

Article Critique #3
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I will be reviewing the article titled “Adaptation of an Adolescent Coping Assessment for Therapeutic Recreation and Outdoor Adventure Settings” written by Melissa S. Russell, Mark A. Widmer, Neil Lundberg, and Peter Ward. It was published by the *Therapeutic Recreation Journal* in 2015. I will first summarize what the researchers studied and their conclusions. Then I will identify some strengths and weaknesses of the article, followed by an interpretation of how it can be used in the field of Recreation Therapy. I will also analyze my own thoughts and perceptions of this article.

Summary

This article identified the need of an assessment system to measure how adolescents cope through therapeutic recreation, wilderness, and adventure therapy programs. There is a system already in place called the Response to Stress Questionnaire (RSQ), but the researchers felt it necessary to adapt this questionnaire specifically to adventure-based therapy programs. They created a new questionnaire based on the RSQ titled RSQ Outdoor Adventure Version (RSQ-OAV). They first had the adolescents participating in outdoor adventure program identify key stressors in the outdoor adventure experience. The researchers incorporated these stressors to rephrase or rewrite the existing RSQ questions in order to fit with the newly adapted questionnaire. Then they administered the questionnaire to students in a traditional high school, an alternative high school, and participants of an adventure/wilderness therapy program. The researchers concluded that the study was successful in creating a domain specific measure of stress and coping for adolescents participating in an adventure/wilderness therapy program. They used several theories to incorporate questions that would make the questionnaire valid and also accurately identify the stress and coping strategies of the participants (Russell, et al., 2015).

Strengths

The article began by explaining the stresses that adolescents go through. They also described the coping strategies adolescents adopt and then how outdoor adventure fits into it. I thought it was important that the researchers first identified the need for adapting the existing RSQ to an outdoor recreation setting. By identifying the problem and the need for a solution, the researchers gave greater validity to their study and created a bigger awareness to the issue they took on. The researchers took the existing generalized assessment practice, the RSQ, and narrowed it to focus on the specific activity they wanted to measure. It now becomes a lot more helpful to program directors of outdoor adventure programs to understand better their participants and how to help them in that specific setting (Russell, et al., 2015).

Weaknesses

The RSQ-OAV was not compared to another assessment in order to show how it is more beneficial than the original RSQ. The researchers tested the new RSQ-OAV on adolescents from a high school, an alternative high school, and an outdoor adventure program. But they did not compare the results to adolescents who took the general RSQ. The RSQ-OAV may be more specific, but if the RSQ and RSQ-OAV produce the same level of behavior outcomes then the RSQ-OAV may be futile. The sample size was also fairly small and predominately white from the western United States. A larger, more diverse population will provide better analysis for this study. Only one group of adolescents were asked to identify key stressors that were implemented in the assessment. Different groups from different regions might identify different key stressors that were not addressed in this assessment. Doing a broader study to cover various groups will benefit the study.

Application

Now that this assessment has been created specifically for outdoor adventure programs, the recreational therapist for these programs now has a particular assessment to use in order to identify the stresses and coping strategies their adolescents. This can be used as a powerful tool to better understand the individual needs of the participating adolescents which can lead to greater self-efficacy and improved behavior. It also provides the practitioners a better analysis of each individual adolescent in that specific program, rather than in a general setting. It helps the practitioner provide a better, individualized service to all of their adolescent participants.

Personal Reaction

As I learn more about assessment and how it is crucial to providing a successful program to my clients, it is interesting to see more specific assessments being developed. There isn't just one form of assessment for all populations in all situations, but the more specific these assessments get the more they can benefit me as a recreational therapist. I can better identify the needs of my patients and provide a successful program for their specific needs. I personally want to work with troubled teens in outdoor adventure programs so knowing that an assessment specifically for that population has been created can be very beneficial to my future plans. It also opens up the idea that other assessments can also be made more specific to help whatever population I may be working with. Not only can it help the adolescents, but it's also a way for the practitioners to see if the program they are developing is actually working and providing successful outcomes. It's important for all aspects of the program to be assessed in order to provide good service.

References

Russell, M., Widmer, M., Lundberg, N., and Ward, P. (2015). Adaptation of an adolescent coping assessment for therapeutic recreation and outdoor adventure settings. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 49(1). Retrieved from <http://js.sagamorepub.com/trj/article/view/5287>