

Values, Ideologies, Attitudes, and Preferences for Relative Allocations to Park and Recreation Services

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Abstract:

Local park and recreation agencies rely heavily on tax-based allocations as a funding source. However, such allocations have recently been cut both overall and relative to other services, incentivizing exploration of alternative funding strategies. Privatization practices represent a potentially efficacious but controversial alternative funding approach. This study examines the relationship between attitudes toward privatization, and preferences for allocating tax-based funding to park and recreation services. The mediating role of other cognitive processes (values, value orientations, and ideology) is considered using a cognitive hierarchy approach. Results indicate that a more positive perception of privatization was related to the allocation of less tax funding to park and recreation services. A more self-transcendent value orientation was positively related to preferred allocations, while a more self-enhancement value orientation and a more conservative social ideology were negatively related to preferred allocations.

Keywords: Public parks and recreation | privatization | financing | values

Article:

Introduction

Local public services, including parks and recreation, rely heavily on tax-based allocations. However, such funding is vulnerable to forces beyond the local level and may decline during periods of economic distress (Barrett, Pitas, & Mowen, 2017). Although local

public park and recreation services received high levels of public support in the late 20th century (Crompton & Kaczynski, 2003; Kaczynski & Crompton, 2006), recent analyses have shown the Great Recession and resultant recovery negatively impacted allocations to parks and recreation both in absolute terms and relative to other public services (Barrett et al., 2017; Pitas, Barrett, & Mowen, 2017). With the effects of the Great Recession lingering long after the economic recovery officially occurred (Martin, Levey, & Cawley, 2012), local park and recreation agencies have been asked to provide high levels of service with constraints in terms of human and financial resources.

Park and recreation agencies also engage in a variety of alternative funding practices and have faced increasing pressure in recent years to adopt entrepreneurial funding and cost-saving strategies (Mowen, Kyle, Borrie, & Graefe, 2006; Walls, 2014). Privatization practices, any action that reduces the public's role in the funding and delivery of public services (Crompton, 1998), is one such alternative. Although the term often calls to mind the outright sale of public assets, privatization exists along a spectrum: at one end sits the fully public delivery model while at the far end resides the fully private delivery model (More, 2005). Corporate sponsorship, outsourcing to private contractors, and the increased reliance on nonprofit "friends" groups are all examples of privatization practices that reduce reliance on public tax dollars.

While the debate surrounding privatization practices is not new (Van Slyke & Hammons, 2003), in light of the financial reality discussed above they have become increasingly relevant to the provision of local park and recreation services. For a variety of reasons, privatization practices related to public park and recreation services have received considerable scrutiny in both the academic (e.g., Glover, 1999; More, 2005; the entire 2005 special issue of the *George Wright Forum*, "Privatization: An Overview") and popular press (e.g., Moss, 2017; Tkaczyk, 2016). Given their use of taxpayer dollars (from users and nonusers alike), local park and recreation service providers must be sensitive to the opinions and preferences of the public when considering the implementation of any potentially controversial practice. Privatization practices have the potential to alter not only the delivery of services but also the user experience, and to raise questions about equity, ownership, and control (Glover, 1999; Pitas, Mowen, Liechty, & Trautvein, 2015).

The present debates over the role of privatization in financing local park and recreation services are not limited to the United States. Canadian parks and protected areas at the provincial and national level employ various models of governance, including the public model, the parastatal model (government corporation), and private sector management. Research at the provincial level suggests the private management model is generally less acceptable compared directly to the parastatal model (Eagles, Buteau-Duitschaever, McCutcheon, Havitz, & Glover, 2011) and in general among park visitors (Eagles, Havitz, McCutcheon, Buteau-Duitschaever, & Glover, 2010; Eagles et al., 2011).

In the United Kingdom, a recent report identified reduced funding as a major obstacle to the future viability of leisure services and discussed several alternative management models that would fall under the broader category of privatization (House of Commons, 2017). A large proportion of the British public is concerned about the impact of reductions in spending on these services and view commercial or private entities, including the national lottery (79%) and private businesses (75%), as highly acceptable alternative funding sources.

The issue of privatization in public services has a long history in the United Kingdom. Compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) was first introduced by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government and extended to leisure services in 1992. The policy required public

sector organizations to consider bids from private firms. Although the goal was a reduction in taxpayer burden, the effect of CCT was the large-scale transfer of public sector jobs to private firms and reductions in pay and working conditions for public sector workers (Heery & Noon, 2008). In leisure services, CCT was plagued by poor planning and by incompatibility between public and private sector practices. Further, the social mission of leisure services was undermined by the use of public-private contracts, which emphasized private sector values (Nichols, 1996) and led to worries about the commodification of leisure services (Coalter, 1998). Although CCT was replaced by Best Value, which attempted to address those concerns through a more holistic definition of value (Ravenscroft, 1998), the concerns raised under CCT largely remain (Tomlinson, 2010).

Although outright privatization may be largely unacceptable to members of the public, specific practices are often perceived as more acceptable (Mowen, Kyle, & Jackowski, 2007; Mowen et al., 2006; Pitas et al., 2018). In the case of corporate sponsorship, it even appears that public attitudes have become more positive over time, as park users adapt to the presence of corporate entities in public spaces (Mowen, Trauntvein, Potwarka, Pitas, & Duray, 2016). Although concerns exist about the impact of privatization on equity and the recreation experience, it appears in many instances that individuals weigh potential benefits against potential impacts (Pitas et al., 2015). When faced with the choice of reduced service quality or the loss of some services, many individuals stated they preferred to see corporate sponsors in their park and recreation spaces. It remains to be seen if this increasing acceptance of corporate sponsorship, and potentially of privatization as a whole, is a longer-term trend, or if a potential ceiling for tolerance of private activities in these public spaces exists.

Individual characteristics may also influence perceived acceptability of alternative funding or service delivery methods. For example, how an individual conceptualizes their role in the community, their citizenship orientation, has been linked to preferences for recreation service delivery. In a 2015 study, individuals who placed higher value on individual freedom and decision-making capacity were more favorable toward the use of private contractors (Potwarka, Havitz, & Glover, 2015). Greater knowledge of the privatization practices being considered has been linked to greater perceived acceptability (Pitas et al., 2018), while personal commitment to the public recreation agency is inversely related to attitudes toward privatization (Mowen et al., 2006).

Despite this growing body of knowledge surrounding the application of privatization in local park and recreation settings, significant uncertainty remains. It is possible that increased support for privatization over time may further undermine the traditional tax-based funding model: were the public to come to view privatization as more acceptable in park and recreation services, the perceived need to spend taxes on these services may decrease. In addition, the underlying psychological constructs that influence attitudes toward privatization remain underexplored in this context. This study seeks to address these questions by examining the role of values, ideologies, and attitudes toward privatization in determining preferences for tax-based allocations to local public park and recreation services.

Theoretical framework

This study uses values theory (Schwartz et al., 2012) and the cognitive hierarchy of human behavior (Homer & Kahle, 1988; Ives & Kendal, 2014; Rokeach, 1973; Vaske & Donnelly, 1999) as the overarching theoretical framework. Values theory examines the cognitive

processes that influence an individual's worldview, personhood, and, ultimately, the individual's actions (Schwartz et al., 2012). Values are guiding principles that endure over time, transcend situations, and represent desirable end states (Rokeach, 1973). Values form the base of the cognitive hierarchy, which theorizes that an individual's viewpoint on specific issues is informed by a number of increasingly specific psychological processes. In this model, more general elements, such as values, influence behavioral intention and behavior through mediating elements, such as value orientations, ideologies, and attitudes (Homer & Kahle, 1988; Ives & Kendal, 2014; Rokeach, 1973; Vaske & Donnelly, 1999). The following sections detail the levels of the cognitive hierarchy to be included in this analysis.

Table 1. The 19 human values (from Schwartz et al.,2012, p. 669).

Value	Main motivational goal
Achievement ¹	Success according to social standards
Power-dominance ¹	Power through exercising control over people
Power-resources ¹	Power through control of material and social resources
Benevolence-dependability ²	Being a reliable and trustworthy member of the ingroup
Benevolence-caring ²	Devotion to the welfare of ingroup members
Universalism-concern ²	Commitment to equality, justice, and protection for all people
Universalism-nature ²	Preservation of the natural environment
Universalism-tolerance ²	Acceptance and understanding of those who are different from oneself
Face ³	Security and power through maintaining one's public image and avoiding humiliation
Security-personal ³	Safety in one's immediate environment
Security-societal ³	Safety and stability in the wider society
Tradition ³	Maintaining and preserving cultural, family, or religious traditions
Conformity-rules ³	Compliance with rules, laws, and formal obligations
Conformity-interpersonal ³	Avoidance of upsetting or harming other people
Humility ³	Recognizing one's insignificance in the larger scheme of things
Self-direction-thought ⁴	Freedom to cultivate one's own ideas and abilities

Self-direction-action ⁴	Freedom to determine one's own actions
Stimulation ⁴	Excitement, novelty, and change
Hedonism ⁴	Pleasure and sensuous gratification

¹ Self-enhancement values.

² Self-transcendent values.

³ Conservation values.

⁴ Openness-to-change values.

Values

Values represent deeply rooted, desirable goals that serve as core guiding principles in an individual's life (Rokeach, 1973). Schwartz and colleagues (2012) identify 19 universal human values shared by all humans in varying degrees. Some values are more similar in terms of their underlying motivational goals, while others have less in common (see Table 1). Individual values may be combined into higher-order value orientations, which group values according to similar or compatible motivations (Schwartz & Butenko, 2014).

The self-enhancement and self-transcendent value orientations will be considered in the current study. The self-enhancement value orientation includes three individual values: achievement, power-dominance, and power-resources. The self-transcendent value orientation includes five individual values: benevolence-dependability, benevolence-caring, universalism-concern, universalism-nature, and universalism-tolerance. The self-enhancement value orientation prioritizes self-interests over those of others, while the self-transcendent value orientation emphasizes placing the good of others before individual wellbeing (Schwartz et al., 2012). Because of their conflicting motivational goals, the self-enhancement and self-transcendent value orientations are opposite one another in the motivational continuum and do not share any common individual values. The conservation orientation is concerned with maintaining personal and social safety/security as well as compliance with established rules and informal norms; conversely, the openness-to-change orientation involves a personal readiness for novel activities and experiences. Conservation comprises seven individual values: face, security-personal, security-societal, tradition, conformity-rules, conformity-interpersonal, and humility. Openness-to-change comprises four individual values: self-direction-thought, self-direction-action, stimulation, and hedonism.

The self-transcendent and self-enhancement value orientations were selected for the current study, given the nature of local public park and recreation services. These services are financed through public tax dollars and organized to benefit individuals and communities. Whether individuals view these services as worthwhile may be partly a function of the relative strengths of their self-transcendent or self-enhancement orientation. For example, if a highly self-enhancement-oriented individual does not perceive a personal benefit from park and recreation services, the person may be less likely to support funding them through tax dollars; an individual with a similar value orientation who perceives a high level of personal benefit may support allocating tax dollars to park and recreation services. Individuals who are self-transcendent in nature may be more willing to fund park and recreation services, recognizing the benefits they provide to others in the larger community. To reduce respondent burden, and because of limited relevance to the topic of local park and recreation financing, the

openness-to-change and conservation value orientations were not included.

The predictive power of values has been demonstrated in terms of both attitudes (Schwartz et al., 2012; Vaske and Donnelly, 1999) and self-reported behavior (Schwartz & Butenko, 2014). Individuals may be expected to behave in a fashion consistent with their dominant value orientation, and may also be more likely to engage in actions that undermine the opposing value orientation (Schwartz & Butenko, 2014). However, the influence of value orientation on attitudes and behavior is potentially asymmetrical. Self-transcendent values inhibit self-enhancing behaviors; concern for the impact of one's behavior makes actions that promote personal benefit or achievement less likely. Conversely, self-enhancement values may have little or no inhibiting effect on behaviors that promote the welfare of others; a self-centered orientation may not inhibit actions that promote the welfare of others (Schwartz et al., 2012). This may be especially true in situations where furthering individual wellbeing also incidentally furthers the wellbeing of others. For example, an individual who perceives he or she would personally benefit from a new park or program would not object to its creation simply because that benefit would also likely extend to others.

Ideology

Ideology occupies an intermediate space in the cognitive hierarchy, acting as a mediator between values and attitudes (Rohan, 2000). Although values influence how an individual perceives their environment, that influence operates at the subconscious level (Rohan, 2000). Some situations, however, call for conscious thought and deliberate choices among courses of action that are not intuitively aligned with a specific value orientation. For example, choosing to support a specific recreational programming effort may not directly relate to a nature-centric, subconscious value orientation; as such, determining a course of action would involve conscious decision making. Other situations may involve deciding among multiple actions that could support a single value orientation, for example, choosing between volunteering at an animal shelter or at a park event, with both providing benefits to the community. Finally, individuals may need to choose whether they will support a course of action that could align with conflicting value orientations. For example, hydraulic fracturing in state parks could provide economic benefits to the surrounding community but also negatively impact environmental quality in the park; choosing whether to support or oppose such a course of action invariably involves weighing positive and negative aspects, and making a conscious choice. In such situations, ideology acts as the link between subconscious values and, more specifically, readily available attitudes (Rohan, 2000).

In the present analysis, social and economic ideology are specifically included because of their salience to the issues of parks and recreation, privatization, and public funding. Because privatization is a method of reducing economic burden on taxpayers in delivering socially beneficial services, both may be important in determining attitudes toward privatization and preferences for allocating tax dollars among local public services. Separate domains are used for social and economic ideological conservatism/liberalism, as evidence suggests moderate individuals often split between these two dimensions (Everett, 2013; Feldman & Johnston, 2014).

Attitudes

Whereas values are enduring in nature and apply across situations, attitudes are evaluations of specific objects (Fishbein & Raven, 1962). The relationship between attitude and behavior has long been an object of study (Ajzen, 2001; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977). The level of power an attitude has to predict behavioral intention is influenced by a variety of factors. Attitudes that are more embedded in the psyche, more accessible, and stronger generally have greater predictive power regarding behavioral intention and, in turn, behavior (Ajzen, 2001). According to the cognitive hierarchy model of human behavior, attitudes are influenced by more general psychological processes, such as ideologies, value orientations, and the individual values that make up those orientations; attitudes in turn influence behavioral intention and potentially behavior (Ajzen, 2001). In this way, values indirectly influence behavior. Values have been demonstrated to influence self-reported behavior indirectly through attitudes, both generally (Schwartz et al., 2012) and in the context of recreation (van Riper & Kyle, 2014; Vaske & Donnelly, 1999).

Study purpose

Despite the increased research focus on the acceptability of privatization in local park and recreation services, the importance of these attitudes on support for traditional funding mechanisms (i.e., tax-based support) remains unexplored. It is possible that as attitudes toward privatization as a funding source for these services become more positive, support for the use of tax dollars in this role would decrease. Such a relationship may threaten the viability of the traditional funding model and undermine the funding stream from tax-based allocations. The present study seeks to address this gap by assessing the relationship between attitudes toward privatization and funding preferences. In addition, the influence of more deeply seated cognitive processes (i.e., ideology and value orientation) on attitudes toward privatization will be examined.

Method

Contingent valuation

As taxpayer dollars support public services, officials must consider this stakeholder group when making decisions regarding the allocation of public funds. Unfortunately, public involvement in the budgeting process is generally limited to those individuals who are most motivated and/or equipped to participate. For this reason, individuals of higher socioeconomic status (e.g., greater income, education), and motivation to participate are likely overrepresented in the budgeting process (Nollenberger, Maher, Beach, & McGee, 2012; Robbins & Simmonson, 2002). Although voting for a particular candidate or party may indirectly express preferences for spending priorities, those with lower socioeconomic status are generally less likely to vote (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995), exacerbating overrepresentation of higher socioeconomic status individuals.

A contingent valuation method may be used to address this issue. Contingent valuation removes barriers to participation in the budgeting process and increases the ease of participation relative to attending public meetings (Nollenberger et al., 2012). This is accomplished by asking respondents to allocate a limited amount of resources among a selection of public programs, forcing respondents to express their marginal preferences among various services. Those services

that receive greater allocations are perceived as more worthy than those that receive a smaller share of the funding.

Nollenberger and colleagues (2012) extended this method by asking respondents to allocate additional funds after a hypothetical budget increase, and to remove funding in response to a hypothetical budget decrease. This technique mirrors the fluctuations in local government spending during periods of surplus (Kaczynski & Crompton, 2006) and retrenchment (Barrett et al., 2017). Nollenberger and colleagues (2012) found that park and recreation services were near the bottom for additional allocations during the budget surplus and among the most likely to be cut during the budget shortfall. Park and recreation services were perceived as the least important among the services measured, a group which included police, fire, and transportation, among others.

Unlike Nollenberger and colleagues (2012), who localized their survey to a single town in Wisconsin, the current research uses an online panel drawn from across the United States and tailored to match key demographic characteristics of the American adult population. A sample of this nature allows a greater degree of generalizability of the results and will allow for the formation of policy and practice at the national level. The current study also assesses the effects of several potential predictors of net allocations toward park and recreation services (i.e., attitudes, ideologies, and values).

Sample and data collection

An online panel sample was purchased from Qualtrics in December 2016. A total of 603 completed surveys were returned, with a 2.3% completion rate among those individuals who received an initial invitation. Qualtrics panel members started 1,570 surveys, with 38.4% of those who started the survey completing it and 61.6% screened out for failing to meet selection criteria (U.S. resident, English language proficient), or failing quality checks (reverse coded items, open-ended questions requiring a specific word or phrase as a response). The sample was designed to track the demographic profile of the U.S. adult population in terms of age, gender, and racial/ethnic identity. The use of an online sampling method was highly cost and time effective, captured a more diverse set of respondents than traditional methods would allow (Gosling et al., 2004), and has been shown to collect high quality data (Roulin, 2015).

Measures

Values

Values were measured using the revised Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ-RR; Schwartz et al., 2012; see Table 2). Each value comprised three individual items, which ask respondents to compare themselves to a hypothetical individual engaging in behavior that corresponds to the value being measured. The specific wording of each item matches pronouns to the gender selected by the respondent (e.g., “he,” “she,” or “they”) and consists of a single sentence. Respondents indicate how similar they are to the individual being described on a six-point scale from “not like me at all” to “very much like me” (Schwartz et al., 2012). Items for the individual values comprising the self-enhancement and self-transcendent value orientations were included (see Table 1).

Table 2. Scale reliability and means for values items.

Dimension/Items	Cronbach's α	Mean	SD
<i>Self-Transcendent Value Orientation</i>	.848	4.90	.71
Universalism-Nature	.875	4.47	1.01
It is important for her to care for nature		4.63	1.07
It is important to her to take part in activities to defend nature		4.18	1.21
It is important to her to protect the natural environment from destruction or pollution		4.58	1.12
Universalism-Concern	.801	4.88	.95
It is important to her that the weak and vulnerable in society be protected		4.65	1.21
It is important to her that every person in the world have equal opportunities in life		4.86	1.16
It is important to her that everyone be treated justly, even people she doesn't know		5.13	0.95
Universalism-Tolerance	.846	4.93	.88
It is important to her to be tolerant towards all kinds of people and groups		5.06	1.01
It is important to her to listen to and understand people who are different from her		5.02	.97
It is important to her to accept people even when she disagrees with them		4.74	1.03
Benevolence-Care	.814	5.16	.81
It is important to her to take care of people she is close to		5.31	.89
It is very important to her to help the people dear to him		5.35	.87
It is important to her to concern herself with every need of her dear ones		4.85	1.07

Benevolence-Dependability	.802	5.03	.84
It is important to her that people she knows have full confidence in her		4.83	1.04
It is important to her to be a dependable and trustworthy friend		5.23	0.92
It is important to her that all her friends and family can rely on her completely		5.04	1.00
<i>Self-Enhancement Value Orientation</i>	.775	3.37	1.08
Achievement	.787	4.30	1.06
It is important to her to have ambitions in life		4.72	1.09
It is important to her to be very successful		4.31	1.28
It is important to her that people recognize what she achieves		3.86	1.43
Power-Dominance	.889	3.05	1.38
It is important to her that people do what she says they should		3.53	1.53
It is important to her to have the power to make people do what she wants		2.87	1.53
It is important to her to be the one who tells others what to do		2.80	1.53
Power-Resources	.896	2.75	1.42
It is important to her to have the power that money can bring		2.89	1.57
It is important to her to be wealthy		2.98	1.58
It is important to her to own expensive things that show her wealth		2.40	1.53

Ideology

Both social and economic ideology were assessed using single-item measures. On a seven-point scale, respondents were asked to indicate their approach to social and economic issues from “very liberal” to “very conservative.” Social and economic ideology were chosen because of their connection to both public parks and privatization practices. As described above, a single

ideology domain may incorrectly classify respondents as either more liberal or more conservative than they actually are, and as such the use of separate social and economic dimensions is recommended (Everett, 2013; Feldman & Johnston, 2014). Single social and economic items have also been shown to have similar predictive power as longer, multiple-item scales of conservatism, reducing respondent burden (Everett, 2013).

Attitudes

Attitudes toward privatization were assessed through a series of items developed based on past research into privatization in the park and recreation context (e.g., More, 2005; Mowen et al., 2016) and actual practices taking place in the local public park and recreation context (see Table 2). Four items addressed privatization as a funding source, corporate sponsorship, outsourcing of services to private contractors, and selling local public park and recreation facilities to for-profit companies.

Importance and quality

To measure perceived importance of park and recreation services, respondents were asked to rate the competitive public services in terms of their importance to them personally and to their community. Respondents were then asked to rate the quality of each service in their community. All ratings were given on a seven-point scale, ranging from “the lowest level of importance/quality” to “the highest level of importance/quality.” Respondents were asked to select “NA” if their community did not offer the service in question (see Table 3).

Net allocations

Respondents were asked to consider a hypothetical budget surplus and a hypothetical budget deficit in the context of their local government. During the budget surplus, respondents were asked to indicate what percentage of the extra money they would allocate to each of 10 possible public services, including parks and recreation, such that the extra funds allocated totaled 100%. During the budget shortfall, respondents were asked to indicate what percentage of the budget shortfall would come from the same 10 services, totaling 100%. A running percentage total was automatically calculated to reduce the burden on survey respondents. The current study presented the 10 local government services identified by the U.S. Census State and Local Government Finance Survey (Census.gov, 2014), and assessed by Kaczynski and Crompton (2006) and Barrett and colleagues (2017). See Table 3.

Data analysis

Using IBM SPSS version 24, reliability was assessed for individual values, value orientations, and attitudes toward privatization using Cronbach’s alpha. Multi-item indices were created for higher-order value orientations (see Table 1) and attitudes toward privatization. Net allocation for each public service was calculated by subtracting the amount removed from a service from the amount allocated to that service. Subsequently, analysis followed the two-step approach outlined by Anderson and Gerbing (1988): using IBM AMOS, a measurement model was first created and tested through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Second, a structural equation model (SEM) was used to test for potential structural relationships between the same latent constructs (see Figure 1).

Table 3. Scale reliability and means for attitude items.

Dimension/Items	Cronbach's α	Mean	SD
Attitudes Toward Privatization	.816	4.02	1.39
Privatization as a funding source in the local public park and recreation context		4.11	1.68
Corporate sponsorship as a funding source of local public park and recreation services		4.80	1.53
Outsourcing local public park and recreation services to private contractors		4.01	1.70
Selling local public park and recreation facilities to private companies		3.11	1.88

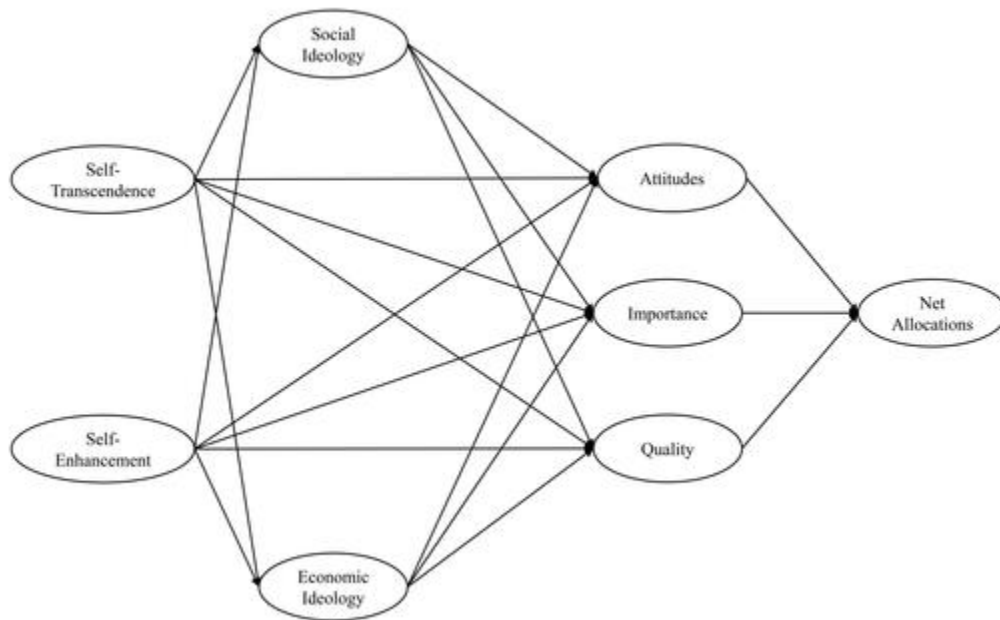


Figure 1. Theoretical model to be tested.

Missing data were replaced through a single imputation with the series mean. While respondents were more likely to skip political ideology questions (Little's MCAR test; $X^2 = 2012.62$, $df = 1,718$, $p < .001$), given the small total proportion of missing data (1.1%), a single imputation method was deemed sufficient. Because data are rarely normally distributed (Miccerri, 1989), a maximum likelihood bootstrap ($n = 500$, $CI = 95\%$) was conducted to reduce

the likelihood of Type I error (Brown, 2015). Bootstrapping also allows for the calculation of total effects (accounting for both direct/unmediated and indirect/mediated effects) in the structural model using while using AMOS.

Item factor loadings and relative fit statistics including the comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) were reported for both the measurement and structural models. Standardized path coefficients and absolute fit statistics were also reported including the X^2 statistic. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) were reported for both the measurement and structural model. Guidelines established by Browne and Cudeck (1993) and Hu and Bentler (1999) were used to interpret model fit statistics, while Cronbach's alpha values were interpreted using guidelines provided by Vaske (2008).

Results

Respondents were approximately 46 years of age and split among males (45.9%), females (52.7%; 50.8% in the U.S. general population as of 2015; Census.gov, 2017a), and transgender or other (1.4%). Whites made up the largest single racial ethnic group (79.6%; 77.1% in the U.S. general population), and approximately 17% of respondents identified as either Hispanic or Latino of any racial background (17.6% in the U.S. general population). The majority of respondents had achieved at least an associate degree.

The mean for the self-transcendent value orientation was higher than for the self-enhancement value orientation ($M = 4.9$ and $M = 3.37$, respectively). Means for individual self-transcendent values were also higher than self-enhancement values. Benevolence-care ($M = 5.16$) and benevolence-dependability ($M = 5.03$) received the highest mean scores, while power-resources ($M = 2.75$) and power-dominance ($M = 3.05$) received the lowest mean scores. Scale reliability was acceptable for both the self-enhancement ($\alpha = .775$) and self-transcendent ($\alpha = .848$) value orientations (see Table 2).

Attitudes toward privatization (see Table 3) were moderately positive ($M = 4.02$), with considerable variation between specific practices. Corporate sponsorship was perceived most favorably ($M = 4.80$), while the sale of park and recreation facilities to private interests was perceived most negatively ($M = 3.11$). Reliability for the four-item attitude scale was acceptable ($\alpha = .816$).

Five services reported positive net allocations: education (12.51%), hospitals and health (3.84%), fire protection (3.58%), police protection (3.13%), and parks and recreation (.26%). See Table 4 for net allocations to all public services. Perceived importance ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.36$) and quality ($M = 5.27$, $SD = 1.30$) for parks and recreation were moderately positive (See Table 4).

Measurement model

The initial CFA did not demonstrate acceptable fit: $X^2 = 698.8$, $df = 96$, $p < .001$, $CFI = .853$, $TLI = .791$, $SRMR = .082$, $RMSEA = .102$ [$CI = .095-.109$]. Two re-specifications were made to the model based on modification indices provided by AMOS: the error terms for benevolence-care and benevolence-dependability within the self-transcendent value orientation were allowed to covary, and the error terms for attitude items one and two were also allowed to covary, resulting in a X^2 change of 239.7. The final CFA achieved adequate fit: $X^2 = 459.1$, $df = 94$, $p < .001$, $CFI = .911$, $TLI = .871$, $SRMR = .079$, $RMSEA = .08$ [$CI = .073 - .088$] (see Table 5).

Table 4. Net allocations to public services, and perceived importance and quality.

Budget Category	Allocation ¹ (%)	Std. Deviation	Importance	Quality
Education	12.51	20.33	5.92	5.07
Hospitals and health	3.84	15.6	5.76	5.15
Fire protection	3.58	12.66	5.78	5.45
Police protection	3.13	18.37	5.65	5.11
Parks and recreation	.26	18.49	5.28	5.27
Libraries	-1.99	15.03	5.26	5.19
Housing and community development	-2.64	16.39	5.01	4.70
Transportation	-4.41	15.59	4.93	4.67
Public welfare	-4.71	23.76	4.97	4.65
Corrections	-9.83	21.15	4.60	4.66

¹ Net allocations, calculated as increased allocations minus decreased allocations.

Structural model

The initial SEM did not demonstrate acceptable fit to the data: $X^2 = 922.4$, $df = 103$, $p < .001$, $CFI = .800$, $TLI = .736$, $SRMR = .085$, $RMSEA = .115$ [$CI = .108-.122$]. Based on modification indices provided by AMOS, as well as measurement and conceptual similarities, the error terms for social ideology and economic ideology were allowed to covary, resulting in a X^2 change of 427.2. Fit statistics for the final SEM indicated adequate fit: $X^2 = 495.2$, $df = 102$, $p < .001$, $CFI = .904$, $TLI = .872$, $SRMR = .078$, $RMSEA = .08$ [$CI = .073-.087$]. All errors and factor loadings were statistically significant.

The structural model yielded 11 significant direct paths (see Table 6). A stronger self-transcendent orientation predicted a more liberal economic ($\beta = -.176$, $p < .001$) and social

Table 5. Measurement model results.

Latent Variable	Item	UNST ¹ (SE)	ST ²
Self-Transcendence			
	Universalism-Nature	1.0 ³ (-)	.568 ³
	Universalism-Concern	1.41(.100)	.866***
	Universalism-Tolerance	1.27(.092)	.832***
	Benevolence-Care	.916(.075)	.653***
	Benevolence-Dependability	.884(.076)	.611***
Self-Enhancement			
	Power-Dominance	1.0 ³ (-)	.819 ³
	Power-Resources	1.03 (.055)	.858***
	Achievement	.444 (.037)	.493***
Social Ideology			
	Social ideology	1.0 ³ (-)	.984 ³
Economic Ideology			
	Economic ideology	1.0 ³ (-)	.982 ³
Attitudes			
	Privatization as a funding source	1.0 ³ (-)	.779 ³
	Corporate sponsorship	.532(.044)	.456***
	Outsourcing	1.01(.055)	.780***
	Sale to private companies	1.11(.064)	.773***
Importance			

	Perceived importance of service	1.0 ³ (-)	.984 ³
Quality			
	Perceived quality of service	1.0 ³ (-)	.988 ³
Net Allocations			
	Allocations of parks and recreation	1.0 ³ (-)	1.0 ³

* $p \leq 0.05$,

** $p \leq 0.01$,

*** $p \leq 0.001$.

¹Unstandardized factor loading.

²Standardized factor loading.

³Factor loading constrained to 1.0 per AMOS requirements; no SE or significance available.

$X^2 = 459.1$, $df = 94$, $p < .001$, $CFI = .911$, $TLI = .871$, $SRMR = .079$, $RMSEA = .08$ [CI = .073–.088].

($\beta = -.197$, $p < .001$) ideology; a stronger self-enhancement orientation predicted a more conservative economic ($\beta = .151$, $p < .001$), and social ($\beta = .183$, $p < .001$) ideology. A stronger self-transcendent orientation was positively related to perceived importance of park and recreation services ($\beta = .219$, $p < .001$), and perceived quality of park and recreation services ($\beta = .208$, $p < .001$). A stronger self-enhancement orientation was positively related to perceived quality of park and recreation services ($\beta = .109$, $p = .015$), and more positive attitudes toward privatization ($\beta = .578$, $p < .001$). A more conservative social ideology was positively related to more positive attitudes toward privatization ($\beta = .173$, $p = .005$). Net allocations were positively related to greater perceived importance of park and recreation services ($\beta = .258$, $p < .001$) and negatively related to positive attitudes toward privatization ($\beta = -.123$, $p = .004$).

Total effects on net allocations (combining direct and mediated effects) were also calculated (see Table 7). A stronger self-enhancement orientation had a significant negative total effect on net allocations ($\beta = -.056$, $p = .048$), while a stronger self-transcendence orientation had a significant positive total effect on net allocations ($\beta = .072$, $p = .003$). The model explained slightly more than 8% of variance in net allocations (see Figure 2).

Discussion

Because park and recreation services rely on tax dollars, public opinion must be taken into account when decisions are made regarding their financing and provision. This is particularly true if considering the implementation of privatization practices, which raise

Table 6. Structural model results, direct paths.

Path	B(SE)	β	<i>p</i> -value
Self-Transcendence → Economic Ideology	-.503(1.29)	-.176	<.001
Self-Transcendence → Social Ideology	-.589(.135)	-.197	<.001
Self-Enhancement → Economic Ideology	.213(.063)	.151	<.001
Self-Enhancement → Social Ideology	.268(.065)	.183	<.001
Self-Transcendence → Importance	.653(.138)	.219	<.001
Self-Transcendence → Quality	.713(.159)	.208	<.001
Self-Enhancement → Quality	.184(.076)	.109	.015
Self-Enhancement → Attitudes	.626(.052)	.578	<.001
Social Ideology → Attitudes	.128(.045)	.173	.005
Importance → Net Allocations	2.76(.441)	.258	<.001
Attitudes → Net Allocations	-1.77(.620)	-.123	.004

$X^2 = 495.2$, $df = 102$, $p < .001$, $CFI = .904$, $TLI = .872$, $SRMR = .078$, $RMSEA = .08$ [CI = .073–.087].

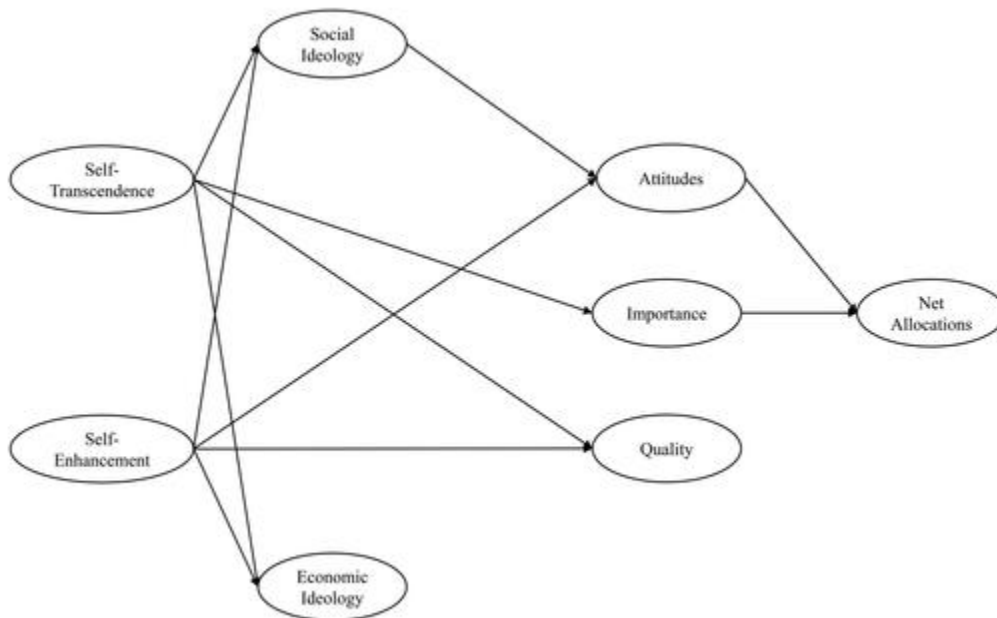


Figure 2. Final model with significant paths indicated.

concerns regarding potentially negative consequences in terms of equity, perceived ownership, and control over these public services (Glover, 1999; More, 2005). In addition, support for privatization may undermine the traditional tax-based system of paying for public park and recreation services: more positive attitudes toward privatization were inversely related to preferences for allocating tax dollars to park and recreation services. Individuals who were more favorable toward privatization indicated lower support for the use of public funding for these services.

As privatization practices potentially become more widespread (e.g., Walls, 2014) and acceptable (e.g., Mowen et al., 2016), this relationship may further weaken the tax-based funding model, the viability of which has recently been called into question (e.g., Barrett et al., 2017; Pitas et al., 2017). When considering the appropriateness of privatization, individuals make conscious choices, weighing potential pros and cons for themselves and others (Pitas et al., 2015). It may be a similar decision-making process is at work here, wherein the need to provide tax-based funding is weighed against perceived appropriateness of alternative funding methods and perceptions of service importance. Decision makers must bear in mind that in addition to potential impacts on the user experience, implementing privatization practices may influence other critical funding streams as well. Tax-based funding for local services is subject to economic forces beyond municipal boundaries; it may also be vulnerable to changing norms regarding the acceptance of privatization. Any benefits provided by privatization may be tempered by potential reductions in tax-based funding.

Values, value orientations, and ideologies may be at the root of attitudes toward privatization and preferences for net allocations. Given the nature of park and recreation services as publicly and personally beneficial, the self-enhancement and self-transcendent higher-order value orientations discussed in this study may be of particular interest to researchers and decision makers. Understanding unobserved cognitive processes that shape attitudes and allocation preferences could be a valuable tool in the decision-making process regarding privatization practices.

Neither value orientation had a direct effect on allocations; accounting for indirect effects, those individuals with a stronger self-transcendent orientation generally preferred greater allocations, while those with a stronger self-enhancement orientation preferred to allocate less to park and recreation services. Spending public tax dollars on a service that benefits others is consistent with a self-transcendent orientation, while a reluctance to spend public tax dollars on a service that benefits the community, as opposed to the self, is consistent with a self-enhancement orientation. It may be there was no direct relationship between the self-transcendent value orientation and net allocations because respondents perceived other public services as more beneficial to the general public: perceived importance partially mediated the relationship between self-transcendent values and net allocations. Individuals with a strong self-transcendent orientation, who perceive other services as more important contributors to the public good, may prefer to allocate less to park and recreation services. Conversely, highly self-transcendent

individuals who perceive park and recreation services as an important mechanism for improving the lives of others would likely prefer greater allocations to parks and recreation.

Appeals to those with a stronger self-transcendent orientation should highlight the community level benefits of these services; appeals to those with a stronger self-enhancement orientation should highlight individual benefits. While local park and recreation service providers have traditionally done an excellent job of promoting community benefits, improvements could be made in emphasizing individual benefits from these services. Recent research indicates a gap exists among Americans in terms of the proportion that perceive individual (83%) and community (92%) benefits (Mowen et al., 2018).

The repositioning framework (Crompton, 2009), and the park and recreation repositioning scale (Kaczynski & Crompton, 2004) may offer an approach to this process: messaging regarding benefits guided by the repositioning framework has been shown to increase preferred allocations to park and recreation services (Kaczynski, Havitz, & McCarville, 2005). Because of their quasi-experimental approach, Kaczynski and colleagues used random group assignment; future research may wish to segment participants according to value orientation, ideology, or even preferred equity operationalization (West & Crompton 2008, 2013) and to test the efficacy of repositioning efforts across various stakeholder groups (e.g., users, nonusers, elected and appointed officials).

Regarding ideology, more socially conservative respondents tended to express more positive attitudes toward privatization, consistent with past work linking the civil citizenship orientation to the private contractor service delivery model (Glover, 2002; Potwarka et al., 2015). This is interesting since the stated goal of privatization is to relieve the economic burden carried by individual taxpayers. It seems respondents view privatization as a social rather than economic consideration. It may be that issues of equity, ownership, and control are seen as more important than economic or financial considerations. This emphasis of social over economic ideology is in line with the insistence of Crompton and Lamb (1991) that social equity be given priority over economic efficiency in the delivery of park and recreation services. As such, when approaching the issue of privatization, decision makers must give sufficient weight to considerations beyond dollars and cents.

In this analysis, parks and recreation was one of five services to receive a positive net allocation. This is in contrast to similar past contingent valuation analyses where it ranked among the lowest in relative net allocations (Nollenberger et al., 2012), as well as a recent analysis of local government spending on public services conducted (Barrett et al., 2017). A necessary caveat is that these analyses consist of hypothetical allocations, representing respondent preferences, but not necessarily their actions. Also, this analysis did not target decision makers, or determine whether respondents were decision makers.

However, it may be that increased awareness of the benefits of park and recreation services, or the improving economic situation in the United States may provide some explanation, as parks and recreation tends to fare better in times of economic certainty (Crompton & Kaczynski, 2003; Pitas et al., 2017). This may also reflect the samples used in the

analyses in question: Nollenberger and colleagues (2012) specifically examined the town of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, which is significantly whiter (90.5%; 79.6% in the current study), not as Hispanic or Latino (2.7%; 17.2% in current study), and less educated (24.4% bachelor's degree or higher; 44.8% bachelor's degree or higher in the current study) (Census.gov, 2017b).

Limitations and future directions

There are many potential directions for future research in addition to the earlier discussion on repositioning and messaging. As the structural model only accounted for slightly more than 8% in total variation in net allocations, many questions remain regarding differences in individual preferences for allocations, which should be the object of further study. Future research must also continue to examine the direct and indirect role of values in the area of alternative funding strategies. Other values or orientations not explored in this analysis may account for some of this variation. Perceived importance of other services must also be considered as a potential mediating factor; if other services are viewed as more effective in achieving individual priorities, preferences for allocations may reflect this.

Several limitations must also be acknowledged, including the use of single-item indicators for social and economic ideology as well as importance and quality. Future research should incorporate greater depth when assessing these constructs and use more extensive and comprehensive measurement tools. The nature of the sample used, a national level online panel, also presents potential limitations. Responses were confined to English-speaking American residents. The issue of privatization is not localized to English speakers in the United States, and future research may wish to adopt a wider lens. Also, while this sampling method provided a greater reach and representativeness than traditional approaches, issues of privatization must continue to be examined in the context of specific localities.

Conclusion

Local public park and recreation services are provided for the benefit of their community, and understanding community sentiment regarding their funding and operation is essential to their provision. Given the historic fluctuations and future uncertainty regarding public funding for park and recreation services, more must be known about the relationship between alternative funding models and the traditional tax-based funding model. It appears that in addition to being susceptible to economic and social forces beyond the local level, tax-based funding for park and recreation services is also influenced by attitudes toward other funding sources. Given the significant benefits that park and recreation services provide to individuals, households, and communities, this interdependence must be considered in the decision-making process and addressed by future research efforts.

Disclosure statement

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