An Analysis Of The Relationship Between Equity Choice Preferences, Service Type and Decision Making Groups In A U.S. City

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This study examines perceptions of what constitutes equitable allocation of publicly provided resources for recreation and park services in Austin, Texas. Three groups containing about 800 individuals (residents, park and recreation department employees, and city council members) were surveyed to determine if equity preferences differed between these three groups and between seven recreation and park services studied. Using a series of analysis of variance procedures and mean separation tests it was found that equity preferences for resource allocation did vary between services and decision making groups. Based upon these findings, suggestions are made on how to improve the policy making and master planning processes for recreation and parks.

KEYWORDS: Equity, urban recreation service allocation, master planning.

A key decision in the delivery of public leisure services is the issue of allocating resources. Allocation decisions address the question “Who gets what?” or, in normative terms, “Who ought to get what?” Despite the extensive commitment of resources to delivering public services, the persuasive role of service delivery in citizens’ lives, and the political implications of these decisions, the allocation function has remained “the hidden function of government” (Jones 1980).

Managers of private sector enterprises offer products and services to customers with the intent of earning the greatest profit from these transactions. Public sector managers do not have such clear cut service delivery objectives. Rather, the public sector administrator operates in an environment comprised of a wide variety of different publics with different expectations. These publics often send “mixed signals” regarding the preferred service allocation strategy. Citizen groups frequently have conflicting or contradictory interests, elected officials may or may not agree with residents, and the professional norms of administrators may cause their perspective to differ from both. Leisure services is an eclectic field. It is a generic umbrella term embracing a very diverse range of services. This diversity makes it likely that individual perspectives on allocation strategies will vary according to the specific type of leisure service being considered.
Purpose of the Study

This study examined different perceptions of what constitutes equitable allocation of publicly provided recreation and park services in a heterogeneous urban setting. Elected officials, agency personnel, and citizen action-group members were asked to provide their perspectives on how recreation and park services should be allocated among the city's residents. With such data, an agency may assess its employees' notions of service delivery priorities and compare their perceptions with those of other individuals who impact the decision process. Two research questions were addressed:

1. Do equity model preferences within each sub-population of elected officials, agency personnel, and citizen action groups differ according to service type?
2. Do equity model preferences for each of seven services studied differ between these three sub-populations?

Models of Equity

Wicks and Crompton (1986) explored four equity models in a study of resource allocation preferences for parks in Texas. Their review of the literature suggested that equality, need, demand and market equity are widely recognized as the available set of alternative models of equitable service allocation. Each of these models is briefly described in the following paragraphs.

Equity Defined As Equality. This equity model entails allocating equal amounts of services to all citizens regardless of need or the amount of taxes paid. There are two sub-definitions of equality that may further our understanding of it. First, strict equality suggests that each unit of analysis should receive the same proportion of public resources. This means of allocation would preserve existing inequalities if any were present. The second definition considers existing inequalities and allocates resources where fewest now exist in an effort to upgrade the minimum standard for those receiving fewest services. Providing services to areas that are spatially deficient differs from equity as need which is discussed below in that it is concerned with geographic rather than economic deficiencies.

Equity Defined As Need. This involves allocating services so that disadvantaged groups, individuals, or areas receive extra increments of resources. If this model is accepted, then the challenge is to delineate "who is needy?" Equity based on need has three concomitant implications: (1) that some individuals should receive more of a service than others in a jurisdiction; (2) that such a distribution pattern should be funded or subsidized on a redistributive basis; and (3) that the private sector's distribution of the service to some individuals is considered inadequate by the general electorate (Lucy and Mladenka 1980).

Equity Defined As Demand. The decision is made on the basis of consumption and/or advocacy in two different ways: (1) by re-echoing (advocacy) of demand or (2) by administrative convenience and appearance. This model of equity has been widely adopted by administrative officials (Crompton and Lamb 1986) for the act of giving valuable feedback from constituents regarding needs.

The Concept of Market Equity. This group of neighborhoods in proportion contribute. The market equity model is based on the idea that people pay a larger portion of the cost of public services based on the efficiency criterion for goods and services. As public officials increase the level to which they subsidize the public sector to pay a larger portion of the cost of public services, the public sector is thereby enlarged.

A second interpretation of market equity involves allocating services to each geographic region in proportion to the amount of taxes paid. In addition, the more equal a region is, the more public services should be provided. A third interpretation of market equity involves a combination of efficiency and need measures. For example, this standard has been used in the development of a new park in an area when expenses are needed.

The above discussion identifies further rationalizing equitable allocation. The following list of values has been developed:

1. Equally to each individual or unit
2. Where fewest services now exist
3. To those with the greatest need
4. Where citizen advocacy is great
5. Where services are most used
6. Where fees cover costs
7. To those who pay the most taxes
8. Where the cost of service provi

Services Selected

The seven services selected for this analysis were those typically delivered by the public sector and have unique attributes. Different equity rules would be favored in allocating these services.
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Equity Defined As Demand. The demand approach allocates resources on the basis of consumption and/or advocacy. This approach may be manifested in two different ways: (1) by residents contacting elected officials and administrators (advocacy) or (2) by consumptive use. Because of its administrative convenience and apparent fairness it has been reported that this model of equity has been widely adopted by elected officials and administrators (Crompton and Lamb 1986, Thomas 1982). The most positive aspect of citizen contacts is that the agency and/or policy makers receive valuable feedback from constituents regarding service delivery.

The Concept of Market Equity. This model entails allocating services to groups or neighborhoods in proportion to the fee or tax revenues that they contribute. The market equity model is based upon the theory of exchange which governs private sector transactions where consumers exchange currency for goods and services. As public recreation and park agencies decrease the level to which they subsidize services, participants are expected to pay a larger portion of the cost of providing those services.

A second interpretation of market equity is linked to the magnitude of individuals’ contributions to government through taxation. This would involve allocating services to each geographic area of jurisdiction in direct proportion to the amount of taxes paid by that geographic area.

Efficiency. In addition to the four models of equity described above, the efficiency criterion may be adopted as an allocation strategy. This suggests that public services would be provided where the cost of delivering them is lowest. For example, this standard may be useful in deciding to develop a new park in an area where cost of the land would be least expensive.

The above discussion has identified eight different approaches to operationalizing equitable allocation. They are:

1. Equally to each individual or unit of analysis
2. Where fewest services now exist
3. To those with the greatest need (based on socio-economic factors)
4. Where citizen advocacy is greatest
5. Where services are most used
6. Where fees cover costs
7. To those who pay the most taxes
8. Where the cost of service provision is lowest

Services Selected for Study

The seven services selected for this study were intended to be representative of those typically delivered by park and recreation agencies. Each of these services have unique attributes and it was hypothesized that different equity rules would be favored in resource allocation decisions for these services.
Outdoor Swimming Pools

These facilities provide benefits that accrue predominantly to participants (Butler 1976) and do not provide the aesthetic outdoor benefits to non-users which may be attributed to parkland. Swimming facilities are a capital intensive service, are recreational, and are fixed in one location.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are characterized by their relatively small size (usually under ten acres). The objective of providing such facilities is to offer public open space and recreation opportunities within easy access of neighborhood residents. Neighborhood parks are fixed resources whose benefits primarily accrue to the neighborhood where they are allocated. Although they may be considered a public good for nearby residents, there is minimal dispersion of benefits from a particular neighborhood park to all city residents.

Community Education Classes

These programs seek to teach specific skills and provide individual training. Due to the frequent reliance upon fees to support these programs, and the individual nature of the services' benefits, community education programs may be classified as private goods. These programs are not capital intensive nor are they fixed in location.

Metropolitan or City-Wide Parks

Metropolitan parks are a major resource. Relatively few such park areas are available in any jurisdiction. Decisions to develop new large scale parks are infrequent and often are based on opportunistic purchases, donations and/or intergovernmental transfers. The importance of location and funding decisions for such large scale capital intensive facilities is likely to politicize the decision making process (Jones 1980). Such facilities, due to their scarcity and capital intensiveness are fixed services and cannot be moved to accommodate changing demographic conditions or equity preferences. Regional parks exhibit a close resemblance to public goods since the entire jurisdiction is likely to benefit from them, even though some groups will have greater access than others to such facilities.

Organized Athletic Programs

Programming of athletic activities is a major recreational function of many park and recreation departments. Frequently, a fee structure is imposed for some programs for which it is intended to recover at least partial operating expenses, e.g. adult softball leagues. Although they are somewhat capital intensive and fixed, their relative profusion in many communities enables administrators or elected officials to allocate resources to different areas.

Park Maintenance

For parks to provide uses with the maintained at an adequate level. Maintenance is largely distributed at the discretion of the local government agencies. It is assumed that some externalities will be maintained to a high standard while some are not. The success of the maintenance of the physical facilities is dependent on the ability of the local government agencies to allocate resources to different areas.

Senior Citizen Outreach Programs

Outreach recreational programs serve community members and their families. The public agency is assumed to have some externalities which affect the quality of life for the community. It is assumed that some externalities will be maintained to a high standard while some are not. The success of the outreach programs will depend on the ability of the local government agencies to allocate resources to different areas.

Who Determines What?

Crompton and Lamb offer the following determinants of what is equitable:

- The traditional government model suggests that services are distributed through a policy process that is likely to be influenced by political considerations.

- Critiques of this model or refinements on the relative strength of individual groups or policy networks are necessary. Which part of the process dominates? How are the factors influencing the position of different groups identified? What are the different groups, and how are they identified?

Agency Personnel

The influence of recreation and park delivery policy stems from their management resources. Those responsible for administration are likely to have a relatively high level of knowledge and experience in the field.
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grammatic resources to different areas of a jurisdiction.

Park Maintenance

For parks to provide uses with the benefits they seek, they must be
maintained at an adequate level. Maintenance is an incremental service that
is largely distributed at the discretion of administrators. Some parks could
be maintained to a high standard while others could be neglected.

Senior Citizen Outreach Programs

Outreach recreational programs seek to identify persons in a com-
unity who need a service from public agencies and are not able to provide
it for themselves. The public agency then directly offers them the service.
It is assumed that some externalities will be present in the provision of such
services since the community will collectively benefit from the enhancement
of its individual members now deprived of recreational opportunities (Stein
and Sessoms 1977). The success of these services relies heavily upon pro-
gramming and leadership which are not capital intensive attributes. There-
fore, administrators of the services may have considerable influence over
who receives what benefits. By definition, outreach programs are not fixed
in location.

Who Determines What is Equitable?

Crompton and Lamb offer the following answer to the question “who
determines what is equitable”:

The traditional government model suggests that the allocation of public ser-
dices is directed through a policy process which operates in the following way:
1) community priorities and values are articulated by citizens or citizen groups
who 2) influence elected representatives who 3) convert the various demands
into formal policy that 4) agency personnel endeavor to carry out (1983:34).

Critiques of this model or refinements in its explanation have focused
on the relative strength of individual groups in the decision making process.
Which part of the process dominates? The following discussion examines
the factors influencing the position of each decision making group: agency
personnel, residents, and elected officials. It is reasonable to expect that
members of these groups have different equity model preferences.

Agency Personnel

The influence of recreation and park department personnel on service
delivery policy stems from their management and delivery of services and
resources. Those responsible for administering departments have been
found to have a relatively high level of discretion in determining who will
receive what benefits (Mladenka and Hill, 1977). Greene calls this phe-
nomenon a flexible resource allocation process (1982). Such flexibility is most often present in recreation and park agencies when: (1) agency rules are not overly restrictive, (2) political influence is not strong, (3) managers are receptive to citizens contacting the agency. The greater is an administrator’s discretion over distributive matters, the more important his or her conception of equity is likely to be.

The influence of lower level agency personnel on service distribution had been underestimated until the role and authority of the “street level bureaucrat” was empirically investigated. (Lipsky 1980; Pratts 1979). These personnel may have considerable discretion because they often have to interpret complex agency rules and objectives, and frequently determine the clientele groups which the agency will serve.

Those involved with the day to day operations of an agency do not necessarily adopt the same goal structures that may direct the actions of upper level managers. For example, their primary objective may be to cope with the immediate stresses of their job rather than to pursue the broad agency goals which guide senior management actions. Lipsky (1980:18) comments that such differences in interest “are likely to be more than minimal.” Hence, it is unlikely that all public agency personnel will share the same perspective of equity even though they are all involved in the allocation decision.

Residents

The impact of residents upon service delivery patterns can range from apathy to activism that results in court actions to alter service allocation policies. Public opinion researchers have concluded that the general electorate, when confronted with complex public policy issues, frequently is not willing or able to become sufficiently knowledgeable to provide meaningful answers (Weissberg 1976).

Because the equity issue is complex, this research effort focused upon residents who had demonstrated by their involvement, an interest in and an understanding of local issues. It was reasoned that residents who were active in neighborhood groups were more likely to be concerned and informed about local issues and have a heightened awareness of the political implications of service allocation decisions. Research done by Abney and Lauth (1985) reported that interest groups were likely to have an influence upon agency department heads. Furthermore, Steger (1984) found that the decision rules adopted by the agency concerning citizen contacts, and the mechanism for reacting to those contacts, were related to the effectiveness of interest groups in influencing agency behavior.

Elected Officials

This group of decision makers is responsible for making major policy decisions. It is a small cadre comprised of elected local officials (mayor and council) and their appointed executive, the city manager. Their impact on equity is most influential in the budgeting process and dramatized through visible public policy decisions in their intervening in the allocation of public services. Elected officials are to be major actors in the distributional consequences (perm effects); government and in the likely it is to be

Research Context

The sample for this study was selected in the City of Austin, Texas. Citizen groups and department employees, and present an intensive service allocation decisions, selected to be major actors in the city of Austin was selected because it had become increasing aware of the park system and because its residents are recreation issues.

In addition, Austin’s Park and Recreation Department employees had become increasingly aware of the relationship between the equity awareness led to agency support and also ensured receptive and cooperation interested in its outcome.

Sample Selection

Agency Personnel. A census survey was conducted by the Department of Employment and the Recreation Department. Surveys were returned yielding 100.

Citizen Group Members. Available for all residents of the entire city, the City Park and Recreation master plan, were selected to make comparisons between the plan. The zone was characteristically a largely white area whereas the other selected area of the city and was composed of a list of all neighborhood associations selected. Once the association inquired about the City’s ament. The mission of these associations was to the City Council and Administration. Although groups will have in specific issues such as parks or traffic, the neighborhood. The selected groups were included in this study we contacted and requested to send its
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dramatized through visible public policy debate concerning a specific issue
resulting in their intervening in the administrative process. For large capital
-intensive service allocation decisions, it is probably reasonable to expect
elected officials to be major actors in the allocational process. The greater
the distributional consequences (permanence and magnitude) of the service
delivered, the more likely it is to be heavily politicized (Jones, 1980).

Methods

Research Context

The sample for this study was selected from three populations in the
City of Austin, Texas. Citizen group members, park and recreation de-
partment employees, and present and former city council members. The
City of Austin was selected because it is well endowed with an outstanding
park system and because its residents are keenly interested in park and
recreation issues.

In addition, Austin’s Park and Recreation Department has shown a
strong commitment to comprehensive planning, and through this process
had become increasingly aware of the importance of the equity issue. This
awareness led to agency support and resources to assist with this study,
and also ensured receptive and cooperative decision makers who were
interested in its outcome.

Sample Selection

Agency Personnel. A census survey was conducted among all 484 Park
and Recreation Department Employees. From this population, 319 code-
able surveys were returned yielding a response rate of 75.2%.

Citizen Group Members. Available resources did not permit a sampling
frame for residents of the entire city that would provide a sufficient “n”
to make comparisons between planning zones. Based upon data from the
Park and Recreation master plan, two of the city’s nine planning zones
were selected that best reflected the city’s overall population and supply
characteristics. One zone was characterized as a high growth, upper income,
largely white area whereas the other zone was racially mixed, in an estab-
lished area of the city and was comprised of middle income families.

A list of all neighborhood associations active in the two planning zones
selected was obtained from the City’s Office of Planning and Growth Man-
agement. The mission of these associations is to represent the neighborhood
to the City Council and Administration on all issues which impact their
neighborhood. Although groups in Austin have been formed to react to
specific issues such as park or law enforcement matters the associations
selected for inclusion in this study were general in nature. Each group was
contacted and requested to send its membership list. The combined lists
comprised the survey population and the sample was drawn from this sampling frame.

The survey sample size was defined by the statistical tests to be used. It was determined that a minimum of 400 respondents would be required. A response rate of 70% was anticipated so a sample of approximately 600 was decided upon. A sample of 592 was selected and after three mailings and a telephone reminder, 424 codeable surveys were returned, yielding a response rate of 71.6%.

City Council Members. To facilitate statistical analysis, the number of city council member respondents was increased by extending the definition to include recent past as well as present city council members. Of the nineteen council members approached, ten usable responses were received, yielding a response rate of 52.6%.

Analysis

To test the strength of respondents’ equity preferences for each of the eight equity models, a series of five-point Lickert-type scale items were developed. An identical series of questions (strongly agree to strongly disagree) were asked for each service to the three survey populations. The matrices in Figure One depict the organizational framework of the data. The three $7 \times 8$ matrices of mean scores for each service and preference form the structure within which data analysis was undertaken.

An analysis of variance procedure was used to identify significant differences between mean equity preference scores of each of the seven services within each sub-population. For example, the means compared are shown as 7-1, 7-2, etc. on Figure One. If the ANOVA procedure indicated significant differences a Schefû’s means separation test was used to ascertain the source of the mean differences. Analysis of variance was also used to test if mean equity preference scores differed between sub-populations. Since the sub-populations had different sample sizes, a least squares means test was conducted on each comparison which the ANOVA procedure found to be significant.

Results

Do Equity Model Preferences Within Each Sub-population Of Elected Officials, Agency Personnel, and Citizen Action Groups Differ According To Service Type?

The results of the analysis of variance procedures indicated that equity preferences did significantly differ for each of the seven services with probability levels greater than .01 in every instance. These patterns of significance were found to be present in each of the sub-populations (residents, employees and council members). Tables 1, 2 and 3 show the mean scores and rank of equity model preferences for each of the three groups. In general, the most preferred equity models were equal allocation to all and where fewest services now exist.

With one exception the market amount of taxes paid and where fe with the taxes paid option being strongly favored option in every instance by services where the costs of provision advocacy also received relatively little of providing services to those paying support for egalitarian or compens have characterized the philosophy provision in the United States. More surprising for those equity options which might efficient (where cost of provision is

There were substantial differer
and the sample was drawn from this defined by the statistical tests to be used. A total of 400 respondents would be required. Consequently, a sample of approximately 600 to 800 was selected and after three mailings, 592 were returned, yielding a response rate of 52.6%. To facilitate statistical analysis, the number of respondents' equity preferences for each of the five service areas were collected and analyzed to determine the three survey populations. The organizational framework of the data collection scores for each service and preference for each of the seven service types were undertaken. The procedure was used to identify significant differences in means separation test was used to ascertain differences. Analysis of variance was also used to compare scores differed between sub-populations. For different sample sizes, a least squares means comparison which was mean.

Results

Each Sub-population Of Elected Officials, in Groups Differ According To Service Type?

Variance procedures indicated that equity scores were equal for each of the seven services with p < 0.01 in every instance. These patterns were present in each of the sub-populations (residents). Tables 1, 2 and 3 show the mean preferences for each of the three groups. Equity models were equal allocation to all exist.

With one exception the market equity models (allocate on the basis of amount of taxes paid and where fees cover costs) received little support, with the taxes paid option being strongly rejected and ranked as the least favored option in every instance by each sub-population group. Providing services where the costs of provision was lowest or on the basis of citizen advocacy also received relatively little support. The widespread rejection of providing services to those paying the least taxes is consistent with the support for egalitarian or compensatory perspectives which traditionally have characterized the philosophy underlying government service provision in the United States. More surprising was the relative lack of support for those equity options which might be considered to be administratively efficient (where cost of provision is lowest and where fees cover costs).

There were substantial differences in equity preferences within sub-
TABLE 1
 Equity Choice Matrix: Mean Scores and Rank For Austin Residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(means) rank</th>
<th>fees</th>
<th>where the fewest</th>
<th>equally</th>
<th>where the most used</th>
<th>low income</th>
<th>advocacy</th>
<th>low cost</th>
<th>most taxed paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. POOLS</td>
<td>(3.24)</td>
<td>(3.30)</td>
<td>(3.47)</td>
<td>(3.30)</td>
<td>(2.79)</td>
<td>(2.37)</td>
<td>(1.91)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS</td>
<td>(2.29)</td>
<td>(3.56)</td>
<td>(3.42)</td>
<td>(3.18)</td>
<td>(2.81)</td>
<td>(2.62)</td>
<td>(1.91)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. COMMUNITY EDUCATION</td>
<td>(3.44)</td>
<td>(3.65)</td>
<td>(3.86)</td>
<td>(3.34)</td>
<td>(3.41)</td>
<td>(2.41)</td>
<td>(1.88)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. METRO PARKS</td>
<td>(3.07)</td>
<td>(3.47)</td>
<td>(3.28)</td>
<td>(2.88)</td>
<td>(2.80)</td>
<td>(2.91)</td>
<td>(1.97)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. ATHLETICS</td>
<td>(3.62)</td>
<td>(3.58)</td>
<td>(3.49)</td>
<td>(3.40)</td>
<td>(3.12)</td>
<td>(2.47)</td>
<td>(1.90)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. MAINTENANCE</td>
<td>(2.97)</td>
<td>(4.40)</td>
<td>(3.72)</td>
<td>(3.57)</td>
<td>(3.45)</td>
<td>(2.51)</td>
<td>(1.91)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. SENIOR'S PROGRAMS</td>
<td>(2.67)</td>
<td>(4.40)</td>
<td>(3.72)</td>
<td>(3.57)</td>
<td>(3.45)</td>
<td>(2.51)</td>
<td>(1.91)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overall rank of means</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
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5 = STRONGLY AGREE  1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE

TABLE 2
 Equity Choice Matrix: Mean Scores and Rank For Park and Recreation Dept. Employees

<table>
<thead>
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<th>(means) rank</th>
<th>fees</th>
<th>where the fewest</th>
<th>equally</th>
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<td>(3.18)</td>
<td>(2.86)</td>
<td>(2.14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS</td>
<td>(2.69)</td>
<td>(3.76)</td>
<td>(3.55)</td>
<td>(3.17)</td>
<td>(2.97)</td>
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<td>(2.18)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. METRO PARKS</td>
<td>(3.20)</td>
<td>(3.56)</td>
<td>(3.66)</td>
<td>(3.31)</td>
<td>(3.09)</td>
<td>(3.12)</td>
<td>(2.18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ATHLETICS</td>
<td>(3.66)</td>
<td>(3.83)</td>
<td>(3.67)</td>
<td>(3.60)</td>
<td>(3.34)</td>
<td>(2.99)</td>
<td>(2.18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. MAINTENANCE</td>
<td>(3.07)</td>
<td>(4.03)</td>
<td>(3.50)</td>
<td>(3.20)</td>
<td>(2.99)</td>
<td>(2.27)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. SENIOR'S PROGRAMS</td>
<td>(2.91)</td>
<td>(4.29)</td>
<td>(3.66)</td>
<td>(3.92)</td>
<td>(3.61)</td>
<td>(2.95)</td>
<td>(2.26)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>overall rank of means</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 = STRONGLY AGREE  1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE

Equity model preferences were for population groups across services. For equity preference for neighborhood parks where fewest now exist (Table 1 and this leveling up equity standard, they are covering costs to determine the allocate reported for athletic programs were quotas voiced their greatest support for allocation model their first choice for esto; the City of Austin fee structure, neighborhood parks, but that athletes were efficient. Equity model preferences were for type which suggests that administrators, examine the equity implications of the basis. An equity model, that would be service may meet with strong objection offering.

Do Equity Model Preferences For Each of Sub-population Groups?

The data presented in Tables 1, 2 and employees and elected officials to
population groups across services. For example, residents' most preferred equity preference for neighborhood parks was to allocate this service to areas where fewest now exist (Table 1). Whereas residents most favored this leveling up equity standard, they strongly rejected the criterion of fees covering costs to determine the allocation of this service. The findings reported for athletic programs were quite different. In this instance, residents voiced their greatest support for fees covering costs and made this allocation model their first choice for athletic programs. These findings suggest that in the City of Austin fee policies should not be implemented for neighborhood parks, but that athletic programs should be self-sufficient.

Equity model preferences were found to differ according to service type which suggests that administrators, planners, and policy makers should examine the equity implications of their policies on a service-by-service basis. An equity model, that would be acceptable to most parties for one service may meet with strong objection when applied to a different service offering.

**Do Equity Model Preferences For Each of Seven Services Differ Between Sub-population Groups?**

The data presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3 show that residents, department employees and elected officials tended generally to have similar pat-
**TABLE 4**

*Cell By Cell Comparison Of Means For Each Respondent Group*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. POOLS</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. COMMUNITY EDUCATION</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. METRO PARKS</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ATHLETICS</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>*</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. MAINTENANCE</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. SENIOR'S PROGRAMS</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>**</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

N.S. = NOT SIGNIFICANT  
* = p > .05  
** = p > .01

proportion over the appropriateness of using norm (model 3). For four of the seven to be less supportive of equality than others indicate that agency personnel prefer to: which may be viewed as least controversial least demanding of judgement, whereas accept equity decisions that reflect their

Moderate levels of disagreement equity model 4 (where most used). Signifies three of the seven services. Two of them (neighborhood parks and metro parks) recreation professionals were significant resources to areas of most use than were public parks.

Support for the redistributive equity model 5, low income areas (model 5), was not significant differences were found to examine (Table 4). In each of the fifteen parks, employees were significantly of resources to low income areas than were contacts more positively, believing that politically expedient. The data also indicates the role of citizen advocacy showed to be even less supportive of citizen advocacy than residents. Advocates favor parks and recreation department employees who contact city councilmen.

The role of citizen advocacy showed between groups. For equity model 6, we see significant differences were found for all cases. Park and recreation department employees and city council members have similar opinions about fees, and those opinions do differ by service types.

The allocation norm most favored by the total sample was equity model 2, where fewest services now exist. This equity model showed relatively high levels of agreement among sub-population groups with unanimity of opinion for five of the seven services.

The summary data shown in Table 4 indicate that residents, park and recreation department employees and council members are not in agreement.
TABLE 4
n Of Means For Each Respondent Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>where</th>
<th>most</th>
<th>low</th>
<th>income</th>
<th>advocacy</th>
<th>low</th>
<th>cost</th>
<th>most</th>
<th>taxes</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>equally</td>
<td>used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>**</td>
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<tr>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>**</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>**</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
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<tr>
<td>**</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.S. = NOT SIGNIFICANT
* = p < .05
** = p < .01

However, a further examination of the data shows that statistically significant differences of opinion did occur between the groups among services. Differences cover operating costs, showed a high level of disagreement. Table 4 shows that for six of the seven equity model. This finding is notable since fees were often quite controversial. These data suggest council members have similar opinions about fees, but by service types.

The most favored by the total sample was equity model 6. This equity model showed relatively strong sub-population groups with unanimity of the seven services.

In Table 4 indicate that residents, park employees and council members are not in agreement over the appropriateness of using equality of allocation as an equity norm (model 3). For four of the seven services studied, residents tended to be less supportive of equality than department employees. This may indicate that agency personnel prefer to allocate resources using a criterion which may be viewed as least controversial or most easily administered and least demanding of judgement, whereas residents tend to be willing to accept equity decisions that reflect their differing needs and wants.

Moderate levels of disagreement were shown between groups for equity model 4 (where most used). Significant differences were found for three of the seven services. Two of those services were resource based (neighborhood parks and metro parks) and in both instances park and recreation professionals were significantly more supportive of allocating resources to areas of most use than were residents.

Support for the redistributive equity option, to allocate resources to low income areas (model 5), was not consistent across the three groups. Significant differences were found to exist for five of the seven services examined (Table 4). In each of the five cases, park and recreation department employees were significantly more supportive of redistribution of resources to low income areas than were residents. This finding suggests that Austin park and recreation professionals espouse a more compensatory human service philosophy of service distribution than do city residents.

The role of citizen advocacy showed the highest levels of disagreement between groups. For equity model 6, where citizens are most persistent, significant differences were found for all seven services examined. In each case, park and recreation department employees were more supportive of citizen advocacy than were residents. Agency employees may view citizen contacts more positively, believing that allocation based on demand is politically expedient. The data also indicated that council members tended to be even less supportive of citizen advocacy than were residents. This suggests that these elected officials did not like the idea of bowing to the demands of special interest groups.

The data for equity model 7, to allocate resources where the cost of providing the service is lowest, shows greater park and recreation employee support for this equity option than resident support. For five of the seven services studied, employees' scores were significantly higher than were those of their clientele. This suggests that agency employees may be more apt to make allocational decisions based upon the efficiency criterion of service cost than residents who appeared to hold to a more egalitarian view of equity.

The final equity model analyzed, where most taxes are paid, revealed some disagreement between residents, park and recreation employees and council members. For each service, residents indicated significantly greater disapproval of this equity option than agency personnel.

A trend appears to emerge in the responses of agency employees. These actors tend to be more supportive than residents of three equity models: advocacy, where the cost of service provision is lowest, and equally.
Although the advocacy and low cost equity models do not receive high scores or ranking, it may be argued that these equity choice preferences represent options which are likely to generate least controversy and meet least resistance. Providing services where cost is lowest is a defendable position for a bureaucrat to assume when asked to be accountable to his or her clientele and elected officials. Similarly, delivering services equally and being responsive to citizen demands may be viewed as politically expedient strategies.

The trend in citizen opinions is less clear. This group’s overall equity preference is strongly supportive of allocating resources where there are fewest. However, residents’ support for fees to cover the costs of athletics and their strong rejection of fees for neighborhood parks seems to indicate that their preferred equity model varies with the service studied.

City council members were more supportive of equity models 2 and 3, where there are the fewest services and equally in all areas of the city than the other two groups. These elected officials tended to reject citizen advocacy and allocation based upon taxes paid, two potentially politically controversial issues.

Implications

Because of the nature of the sample used, the particular findings of this study cannot be generalized to other communities. However, the study’s findings do suggest that there are likely to be substantial differences in equity concepts between decision making groups in any community. Further research in other communities will discover whether those differences are similar or different to those revealed in Austin.

Although it may be assumed by some that the most wealthy and/or politically active always receive the greatest proportion of public services, political scientists have tested and discredited that commonly held assumption. Lineberry (1977) provided evidence to reject what is termed the “underclass hypothesis”, which implies that those least able to influence service allocation decisions, e.g., the poor or disenfranchised, are systematically discriminated against by government agencies and receive fewer services than other groups. The overall findings of this study support Lineberry’s conclusions insofar as the dominant equity preference is for equality of service allocation.

Just as Lineberry described the differences in service distribution across a city as “unpatterned inequality” (that is, not systematic), a hypothesis suggested by the finding of this study is that “unpatterned equity attitudes” also occur across a city, with particular groups preferring different equity models.

An underlying premise of this research was that there should be some dialogue and hopefully consensus on the fairness or equity of service allocation by those participating in the public decision making process. Given that equity preferences were found to differ between resident groups, park and recreation department employees, a recommended that the equitability of services, policy and planning decisions are made by citizens and policy planners should first of equity should be used, and then “Why for delivering this type of service?”

Citizen participation in public decision making has been the subject of much scholarly work on public agency policy and procedures. Issues of equity and efficiency are critical in defining how an agency (1979; Mladenka, 1981 and Jones 1980) should be defined, and some inconsistency is present between residents of different neighborhoods and residents of the same neighborhood.

In response to the advocacy statement, public decision making should be allocated to areas where citizens are showed significantly less support than in large cities. This finding was surprising because individuals belonging to cite to recognize their ability to effectively influence decision making. Policies on citizen contact with the external environment (1978), Jones (1980), Nivola (1979) client contact behavior often dictates the use of services by residents, guidelines (decision rules) should be re-examined.

The attitudes of elected officials are not at a subjective or informal level. This research enables those attitudes to be compared to other groups. It is suggested that regularly. Data suitable for time series analyses are available to researchers in predicting policy changes on the opinions of interest groups in making decisions.

The conditions under which local government services differ widely. These conditions are decided by local taxpayers will direct public policy appropriate to one service in one different service in that city or the same service in different locations who adhere to a single model or generate conflict. Charging full cost for a service perceived as unfair as is offering all services in the city studied here recognized that there was the type of service being offered. Therefore, service should reflect those service characteristics.
ow cost equity models do not receive high argued that these equity choice preferences likely to generate least controversy and meet vices where cost is lowest is a defensible po- ume when asked to be accountable to his or als. Similarly, delivering services equally and mands may be viewed as politically expedient ions is less clear. This group’s overall equity tive of allocating resources where there are apport for fees to cover the costs of athletics ses for neighborhood parks seems to indicate model varies with the service studied. re more supportive of equity models 2 and services and equally in all areas of the city nese elected officials tended to more strongly location based upon taxes paid, two potentially

Implications

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The overall findings of this study support ar as the dominant equity preference is for d the differences in service distribution across ality” (that is, not systematic), a hypothesis is study is that “unpatterned equity attitudes” particular groups preferring different equity f this research was that there should be some umus on the fairness or equity of service al- in the public decision making process. Given bond to differ between resident groups, park and recreation department employees, and city council members, it is rec- ommended that the equitability of service allocation be examined before policy and planning decisions are made. Therefore, service allocation re- searchers and policy planners should first ask the question “Whose standard of equity should be used?”, and then “What is the appropriate equity model for delivering this type of service?”

Citizen participation in public decision making or resource allocation has been the subject of much scholarly work. The impact of citizen contacts on public agency policy and procedures is not uniform and differs across services and between agencies. However, the decision rules established by an agency are critical in defining how an agency responds to citizens (Nivola 1979, Mladenka, 1981 and Jones 1980). The data from this study suggest some inconsistency is present between attitudes held by agency personnel and residents toward the role of citizen contacts in directing resource allocation.

In response to the advocacy statement (model 4) “resources should be allocated to areas where citizens are most persistent”, Austin residents showed significantly less support than did park and recreation department employees. This finding was surprising since the citizen sample was comprised of individuals belonging to citizen groups who might be expected to recognize their ability to effectively influence public policy. This suggests that policies on citizen contacts with the agency should be reviewed. Mladenka (1978), Jones (1980), Nivola (1979) and others have confirmed that clientele contact behavior often dictates service allocation. Given this po- tential influence of residents and the receptivity to citizen demand shown by employees, guidelines (decision rules) for reacting to resident contacts should be re-examined.

The attitudes of elected officials are routinely assessed by administra- tors at a subjective or informal level. The more objective approach taken by this research enables those attitudes to be quantified and, hence, com- pared to other groups. It is suggested that such data should be collected regularly. Data suitable for time series analysis may, in the future, be valuable to researchers in predicting policy shifts and interpreting the effects of social changes on the opinions of actor groups in the public decision making arena.

The conditions under which local governments deliver recreation and park services differ widely. These conditions and the prevailing opinions of local taxpayers will direct public policy at the local level. The equity model appropriate to one service in one city may be inappropriate for a different service in that city or the same service in another city. Admin- istrators who adhere to a single model of service allocation will inevitably generate conflict. Charging full cost for all services is as likely to be widely perceived as unfair as is offering all services free of charge. The residents in the city studied here recognized that one variable in determining equity was the type of service being offered. That is, any discussion of equitable service should reflect those service characteristics which correspond to the
clientele's equity preferences. It is therefore recommended that agencies implement an Equity Assessment Process which would help clarify goals and objectives and ameliorate agency conflicts with publics. Planners recognize the need to operate under clearly stated goals, yet frequently have no such guidance in the equity area. Writing goal statements that recognize equity preferences of all those in the decision making process would be an important step in that direction. Examination of public beneficiaries and a broadening of knowledge about "who gets what" is likely to provide data whose interpretation will lead to improved service allocation decisions.

References


Ethnicity and Urban Recreation: Hispanics in Chicago

Ray Hutchison
Urban and Public Policy University of Wisconsin

Field observations of white, black, and Hispanic residents and visitors to parks and other public facilities in Chicago showed that distinct patterns of recreation behavior exist between these groups. Differences in recreational behavior patterns have been found not only in the types of activities engaged in, but also in the social and cultural differences between ethnic and racial groups. These differences reflect the advantage of an observation period that varies from one to six years.

KEYWORDS: Race, Ethnicity, Hispanics, Urban Parks

Leisure and recreation activities are: social organization, social activity, and subgroups and social life in the urban context and (Fidel, 1985). Differences in their neighborhoods and regional parks in Chicago were found not only in the types of activities engaged in, but also in the social and cultural differences between ethnic and racial groups. These differences reflect the advantage of an observation period that varies from one to six years.

The advantage of an observation period that varies from one to six years in the US population, indicates a pragm of the large numbers of Hispanics across Fidel, 1985).

Ray Hutchison is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. 2420 N. Nicolet Road. Study was funded in part by a research grant from the National Science Foundation. Dr. Kenneth Fidel (Defaul, 1984) and data collection; field staff for the project were: Hernandez, Dr. John Dwor (U.S. Forest Service), and anonymous reviewers for JLR prep of this research manuscript.

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