friendships as high.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	My child should have the opportunity to utilize community recreation services.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I would pay for the tuition required for my child to participate in a recreational activity.	1	2	3	4	5

Please read the following questions and rate each one using the following scale;
1 = Very Important; 2 = Important; 3 = Of Some Importance;

4 = Not Very Important;5 = Of No Importance

1. What would the purpose be for your child to participate in a social/recreational service?

	VP	I	OSI	NVI	ONI
Develop hobbies/interests	1	2	3	4	5
Develop friendships	1	2	3	4	5
Utilize community resources	1	2	3	4	5
Learn appropriate social skills	1	2	3	4	5
Improve behavioral skills	1	2	3	4	5
Provide Daycare	1	2	3	4	5
Other (explain)	1	2	3	4	5

2. What types of recreational activities would your child be interested most in?
(Use the rating scale as above).

Team Sports Soccer, Baseball, etc.,)	1	2	3	4	5
Swimming	1	2	3	4	5
Tennis	1	2	3	4	5
Arts and crafts	1	2	3	4	5
Bicycling	1	2	3	4	5
Playground Equipment	1	2	3	4	5
Aerobics	1	2	3	4	5
Gymnastics	1	2	3	4	5
Dance Class	1	2	3	4	5
Other (explain) ____________	1	2	3	4	5

3. What setting would be appropriate to your child's needs? (Use the rating scale as above).

School Clubs/Organizations	1	2	3	4	5
Boy/Girl Scouts	1	2	3	4	5
YMCA	1	2	3	4	5
Health Clubs	1	2	3	4	5
Community Recreation Dept.	1	2	3	4	5
Other (explain) ____________	1	2	3	4	5

4. What is the biggest obstacle to your child receiving appropriate social or recreational services?

Please rank the following responses from 1 to 6. One being most important to six being least important.

___Lack of services available
___No transportation
___Child has serious behavioral problems
___Child has serious medical problems
___Fear of not being accepted
___Other (explain) ________________________________

Additional Comments:

APPENDIX D

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the social and recreational needs for children and teenagers with developmental disabilities. This survey was an attempt to identify and prioritize the needs of this particular population It is hoped that as a result of this survey, a move towards providing appropriate client services for identified unmet needs will occur.

A copy of this study's findings will available to participants upon request. If you have any questions, or concerns regarding this survey please contact Millee Martin-Walton, at (909) 370-0902 ext. 559, or Dr. Nancy Mary, California State University San Bernardino at (909) 880-5560.

APPENDIX E

SURVEY RESULTS (Raw Data)

Please read each question and circle the response which best describes your opinion using the following scale: 1=Strongly Agree: 2=Agree: 3=No Opinion: 4=Disagree: 5=Strongly Disagree

	SA	A	NO	D	SD
1. It is important for my child to have appropriate social and recreational opportunities.	38	17	1		
2. My child would benefit from a service that provided social and recreational opportunities.	39	14	3		
3. A social/recreational setting that my child participates in should be integrated with nondisabled peers.	22	23	7	4	
4. I would rate my child's opportunity to develop interests and hobbies as high.	16	17	9	9	5
5. I would rate my child's opportunity to develop friendships as high.	16	15	5	15	5
6. My child should have the opportunity to utilize community recreation services.	32	20	3	1	
7. I would pay for the tuition required for my child to participate in a recreational activity.	18	22	8	7	1

Please read the following questions and rate each one using the following scale:

1=Very Important; 2=Important; 3=Of Some Importance; 4=Not Very Important; 5=Of No Importance

1. What would the purpose be for your child to participate in a social/recreational service:

	VP	I	OSI	NVI	ONI
Develop hobbies/interests	25	20	9	1	1
Develop friendships	29	18	5	2	2
Utilize community resources	15	31	9	9	1
Learn appropriate social skills	36	13	4	1	2
Improve behavioral skills	29	14	5	3	
Receive Day Care Services	12	11	14	12	7
Increase Self Esteem	33	12	6	2	3
Other	8				

2. What types of recreational activities would your child be interested in most?
<u>(Use the rating scale as above):</u>

	VP	I	OSI	NVI	ONI
Team Sports (Soccer, Baseball, etc.)	19	13	8	4	12
Swimming	18	21	5	3	9
Tennis	4	1	11	16	24
Arts and Crafts	16	13	14	6	7
Bicycling	14	13	12	10	7
Playground Equipment	12	28	8	4	4
Aerobics	8	8	11	12	17
Gymnastics	8	8	11	12	17
Dance Class	10	8	9	11	18
Other	10				

3. What setting would be best to meet your child's needs?
(<u>Use the rating scale as above</u>)

	VP	I	OSI	NVI	ONI
School Clubs/Organizations	19	17	7	1	12
Boy/Girl Scouts	12	13	11	8	12
YMCA	7	18	11	6	14
Health Clubs	4	12	14	10	16
Community Recreation Dept.	14	26	9	1	6
Other	13				

4. What is the biggest obstacle to your child receiving appropriate social or recreational services?

<u>Please rank the following responses from 1 to 6. 1 being most important to 6 being least important.</u>

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Lack of services available	32	7	7	1	1	4
Lack of financial resources	17	5	11	11	4	3
No transportation	5	9	5	5	7	16
Child has serious behavioral problem	4	2	8	5	9	19
Child has serious medical problem	5	6	4	4	7	21
Fear of not being accepted	6	14	5	4	2	16

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