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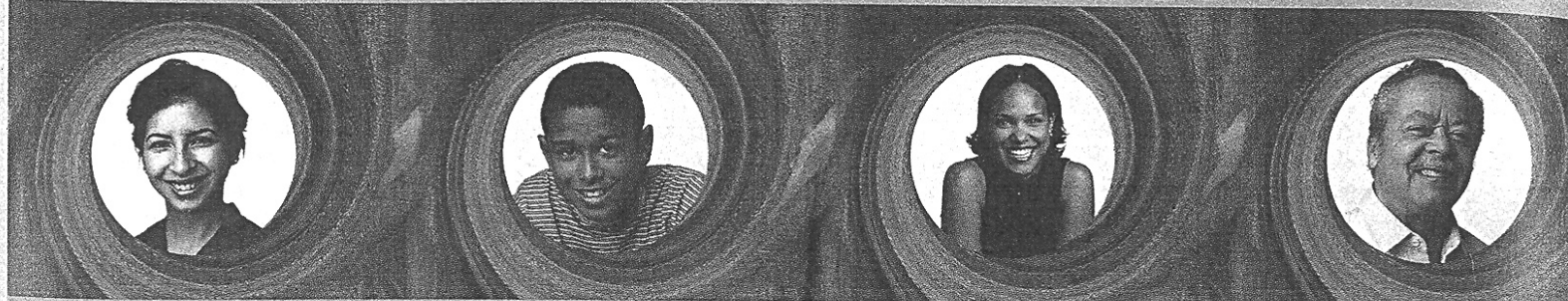
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The California Rainbow



Servicing Multi-Cultural Communities

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nia Association of Parks
and Recreation
Commissioners and
Board Members

If it can be said that the United States of America is a melting pot of cultures, then it would be correct to add that the melting pot of cultures contains many spices which add to the taste and feel of American life in the 21st century. The variety and consistency of the many spices is continually undergoing change in potency of the American culture. This change has been steered by legal and illegal immigration over recent years and has become a hot political issue for many, as it has done so many times in years gone by. While politicians try and steer this issue for their own political agendas and media tries to fuel the turmoil, there is an emerging need to explore the changing composition of our communities in terms of the overall impact on our communities. As we explore American communities at the core level we are fast reminded how immigration over the past few centuries has made the United States of America what it is today.

The notion that this is a land of immigrants is reinforced by the fact that, unless you are a direct descendant of the Native Americans, then you or your ancestors arrived in the United States of America onboard the Mayflower or fleet of other ships used in that era or via Jumbo jets flown by the various airlines in this day and age.

Immigration during the 16th through 19th centuries was primarily from Europe with some non-voluntary immigration from the African coasts. For the 20th century and now the 21st century, the immigration pattern is significantly different due to many factors, which range from economic advancement, changing employment patterns, escaping oppression to family re-unification. The immigration patterns from the Census Bureau show a much wider mix in the immigrant base, with largest immigration being from the Asian and Latin American hemispheres.

When studying the immigration patterns of earlier centuries many similarities can be drawn with issues and challenges faced by immigrants and the claimed citizens of the United States of America. However, assimilation has and continues to play a great role in helping people embrace and understand diversity of cultures. Such understanding and advancement which in many cases took decades to acquire has over the past few decades been accelerated by factors such as civil and equal rights. As a result American communities have become much more inclusive and mutually cohesive through integration of various cultures and beliefs. What 50-100 years ago was taboo, not done or unacceptable is today quite the norm. Respectively, cross cultural marriages a very hot and volatile button issue just 50 years ago is embraced by a vast majority of Americans with open arms across the United States.

Those American communities which have established generational and historical roots have over the years experienced a calm breeze of inclusion, tolerance, accommodation and acceptance of communal differences blowing at all levels. But this calm breeze is fast being disrupted by the new demographic changes which

bring with them vast changes in the social, cultural and economic patterns impacting rooted communities by inducing emerging and new communities. While the newly developing communities try to secure acceptance and accommodation within the mainstream of American life, they are undergoing a massive culture shift themselves.

Recognizing these changing tides, politicians have begun to address citizens by focusing on a few general communal identifiers such as European or White American, Asian, Afro-American or Latinos as can be evidenced by the last two general elections. Yet the real picture within American communities is significantly different. The European or white American community alone has as many sub-cultures which are based in the various ethnic roots, languages and various religious beliefs. Early immigrants from England, France, Italy, Germany and other countries have assimilated and integrated into harmonious and heterogeneous communities. The "new comers" from Eastern Europe have introduced once

Differing Patterns of Use

A major planning effort for Chicago's largest park provided an opportunity to examine outdoor recreation use patterns and preferences among a racially and ethnically diverse clientele. The results were published by Paul H. Gobster, USDA Forest Service, North Central Research Station, in an article entitled "Managing Urban Parks for a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Clientele." Excerpts are presented below and throughout this magazine.

One big difference between racial/ethnic group use patterns was social group size and composition. Whites tended to use the park as individuals or couples, with an average size of 1.6. Minority groups in contrast averaged 3.7 for Blacks, 4.4 for Latinos, and 5.0 for Asians. Significant numbers of Latinos and Asians came in large groups; more than 10% of each were using the park in groups larger than 10. Group type information was collected in the minority survey only. Although results showed that one-third to one-half of minority visits took place by individuals or couples, the survey also revealed the importance of family groups in the social patterns of minority users of Lincoln Park. Visits to the park by families accounted for 38% of park use by Blacks, 41% by Latinos, and 47% by Asians. In all cases, park use by the extended families - the immediate family plus close relatives - was the rule rather than the exception. This contrasts with the available information on White park users, 88% of whom either came alone or with one other person. Organized outings also figured significantly in the types of groups in which Blacks and Latinos used the park, with 11% of visits by each occurring in organized groups.



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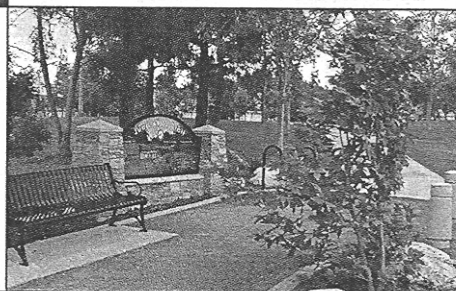
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again new dimensions of language, faith and culture thus creating communities with new and complex challenges. Equally the Asians, Afro-Americans and Latinos have similar and significant factors which over recent years have added to the complexity of their communities.

This complexity within communities can be explained by the nation's economic needs as well as a compassionate approach for individuals escaping oppression and persecution in their homeland. This has generated an influx of immigrants from all parts of the world, which over the past few decades has generated at the micro level highly diverse and complex communities.

While the history and cause of change in our communities are of little importance to the parks and recreation professional, the fact is that the parks and recreation profession's mantra is "We Create Community." Then professionals in associated fields need to be aware of the mix and build of their local communities. With this knowledge professionals can network effectively

within their communities and gain understanding and knowledge with which they can create programs and services to serve their community as a whole.

To this extent parks and recreation staff in Michigan recognizing their community mix discovered that a group of talented girls of Middle Eastern origin were excluded from taking part in aquatics programs for reasons associated with culture and religion. Recognizing the potential market, night time aquatics programs staffed by female employees were developed catering to this specific group of Islamic women.

Also in Michigan, staff within metropolitan areas experience dropping numbers in many sports programs networked within local communities and found a demand for cricket. They worked with local groups and established competitive cricket programs. In the Detroit area, basketball was a popular sport with many youth but competition made this not a very diverse sport as it was dominated by youth who had a height advantage. Kids below a cer-

tain height did not participate. To address this issue and increase participation an under 6ft league was established which allowed youth from a vast variety of cultures to participate.

By recognizing and addressing local community needs as well as cultural concerns of a community, parks and recreation staff can establish not only revenue generating programs but build bonds within communities which brings trust and mutual respect and can open doors for opportunities with other local agencies such as seniors, health, housing, etc.

In respect, we hear from federal, state and local governments about health and social issues which are critical to the general well being of our seniors, youth and communities at large. Issues such as elder, child and spousal abuse are hot button issues and in many communities the victim suffers in silence. Yet the TV, radio and print advertisements along with public broadcasts convey the messages, issues for concern and monitoring along with av-

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Activity Participation

Park users in Chicago were asked open-ended questions about their activities in the park the day of their interview and during other times and seasons.

Common activities. Results showed a core of activities that occur in the park regardless of race or ethnicity. These activities included walking, swimming or sunning at the beaches, picnicking and barbecuing, going to zoo, sitting and relaxing, and bicycling. Participation in these top activities, averaged over all groups, ranged from 27% for walking to 14% for bicycling. Some groups, however, were more likely than others to participate in these activities. More Whites, for example, walked and bicycled, more Latinos and Asians picnicked, and more Latinos visited the zoo than did other groups.

Group variations. Outside of the core activities were other pastimes that some groups participated in more than others.

1. Passive activities - All minority groups were more likely to engage in passive, social park activities than Whites. Picnicking was a frequent activity of Latinos and Asians; other frequent passive social activities included talking and socializing by Blacks, engaging in organized festivals and parties by Asians, and watching organized sports by Latinos.
2. Active-individual sports - Whites were the most involved in active-individual sports. Activities in this category with high participation by Whites include walking, bicycling, jogging and walking the dog.
3. Active-group sports - All groups participated in active-group sports, but differed in some specific activities.

(Gobster, Paul J., "Managing Urban Parks for A Racially and Ethnically Diverse Clientele," Leisure Sciences, 2002, 147)

enues for help in very focused or targeted ways and primarily in English. Respectfully an old lady who may be suffering abuse, but can not speak, understand, read or write English will have a very tough time alerting others of her plight. In the event that those who subject her to the abuse learn of services and support for such people, they definitely will not pass on the information to her. It does not matter what this persons culture, place of origin, faith or mother tongue language. The issue of abuse can confront any senior, but those who have challenges of mobility, language and literacy will have an impossible task of securing help.

By structuring parks and recreation services and programs to reach into cultural pockets of local communities we can help the melting pot of American culture cook a little faster. At the same time we may even provide much needed relief and service to those in need. The list of services which can be offered is simple from English as a second language, to special events with

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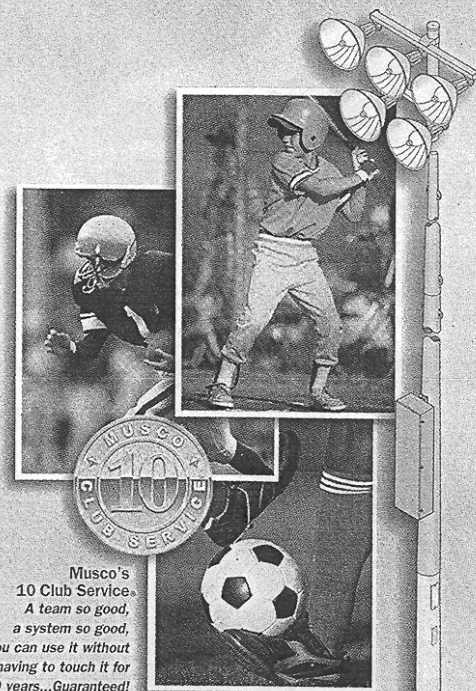
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community and family focus: grandparents and grandchildren events or even a truly international sport like cricket.

Fiscal factors such as income and expense are real factors for parks and recreation professionals as they juggle programs with finances and in many cases cancel programs for lack of funds. Programs or services which generate revenue can be valuable resources in good and bad economic times. By reaching out, programs which service local needs can be generated, which in turn can be new revenue sources. In addition such programs can build bridges within communities and cultures. This will only help the process of assimilation as well as open doors for other agencies which service the many other needs of communities and individuals.

Communicating Across Cultures

Ten Tips

1. Understand your own culture
2. Avoid making assumptions
3. Recognize the group mentality
4. Think hierarchy
5. Show respect
6. Be flexible and adaptable
7. Solicit input
8. Edit for universal understanding
9. Confirm comprehension
10. Ask for advice

Steps To Make Cross Cultural Communication Easier

- Build mutual understanding
- Listen with an open mind
- Do something/help others understand
- Focus on relationships

Overall, to become more proactive on building bridges between cultures, bring other people into your conversations. It may be easier to express a viewpoint when several people understand the culture. The more you learn about other cultures the more comfortable you will be in diverse situations.

(Kallirai, Inderjit S.; Braxton-Ellington, Myrtle; Al-Oboudi, Idris Jassim; "Creating Pluralistic Communities")



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Latinos And Public Lands In California

Management of leisure resources in California would be incomplete without consideration of the fastest growing ethnic group—Latinos. There are approximately 12 million Latinos in California (about one-third of California's population; Bear Facts, 2004), and this is expected to grow to 21 million Latinos by the year 2025 (about 40% of California's population).

About 77 percent of Latinos in California are from or have immediate family ties to Mexico (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Some studies indicate that people from Mexico prefer to be called "Mexicans" or "Mexicanos," and some prefer "Chicanos" (Chavez, 2000). A less favorable term is "Hispanic." This is a term coined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census (Comas-Diaz, 2001). Though the terms "race" and "ethnicity" are sometimes used interchangeably to describe Latinos, they are not the same. Latino is an ethnicity. Latino people may come from various racial groups (e.g., Caucasian, African American).

It is important to note that even if a group of people prefer to call themselves "Latino" or "Mexican" that there is variability within the group. In other words, though it is easiest to generalize to all "Latinos," it does not always work. Not all "Mexicans" are alike, and there may be more variability if the Latinos are from Central America, South America or other places.

Examples of variability come from U.S. Census Bureau (2000) data: (1) About 26 percent of California's population speak Spanish. Of these, about 12 percent also speak English "very well." (2) There is wide variation in household income levels. For example, about seven percent of Latinos earn less than \$10,000 annually, while one percent earn between \$150,000 and \$199,999 annually. Median household income was \$36,600. (3) About 28 percent of the state's Latinos have had some college experience.

While generalizations are not always accurate they can help managers make better decisions about serving particular visitor groups, such as Latinos. Previous studies of Latinos visiting public lands, such as National Forests or deserts in California, indicate the following generalizations may be useful for planning:

1. **Motivations** to participate in outdoor recreation include rest, relaxation, fun, and being close to water (Chavez, 1992; Chavez, 2001). Another study found that Latino Los Angeles County residents had preferences for viewing scenery and escaping daily life (Tierney, Dahl, & Chavez, 1998). In a limited in-depth interview study of Mexican visitors to National Forests it was found that these visitors brought family members to outdoor recreation sites because those sites reminded them of their homeland, and they wanted to share that experience (Chavez, 2003).

By
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2. **Preferences** at sites included the desire for shaded areas, and preferences for development at sites (Chavez, 2002a). Developments included flush toilets, larger-sized picnic tables, barbecue grills, water faucets, and the like.
3. Studies of **Activities** at sites may be less generalizable because many of the studies focused on picnic areas, thus, picnicking was important. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that "picnicking" for Latinos may be different than for other visitor groups (Carr & Chavez, 1993). Picnicking may be an all-day activity for Latinos, literally beginning as soon as a site opens and finishing when the site closes. Multiple meals may be cooked throughout the day, and many foods are made from scratch on-site. Some Latinos don't know where to go for leisure pursuits or what to do at recreation sites (Tierney, et al., 1998).
4. **Group characteristics** studies indicate a strong family orientation that includes multiple generations and extended family members (aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.). In several studies, average group size was 15 for Latino groups, but some groups are smaller and some can be rather large (100 or more)(Chavez, 2001). The perception by Latinos may be that 100 people does not necessarily constitute a large group, nor would they necessarily believe a site with 100 people is crowded. This may not match the perceptions of the people managing these same sites.
5. **Barriers** to participation in outdoor recreation include feeling unwelcome, feeling discriminated against (either in route to a site or once they arrive), and not being able to find people who are similar either visiting the site or working at the site (Tierney, et al., 1998). A limited in-depth study found that local city parks are thought to be unsafe (Chavez, 2003), resulting in visitation at more distant places (such as forests).

Managers have many tools at their disposal. These are typically categorized

as indirect (these indirectly impact visitors and include maps, brochures, signs, etc.), collaboration or bridge building (partner with constituent groups to make decisions), resource hardening (protect landscape from physical deterioration), and direct visitor management (have direct impact on visitors, such as law enforcement, closures of sites, etc.). Unless legislation directs otherwise, managers should always opt for the least restrictive tools first (in other words, don't go directly to closures). I suggest using the "I Triad"—invite, include, involve (Chavez, 2000). Inviting Latinos means to learn more about the perceptions of your visitors. You are inviting their opinions and educating yourself. Include means to bring Latinos into the decision-making process. This educates your agency. Finally, involve Latinos. This means to hire Latinos into the ranks of your employees and put them on your Board of Directors. Each "I" is important and necessary. To these I would add another "I"—innovate. You may need to think

outside the box to be truly inclusive with Latino groups.

Following are some specific actions you could take to serving Latinos on public lands:

1. Communication.

- Make sure the literature you use includes Latinos. If your brochures do not have Latinos, then you should consider adding them.
- Provide communications in Spanish, using "back translation" techniques, or "International Symbols". A back translation (Marin & Marin, 1991) is achieved through the use of professional translators (not someone in the office who knows some Spanish). To do this, write what you want translated in English. Hire one translator to write the text into Spanish. Hire another translator to take the Spanish version and write it in English, and then you compare the two English versions. This may be costly, but worthwhile. International Symbols are signs that convey messages

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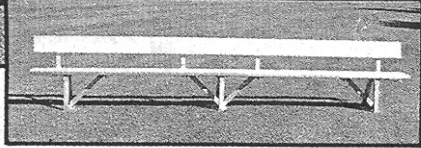
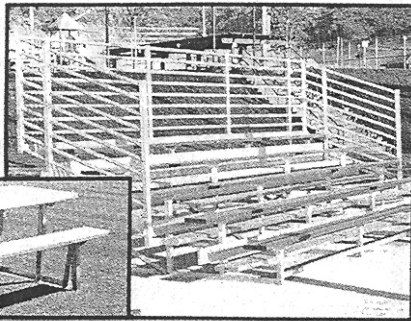
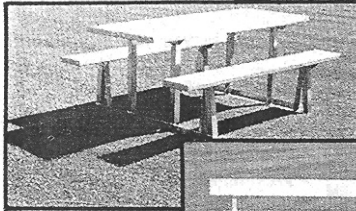


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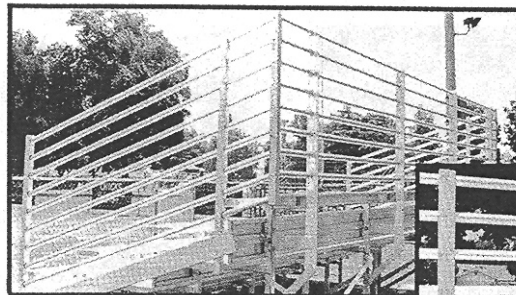


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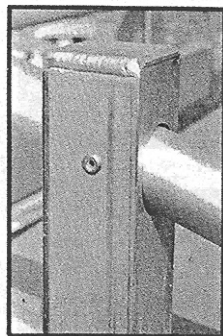
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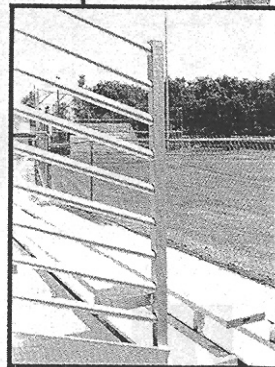


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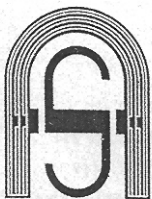


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without words. Note though that not all International Symbols convey the messages we intend (Chavez, 2002b).

- Seek alternative communication methods for Latinos, as they may prefer interpersonal or face-to-face communications. Examples of these include using ECO-Teams (Absher, Winter, & James, 1997) to deliver messages to site visitors (young people who are taught environmental messages and deliver them directly to Latino visitors), and an Information Van which takes messages directly to sites where Latinos are visiting rather than expecting Latinos to use other information sources, such as kiosks or information desks (the van drivers are bilingual and all the information is available in Spanish).
- Give full information on signs. Tell Latinos what you expect and why. And you may need to tell them where to go—such as where to acquire a fire permit.
- Try not to use negative wording.
- Try not to use jargon—you may think you know what something means but other cultural groups may not interpret these the same way.

2. Employment and Development

- Be sensitive to Latino groups and realize that training will be needed for all constituent contact employees, including seasonal employees and volunteers. Training should include data about the visitor group, development preferences of the visitors, communication preferences and the like.
- Some sites may require renovation or equipment upgrades to better meet the needs of Latino groups. This might include removal of small tables for larger ones and placing some tables in close proximity to others to serve larger groups.

It is important to seek out information about the Latinos recreating in your area (a local university may be a source to gather data), carefully consider content and delivery of communications, be collaborative in decisions about serving Latinos, and focus on serving the needs identified by your visitors. Finally, be mindful that while serving Latinos on public lands, you are providing for more than recreation experiences, you are providing for personal growth and family bonding.

