

# Disability Inclusion, Intersectionality, and Knowledge Translation

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Center on  
**KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION FOR  
DISABILITY & REHABILITATION RESEARCH**

# The role of race and ethnicity in leisure participation among children and youth with disabilities: A systematic review

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# Land Acknowledgement



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# Background



Leisure: engaging in informal or structured play, recreational or leisure activities



Leisure enhances future success, social-emotional adjustment, physical well-being, social inclusion of children/youth with disabilities

**No boundaries**

# Background

- Structured leisure (includes rules, pre-planning, taught with trainers):
  - ✓ Strengthen resilience, self-efficacy, independence, more school engagement
  - ✓ Social bonding, developing relationships, more school engagement
  - ✓ Identity development, overcome the stigma of disability
  - ✓ Prepare young adults with disabilities for adult life



## Background (cont'd)

- Children/youth with disabilities participate less in structured leisure activities
- Rate of participation is significantly lower among racial/ethnic minoritized children and youth with disabilities compared to their white peers
- 65% of racial/ethnic minoritized immigrant children with disabilities and 57% without disabilities in the U.S. had never participated in any structured leisure activities

# Rationale

**14.3% of 8 million Canadians with disabilities are racial/minorities  
(13.5% below 15 years old)**

**Experience worse school/employment outcomes; low social participation; more health disparities**

**Racial disparities persist into adulthood**

**Lacking support leads to more unemployment, social isolation, health problems**

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# Objective

To explore the role of race and ethnicity in leisure participation among children and youth with disabilities



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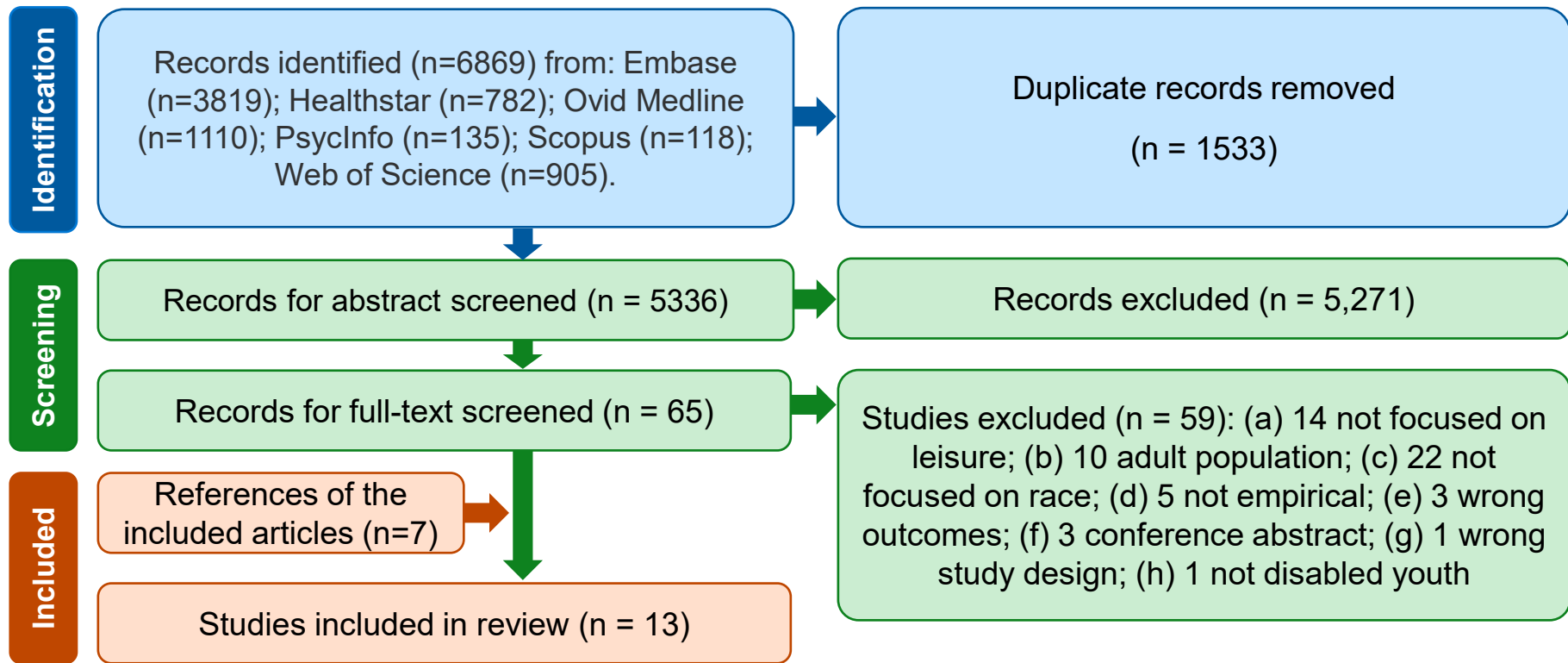
# Methods

Key concepts: leisure, disability, children and youth, race  
Databases: Ovid Medline, Healthstar, Embase, PsycInfo, Scopus, and Web of Science

## Inclusion Criteria

- Peer-reviewed journal publications from January 2000 to October 2023
- Sample of children/youth (up to age 21) with a disability
- Empirical studies with at least one finding about the role of race in leisure participation

# Identification of Studies via Databases and Registers



# Characteristics of 13 Included Studies

## Participants:

- 1,040 children/youth
- 753 parents/caregivers

## Conducted in 6 countries:

- 8 in the U.S.
- One each from Canada, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Scotland, South Africa

## Leisure activities:

- 10 physical recreation
- 1 Latin dance
- 2 various types of recreational activities

## Race and Ethnicity

5 studies with  
Hispanic majority

One study with  
Chinese majority

3 studies with  
equitable  
distribution of racial  
groups

3 studies with white  
majority

One study with racial  
representative  
majority

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# Main Types of Disabilities

Physical disabilities

Cognitive/learning disabilities

Developmental disabilities

Intellectual disabilities

Visual impairment

Cerebral palsy

Autism spectrum disorder

Emotional/behavioral disorder

Asthma

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# Methodological Design

9 studies had qualitative design

4 studies had quantitative design



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# Theories Used by Included Studies

Ecological theory

Grounded theory

THEORY

Capital theory

Social control theory

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# Overview of Themes



**Rates of participation**



**Factors affecting participation**



**Benefits and impact of culture on participation**



**Intersectionality**

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# Rates of Leisure Participation

Low rate of participation among racial minorities (4 studies)

- Guatemala and U.S.: Hispanics showed low participation (once a month) or no participation
- Canada: Black and Asian children with disabilities reported significantly lower participation

Low rate of participation irrespective of race (3 studies)

- U.S.: 47% were active less than 3 hours/week; those with physical disabilities were 1.29 times more likely to participate less; 40% never participated

# Factors Affecting Leisure Participation

Discrimination,  
stigmatization,  
racism  
(4 studies)

Fear of  
harassment or  
safety  
(4 studies)

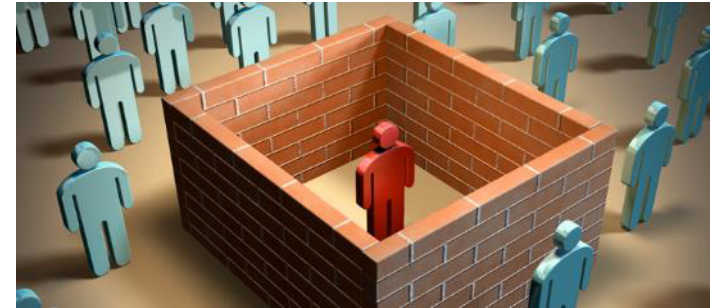
Systemic factors  
(6 studies)

Disability-related  
factors  
(5 studies)

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# Discrimination, Stigmatization, Racism

- Hispanic/Chinese/Black parents: Negative attitudes of others toward their children affected decision making for leisure participation
- Black mother experienced racism when her son was playing with a white child
- Hispanic/South African children felt embarrassed, ashamed, and vulnerable when they compared themselves with their peers



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# Fear of Harassment/Safety Concerns

- Fear of harassment and safety concerns limited leisure participation.
- Chinese and Scottish parents worried that their youth would be harassed or bullied by other children or people.
- Scottish and Hispanic parents limited outdoor activities due to safety concerns.



# Systemic factors:

Community policies

Limited facilities and resources

Lack of information

Lack of competent professionals

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# Disability-Related Factors

**Adolescents' challenges:**  
More difficult and take additional  
time to learn skills

**Parents' challenges:**  
Difficult to understand whether an  
activity is pleasant or a chore;  
difference between chronological  
and developmental age;  
communication and emotional level

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# Benefits and Impact of Culture on Leisure Participation

Perceived benefits of leisure participation (5 studies)

Perceived constraints of leisure participation (7 studies)

Parents' sense of advocacy (4 studies)

Importance of family participation (4 studies)

# Perceived Benefits of Leisure Participation

- 5 studies
- Hispanic parents: psychological (e.g., relaxation, increasing attention span and perceived competence) and social (e.g., socialization, peer support) outweigh health benefits; obesity prevention
- Scottish parents: leisure can improve children's self-confidence and long-term health to be healthier adults





# Perceived Constraints for Leisure Participation

Feeling lonely (5 studies)

- Hispanic immigrants: living away from immediate family; lack of culturally relevant activities; no trust in others to take care of their children

Other priorities (3 studies)

- Hispanic parents: too many other responsibilities; work obligations

Lack of value for leisure (1 study)

- Chinese parents: leisure is a distraction for working; no benefits; useless

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# Parents' Sense of Advocacy

## Key role of mothers (4 studies)

- Hispanic mothers: personal responsibility to provide long-term support, teach and model healthy lifestyles, place restrictions; some needed a professional to tell them what to do; complained some fathers were not comfortable with disability
- Black mother: left her marriage because of aggressive husband to her child

## Role of fathers (1 study)

- Some Scottish, white fathers: left job, sacrificed time

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# Importance of Family Participation

- Four studies (all participants had Hispanic backgrounds)
- Family is the most important aspect of Hispanic life
- Enjoy leisure as a family unit



# Intersectionality

Interaction of race, ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic status (SES)  
(3 studies)

Interaction of race, ethnicity, disability, and gender (6 studies)



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# Interaction of Race, Ethnicity, Disability, and SES

- 3 studies
- Financial constraints as the major barrier to leisure participation for all Hispanic immigrant parents in the U.S. and parents in Guatemala



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# Interaction of Race, Ethnicity, Disability, and Gender

- 6 studies
- Racial/ethnic minoritized boys showed lower participation compared to girls in Canada
- Chinese fathers were more overprotective of their daughters
- Among Hispanic families, mothers are often responsible for providing family leisure needs

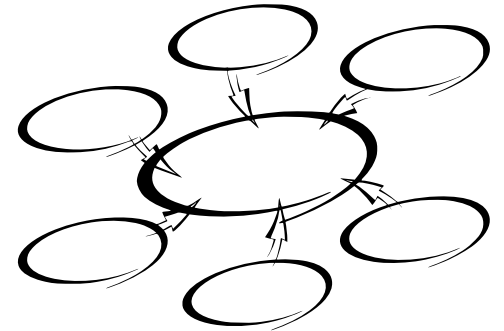


# Conclusion

- Most studies included in our review found that racial/ethnic minoritized children and youth with disabilities have low rates of leisure participation.
- Findings revealed how disability and racial discrimination, systemic factors, cultural preferences, and limited financial resources shape leisure experiences and rate of participation of racial/ethnic minoritized children and youth with disabilities.

# Implications

- Understanding what leisure means to racial/ethnic minorities could help recreational therapists to facilitate meaningful and culturally-sensitive leisure programs.
- A multi-faceted approach is needed to improve leisure participation of racial/ethnic minorities, which involves parents/caregivers, leisure providers, community stakeholders, and children with disabilities.





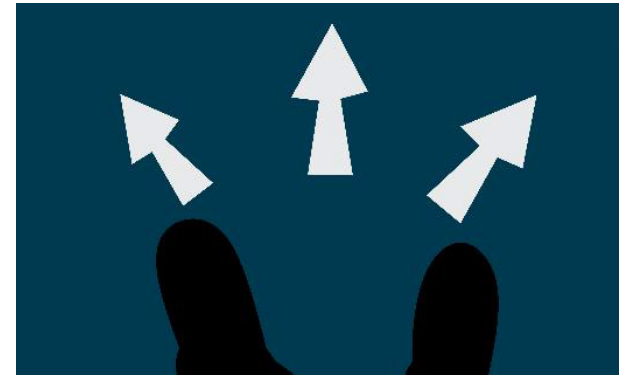
## Implications (cont'd)

- Designing new or adapting existing leisure programs that align with the culture and preferences of racial/ethnic minorities to support their participation.
- Enhancing awareness of recreational providers about their personal beliefs, values, and prejudice could prevent racial discrimination and increase leisure participation.



## Future Research Directions

- Examine whether the trends identified in this systematic review are similar among other racial/ethnic minoritized children and youth with disabilities
- Explore immigrant status and the extent to which race/ethnicity impacts leisure participation for children with disabilities
- Understand the value of other meaningful leisure activities (e.g., music, art, drama) for racial/ethnic minorities with disabilities



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SSHRC  CRSH

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada  
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

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# Thank you!

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# Q&A



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