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## VALUES AND DECISION- MAKING: INTRODUCING THE PUBLIC SERVANT VALUES QUESTIONNAIRE TO RECREATION ADMINISTRATORS

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*Public service values and decision-making have been major sources of discourse and scholarship in the public administration discipline broadly, but have received little attention in the field of public recreation administration specifically. This paper investigates current literature on public service values and recommends the public service values approach as a tool to help recreation professionals make sense of and justify administrative decisions. The paper also demonstrates the utility of the public service values questionnaire by investigating the role public service values play in predicting choices made in a simulated recreation decision-making scenario. A sample of 1,608 individuals were asked to decide whether or not they would close a recreation center in a value-laden context. The findings suggested that the majority of individuals would not close the recreation center, given the specified criteria, and that values such as loyalty, advocacy, and rule of law influenced their decision. The authors recommend further study of the public service values approach as well as continued discussion of the role of values in public recreation administration settings.*

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Public administration, and thus public recreation management in the United States, is in a constant state of change (Morççöl, 2008). This continual evolution necessitates that recreation agencies and administrators adapt in order to fund and deliver programs and services in a way that meets the needs of an increasingly diverse constituency. For example, in the 1970's a global, political agenda materialized in the United States with the aim of remodeling government (Terry, 2005). Dubbed New Public Management (NPM) by its supporters and later the "hollow state" by its critics, this institutional philosophy promoted the adoption of private sector attitudes, policies, and practices in public administration settings (Hood, 1995; Haque, 2007). As a result of this attitudinal shift, public agencies and departments began to build cooperative partnerships with both not-for-profit and for-profit agencies, relying on new, non-tax based

funding streams. Other changes accompanied this shift in public sector values and behaviors. For example, management and quality improvement strategies were aligned with outcome-based, performance measurement approaches utilized in the private sector (Terry, 2005). Expectations for public managers changed, requiring higher accountability and more specialized skill sets. No public program, department, or discipline was left unaffected by this shift in values, least of all public recreation (More, 2005). Recreation administrators were confronted with a host of new and complex decisions and problems and few tools or frameworks to address them (King, 2014). While budget maximizing and rational choice models were proposed to guide decision makers, these theories were highly criticized as providing underdeveloped and unidimensional

support for decision-making (Moynihan, 2013).

The concept of public service values (PSVs) was introduced as an alternative decision-making model and assists public servants make sense of and justify their decision-making. PSVs are distinguishable from other values via their action orientation and concern for ethical, professional, humane, and democratic practices (Molina & McKeown, 2012). Inventories and lists designed to categorize and, on occasion, measure these PSVs have been developed over the years (Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007; Molina & McKeown, 2012; Schwartz et al., 2001). Additionally, a contemporary instrument, the Public Service Values Questionnaire (PSVQ) was recently developed, aimed at eliciting and evaluating a broader set of PSVs (Witesman & Walters, 2013). Public recreation research has largely neglected the use of PSVs and the PSV approach in decision analytics, despite the approach's acceptance and use in broader public administration scholarship. The aim of this paper is to: (1) introduce the PSVQ to recreation administrators; (2) recommend the instrument as a tool to illuminate the recreation administration decision-making process; and (3) demonstrate the utility of the PSVQ in recreation settings by reporting results from a test study where the PSVQ was employed to investigate the relationship between PSVs and recreation decision-making.

### NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT TRENDS IN PUBLIC RECREATION

As part of the NPM trend, public recreation departments transitioned towards fee-based programming and the privatization of recreation services (Hefetz & Warner, 2011; Jung & Bae, 2011; Jang & Kwon, 2014). Though originally focused on outsourcing maintenance or food and beverage services, the scope and nature of recreation privatization has increased in complexity (Mathur, 2009; LeSage, McMillan, & Hepburn, 2008) and now influences the entire public recreation decision-making process. Public recreation administrators find themselves making decisions regarding program outsourcing, membership and program fee increases, park access, private partnerships, and program or center elimination (Esprit &

Smith, 2011; Maher & Deller, 2007; Jimenez, 2013).

Financial ebb and flow independent of the transition to NPM, including the recession that occurred between fall 2007 and summer 2009, have also impacted public recreation funding and its administration (McCann, 2013). Though federal, state, and local governments often make difficult budget cuts when they experience decreased revenue, recreation departments and other services deemed non-essential or discretionary may experience more severe reductions in budgets, resulting in personnel loss and closures (King, 2014). Promoting the relative value of recreation programs and services has been critical within public administration.

Recognizing that recreation services may be undervalued when difficult decisions regarding local budget cuts have to be made, general consensus would suggest recreation programs experience the worst of these cuts; however, this is not always the case (Stroud Region Open Space and Recreation Commission, 2010). A number of questions are raised by the inconsistent manner in which budget cuts are implemented. Why do some recreation programs warrant closure while others do not? How are modifications or reductions in recreation services justified? What influences administrator decision-making when questions regarding cuts, closures, or privatization arise? These questions reflect decision-making scenarios in public recreation administration that present moral and economic dilemmas for professionals in the field. To support public recreation educators and professionals in their efforts to address these challenges, a variety of decision-making theories and criteria have been proposed.

#### DECISION-MAKING IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

While a complete review of decision-making scholarship is beyond the scope of this paper, a few noteworthy studies and frameworks are discussed. O'Fallon and Butterfield (2005) reviewed empirical studies conducted from 1996 to 2003 and highlighted a variety of factors that influenced decision-making, including: socio-cultural factors (e.g., age, gender, or nationality), organizational factors (e.g., industry type, business competitiveness, or organizational size), and moral reasoning and intensity. Their study introduced the role of morality-based values into the public decision-making sphere (see also Stazyk & Davis, 2015). Dane and Pratt (2007) proposed a theoretical model that distinguished between normative *rational*

and non-traditional *intuitive* decision-making strategies, where rational decision-making is logical and deliberate and intuitive decision-making is "affectively charged...rapid, non-conscious, and holistic" (p. 40). The researchers argued that the latter may be more appropriate in times of uncertainty or risk, though rational approaches predominate the public sphere. In the early 1970s a budget maximizing model was proposed consistent with rational choice theories (i.e., choices are made deliberately in consideration of alternatives and consequences). This model of decision-making posited, as its name implies, that the sole driver of decision-making was economic gain (Hughes, 2012; Sims, 2008). While this overly simplistic model has since been expounded upon, its basic tenets are still reflected in various decision-making models. Specifically, decision-making research suggests that individuals seek to *maximize* by choosing the best alternative or *satisfice* by choosing an alternative that exceeds some criterion or target (March, 1994, p. 18; see also Gang, 2009).

Witesman and Walters (2013) argued that values also influence decision-making, perhaps more so than any other mechanism or motivation. This belief was anchored to early studies linking values to ethical dilemmas. In one study, for example, the disparate values of relativism and idealism were investigated as predictors of ethical decision-making. Idealistic values were consistently positively correlated with ethical decision-making whereas relativistic values had a negative correlation (Singhapakdi, 1999). More (2002) suggested that public recreation decisions are likewise deeply embedded in the context of personal and public values. For example, policy decisions designed to deter park use by certain user groups (e.g., through permitting or prohibition of alcohol) were made because of an inherent discrepancy or difference in values between the targeted group and mainstream society.

#### PUBLIC SERVICE VALUES

Numerous value-based models have been used over the years in an effort to understand patron or user preferences (Hunt, Scott, & Richardson, 2003), while at the same time acknowledging the difficulty public recreation administrators face when making complex decisions (King, 2014). Gómez (2002), for instance, studied social and cultural values as predictors of recreation participation and found that the combination of cultural values and socio-economic status either facilitated or

constrained recreation participation for various ethnic and racial groups. Carothers, Vaske, and Donnelly (2001) examined how values influenced conflict in recreation settings. They specifically described how opposing values created conflict between hikers and bikers using a shared leisure space. Tanner, Freimund, Borrie, and Moisey (2008) used value models to understand and predict conservation attitudes, outdoor behaviors, and public parks use. While these studies have proven the utility of a values-based approach, none of them have used public values to predict or explain specific administrative decisions. In other words, prior use of value models has focused on how individual values impact individual-level participation in recreational services, whereas this study and approach explores how individual values may impact the decisions of public administrators who determine the fate and future of recreation services and their beneficiaries.

Public management researchers have taken a longstanding position that PSVs can, do, and should influence the attitudes and behavior of public servants (Witesman & Walters, 2013). In addition to guiding public servant behavior, these values distinguish or differentiate public servants from their private sector counterparts (Houston, 2006; Jos & Tompkins, 2004). For example, public servants are more likely than private sector managers to focus on people or environmental needs than on generating profits. An emerging body of empirical research indicates PSVs, at both the participant/constituent and administrator/manager level, strongly correlate with decision-making at those levels (More, 2002; Witesman & Walters, 2013). Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) defined *values* as "(a) concepts or beliefs, (b) about desirable end states or behaviors (c) that transcend specific situations, (d) guide selection or evaluation of behavior and events, and (e) are ordered by relative importance" (p. 551). PSVs are values that honor public interest and motivate public servants to act ethically, professionally, democratically, and humanely for the benefit of the public they serve (Molina & McKeown, 2012).

Based on prior definitions of PSVs, Witesman and Walters developed the PSVQ, which places values into a public service context and operationalizes (i.e., converts into measurable items for an empirical instrument) 37 values identified in the works of Van Wart (1998), Schwartz et al. (2001), and Jorgensen and Bozeman (2007) as relevant to public sector decision-making. Where earlier approaches emphasized values that motivate

individuals to enter the public sector (Crewson, 1997), the PSV approach considered how values influenced decision-making after a public sector position had been acquired. Additionally, the PSV approach theorized that the values that guide decision-making are hierarchically ordered such that in different situations some values are given greater weight or consideration than others (Witesman & Walters, 2013).

Witesman & Walters (2013) also incorporated the decision modeling approach proposed by Tetlock (1986) to identify how PSVs interact to support particular decisions in the public context. The value pluralism model suggested that “people are likely to think about an issue in integratively complex ways to the degree that the issue activates conflicting values that people perceive as: (1) important and (2) approximately equally important” (Tetlock, 1986, p. 819). Constructing value-based models of this kind better reflects the complexity and reality of public recreation decision-making. However, these models often require sacrificing one value at the expense of another — trade-off decisions that are personally and politically disagreeable and difficult to defend. The present study used the PSVQ in conjunction with a pluralistic public recreation decision scenario to determine whether PSVs predict specific recreation manager decisions and to identify which values may have a stronger influence in those decision-making processes.

Specifically, this study sought to determine whether relationships were present between the 37 predetermined public values identified by Witesman and Walters (2013) and a specific, recreation-based decision context: whether or not to close a public recreation center knowing a majority of citizens could not afford the private services offered as alternatives in the community. We hypothesized that PSVs would have a statistically significant relationship with the decision to close a recreation center when controlling for all other variables.

## METHODS

Data for this study were derived from a secondary source, gathered September 2012 from individuals living in the U.S. via an online survey hosted by Qualtrics panel services (i.e., an intermediary group that recruits and rewards survey respondents). A non-probability, quota based recruitment strategy was employed to ensure a sample was drawn matching the U.S. population distribution on demographic characteristics such as age, gender, race, and income

status. Initially, 2,316 respondents completed the survey, but the respondent pool was narrowed to those respondents who provided complete responses and for whom there was variation in responses on the value items according to best practices recommended by Osborne (2012). Data quality measures (“to ensure quality data, please select...”) were also employed and responses which did not meet the quality requirements (i.e., those that did not select the desired option, ‘5,’ on the specific item) were deleted. This examination of the dataset resulted in a sample size of 1,608 respondents, or roughly 69 percent of the original sample.

The sample identified primarily as male ( $n = 940$ , 58.4%) with an average age of 49.12 years ( $SD = 13.82$ , range = 18-80 years). Over half had some college (26.5%) or completed a bachelor's degree (26.7%).

The bulk of participants had an annual personal income below \$25,000 per year ( $n = 405$ , 25.3%) with the next largest group earning \$50,000 – \$74,999 ( $n = 341$ , 21.3%). The group was fairly homogenous in terms of race with 84% of respondents ( $n = 1,340$ ) reporting as Caucasian. The next largest group identified as African-American ( $n = 118$ , 7.4%). Politically, the group was 40.7% democrat leaning, 32.9% republican leaning, and 26.4% independent. Table 1 reports the demographic characteristics of the sample compared to the Current Population Survey (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013) proportions for gender, educational attainment, race, age, and income.

This study measured PSVs and decision-making using a three-part questionnaire: (1) decision preferences and respondent confidence in their

TABLE 1. Demographic Characteristics (N = 1,608)

	Sample	U.S. Population
Sex		
Male	58.4%	49.1%
Female	46.1%	50.9%
Education		
High school diploma or equivalent	19.4%	37.0%
Some college	26.5%	20.4%
Associate's degree	13.6%	11.8%
Bachelor's degree	26.7%	17.2%
Graduate degree	10.5%	13.6%
Race/Ethnicity		
White	84.0%	67.0%
Black	7.4%	12.2%
Other	7.6%	20.8%
Age		
18-24	4.3%	13.7%
25-34	14.4%	18.4%
35-54	41.0%	37.5%
55-64	27.3%	16.7%
65-80	12.6%	13.7%
Income		
Less than \$25,000	25.3%	45.5%*
\$25,000 - \$34,999	13.8%	13.1%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	16.6%	14.3%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	21.3%	13.5%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	10.7%	6.1%
\$100,000 or more	12.3%	7.5%
Political Stance		
Democratic leaning	40.7%	**
Independent	26.4%	**
Republican leaning	32.9%	**

Note. \* Population estimates included individuals age 15 and up while the raw sample included individuals age 18 and up. \*\* Population data unavailable.

decision, (2) 37-item PSVQ, and (3) demographic information.

The dependent variable, *decision preferences*, was measured in part one of the instrument via a decision scenario based on the item modeling work of Tetlock (1986). In this decision scenario respondents were asked to indicate a decision preference and then identify how confident they were in their decision based on the available information. This approach “allows for conflict between two potentially justifiable actions...and identifies implicit rationales that could justify each of the two opposing decisions within the scenario” (Witesman & Walters, 2013, p. 391). In this study, the following question was utilized in line with Tetlock’s (1986) specifications for design:

*Should a financially strapped city close its recreation center to save money even if many citizens cannot afford the private fitness facilities in the area?*

Respondents were given a dichotomous, yes/no, response option followed by a measure of how confident they were in that decision. Decision confidence was measured on a 7-point Likert scale where 1 was “not at all sure” and 7 was “very sure.” A new variable was computed by assigning -1 to “no” responses and +1 to “yes” responses and multiplying these numbers by the confidence scores, resulting in a 14-point scale ranging between -7 and 7.

Part two, the PSVQ section, begins with a prompt that helps situate the respondent in the public servant role and context. It reads:

*Each of the following statements indicate a value that is often associated with the role of a public servant. Imagine a public official who is guided by the value indicated in their role as a public employee. Please indicate how much that public servant is like you.*

Respondents are then asked to respond to questions about each value in the following gendered response format (see Table 2): *He/she believes that [value] is important. He/she believes that public servants should [operational definition of value].* To use service as an example, the question would be constructed in the following format: *He/she feels that service is important. He/she believes that government workers should strive to improve the lives of the public they serve.* Respondents indicated how closely this statement resembled themselves using a

7-point Likert scale where 1 is “not at all like me,” 7 is “exactly like me,” and 4 is a neutral opinion.

Finally, respondents were asked to report general demographic information including age, gender, ethnicity, income, education status, and political stance. Because the present study was exploratory in nature, and the primary goal was to introduce a new instrument in a specific context, groups that were too small, as in the case of the non-white demographic categories, were consolidated into one larger group. These demographic factors were included in regression models as control variables.

Pearson correlations were conducted to determine if a linear relationship existed between any of the PSVs and the decision to close a recreation center. Hierarchical linear or blocked regression of the PSVs regressed on decision preferences was conducted to determine relative impact of values on the decision to close a recreation center when accounting for all other variables (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2013). In order to remove or explain potential spurious relationships, control variables were entered into the first block, step one of the regression model. Values were added to the second block, step two of the regression model to determine the unique amount of variance in the decision to close a recreation center variable explained by public servant values.

## RESULTS

Pearson correlations were calculated to explore relationships between the 37 PSVs and decisions to close a recreation facility. Of those 37 PSVs, 16 correlated at a significant level ( $p \leq .05$ ) with the “likelihood of closing a public recreation center” (LCPRC) variable. Upon identification of 16 likely contributors to LCPRC, a linear regression was conducted. Five of the PSVs (regime loyalty, rule of law, advocacy, public interest, and social justice; see Table 2 for definitions) contributed significantly ( $p \leq .05$ ) and explained 9.6% of the variance within the model ( $F(5, 1604) = 34.063, p \leq .001$ ). With inclusion of the remaining 11 PSVs, the model accounted for 10.4% of the explained variability, but the F score was significantly weaker ( $F(16, 1593) = 11.546, p \leq .001$ ) so they were excluded from the model.

To further understand causal factors that may influence the closure of a recreation facility, a blocked regression was conducted with the five PSVs and demographic information of survey participants including age, race, education

level, political stance, gender, and income. Results indicated that the inclusion of this demographic information increased the explanatory power of the model by 5.1% to account for 12.4% of the explained variance ( $F(11, 1534) = 19.760, p \leq .001$ ; see Table 3).

This finding suggests that the inclusion of demographic information when accounting for reasoning behind recreation closure attitudes helps to better explain the total model and decision-making context. This result also indicates that public values were statistically significant predictors of LCRPC when controlling for other variables.

## DISCUSSION

This study investigated whether public values were meaningful predictors of a recreation-related decision by exploring how 37 PSVs established by Witesman and Walters (2013) related to responses to the following fictional scenario: Should a financially strapped city close its recreation center to save money even if many citizens cannot afford the private fitness facilities in the area? First, the authors found that a greater proportion (58%) of respondents said “no” they would not close the recreation center. This finding seems to contradict traditional assumptions regarding how recreation services are valued by the public and public officials (Fulton, 2012; Hayward, 2011; King, 2014). However, it should be noted that the framing of the decisions scenario may not reflect the unique and often complex decision contexts faced by public recreation administrators across the country.

Regardless of the stance taken, public values were a significant – albeit moderate – predictor of the proposed recreation center closure even when controlling for demographic variables including political preference. *Regime loyalty, social justice, advocacy, and public interest* correlated with the decision not to close a recreation center (described below as anti-closure values), while *rule of law* correlated with the decision to close a recreation center (described below as a pro-closure value).

*Regime loyalty*, as defined in this study, refers to agreement with the statement: “People who work for government should support the political system.” This value stems from a broader value set, *tradition* (Schwartz, 1992), which is characterized by “upholding customs derived from social institutions” (Witesman & Walters, 2013, p. 381). In this case, it appears that the connection between regime loyalty and anti-closure sentiment is

TABLE 2. Thirty-Seven Public Service Values

Value	Item
Accountability	Government should be accountable to society for its actions and the results it achieves
Administrative Structure	Government workers should act through proper channels of authority
Advocacy	People who work for government should promote the interests of society's least advantaged
Altruism	Government workers should serve others and put the needs of others before their own needs
Citizen Autonomy	Government should assure that individuals are free to pursue opportunity and happiness in their own way
Citizen Involvement	Government should ensure that the people affected by a public policy can influence how that policy is made and enacted
Compliance	Government workers should enforce the rules when others challenge them
Confidentiality	Civil servants should respect and protect all privileged information
Continuous Improvement	Government should always use the newest and best approaches in getting a job done
Customs	Government should uphold the traditional beliefs and practices of society
Efficiency	People who work for government should make good use of resources
Equal Treatment	Government workers should treat people the same regardless of individual circumstances
Fairness	Government should ensure that the acknowledged rights and privileges within a society are extended equally to all
Following Rules	Government workers should follow rules, laws, and procedures even when no one is watching
Government Effective	Government should have the capacity and power to implement its policies
Government work	Government employees should want to work for government
Impact	Government workers should make a positive difference in society
Impartiality	People who work for government should avoid preferential treatment of people or groups
Independence	People who work for government should think and act for themselves
Influence	Government workers should be able to affect organizational outcomes
Innovation	People who work for government should always look for new ways to do their jobs better
Leadership	People who work for government should play a principal role in their organizations
Learning	Government workers should always seek to improve their skills and abilities
Listening to Public	Government workers should seek and respond to the views of the public
National Security	Government would ensure that the country is safety from threats from within and without
Openness	Government workers should be open and public about the decisions they make and the work they do
Protection of Minorities	Government should consider and protect the rights of those who do not have the greatest voice in society
Public Interest	Government should contribute to the well-being of society
Regime dignity	Government workers should treat the legal and political institutions of government with respect
Regime Loyalty	People who work for government should support the political system
Responsiveness	People who work for government should respond promptly and attentively to request from the public
Rule of Law	Governments should enforce the laws adopted by society
Self-Motivation	Government workers should take the initiative in their work with minimal supervision
Service	Government workers should strive to improve the lives of the public they serve
Social Justice	Government workers should seek justice for everyone, even people they do not know
Sustainability	Current government action should continue to prove beneficial to society in the future
Transparency	Government workers should provide information to the public that is complete, clear, and easy to understand

rooted not in loyalty to a particular governing body, but rather to a belief about protecting the governing body's role and responsibility to serve its citizens. While the authors of the present study cannot presume to know how the question was interpreted by respondents, they can say that individuals who valued regime loyalty had a greater desire to maintain recreation services despite limited monetary resources.

*Social justice* represents the belief that government workers should seek justice for everyone, even people they do not know. It is derived from a broader value set, *universalism* and its subset *equity* (Schwartz, 1992), which is characterized

by “distributing social benefits without discrimination or favoritism” (Witesman & Walters, 2013, p. 380). Viewed in this light, the findings of this study would suggest that individuals interested in equity or equitable access may be more interested in ensuring that community members have access to needed recreation services. In other words, equity minded individuals perceive recreation as a social benefit – one that community members are entitled to enjoy.

*Advocacy* describes the belief that people who work for the government should promote the interest of society's least advantaged. Advocacy is a derivative of Jorgenson and Bozeman's (2007) value set, *benevolence*, which is characterized

by a desire to “promote the welfare of those with whom you have personal contact” (Witesman & Walters, 2013, p. 380). In this context advocacy may be understood as an individual's desire to ensure underprivileged community members have equal access to resources.

*Public interest* refers to one's belief that the government should contribute to the well-being of society. It originated within Jorgenson and Bozeman's (2007) value set, *universalism*, which denotes a desire to “promote the welfare of society as a whole” (Witesman & Walters, 2013, p. 380). Again, this value implies that recreation centers serve the general welfare and contribute to the overall wellbeing of the community and

**TABLE 3. Regression Analysis Summary for Demographic Variables and Public Service Values Predicting Support of Recreation Facility Closure**

Variable	B	SEB	β
Block 1 $R^2 = .073, p < .001$			
Age	.01	.01	.04
Education	.28	.10	.08*
Personal Income	.22	.09	.07*
Gender	1.15	.28	.10**
Political Stance	1.01	.16	.10*
Race	1.26	.37	.08**
Block 2 $R^2 = .124, p < .001$			
Age	.01	.01	.02
Education	.26	.09	.07*
Personal Income	.15	.08	.05
Gender	.70	.28	.06*
Political Stance	.49	.17	.08*
Race	1.20	.37	.08*
Regime Loyalty	-.15	.08	-.05*
Advocacy	-.42	.10	-.12**
Social Justice	-.36	.12	-.09*
Rule of Law	.54	.12	.12**
Public Interest	-.36	.13	-.08*

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .001$

individuals within the community and should remain open.

*Rule of law* is the belief that the government should enforce laws adopted by society. Encapsulated in the *tradition* value set (Schwartz, 1992), this value places needs of the institution or governing body above needs of the people it serves. Because recreation centers tend to function in a local government context, citizens may perceive funding for recreational services — particularly in a low-resource environment — as competing for funds allocated for “rule of law” oriented activities such as local law enforcement, emergency services, and administration of local regulations. In other words, individuals who particularly value the rule of law may also value recreation services but rank them lower in importance when compared to other government services.

As noted by Witesman and Walters (2013), the fact that other values were not correlated to the decision to close a recreation center does not mean they are not important to the participants in this study or that they would not be used in other decision contexts. What the absence of these other values does suggest is that when individuals make decisions about recreation funding or access to recreation services, *regime loyalty*, *social justice*, *advocacy*, *public interest*, and *rule of law* are the values they are most likely to use in influencing and justifying their decisions. As recreation administrators apply the PSV approach and employ the analytic tool it espouses, they may be able to open up a broader discussion about public values in

recreation decision-making and lend support to this emergent public sector movement.

#### LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Data analyzed in the present study were derived from a secondary source, which means the study was limited by the recruitment strategies used, methodology employed, and questions asked by the authors of the original dataset. This explains the use of a single recreation scenario and the narrow focus on recreation center closures in this study. That said, the intent of the present study was to introduce the PSVQ and the use of public servant values in the field of recreation administration broadly, not to analyze a specific recreation decision.

The contribution of public values as a predictor of the decision to close a recreation facility was moderate. However, the authors urge practitioners to use caution when employing the PSV questionnaire and approach in actual decision-making scenarios and to test the instrument in different recreation decision contexts. In other words, public recreation administrators should recognize that the decision scenario used in this study was deliberately limited to encourage a strong either-or stance and may not perfectly represent their unique situation and social, cultural, or geographic setting. Researchers might also explore what else contributes to decision-making in the context of recreation center closures and whether administrative pressure or other

factors overshadow PSVs and preferences.

An additional limitation of the study is that some of the PSVs may lend themselves to different interpretations. In the case of regime loyalty, it is possible that the phrase “political systems” may have meant something different to each of the respondents. Witesman and Walters (2013) concurred with this finding, suggesting that a few of the values may not be accurate portrayals of public sector values or may not be the best operationalization of those values. Future studies should consider reviewing and redefining these values or consider including other values that might have more relevance to the decision scenarios being studied. For example, a qualitative approach might elicit pertinent information about the unique value sets public recreation servants utilize and provide better ways to frame PSVQ items.

This study was also limited in that it represented individuals with internet access and may have excluded disadvantaged or less privileged individuals from contributing their value set perspectives. Furthermore, this methodological approach may have been a barrier for senior citizens, which is problematic considering this group represents a large portion of the voting population. Future studies should generate samples representative of the nation as a whole, incorporating groups who are most influenced by specific decision contexts.

While findings indicate there is a relationship between PSVs and the decision to close a recreation center, the authors cannot say with confidence that they are the strongest predictors of closure in this context. Future studies should continue to explore the social and political nuances from which PSVs are derived and recreation related decisions are made. Beyond providing a link between values and decision-making, the present study ought to inform a larger discussion of decision-making among public recreation professionals. Future studies might also test the PSVQ in other decision-making contexts where the use of PSVs may be more relevant or explicitly obvious. Such settings might include whether or not to privatize a public recreation service, whether or not to build a community center in a recreation deprived community, or whether or not to offer certain types of programs over others. Future researchers should follow the guidelines outlined by Witesman and Walters (2013) for constructing decision scenarios and consider collecting data from a more representative sample.

While this study's findings suggest that PSVs were a moderate predictor of a specific recreation related decision, they provide preliminary evidence toward justifying decision-making to external stakeholders and responding to constituency needs. This may facilitate the opening of "decision-making processes to public scrutiny and involvement" (Denhardt, Denhardt, & Blanc, 2013, p. 8). In this light, the PSVQ may serve as either an expert/novice bridge, where administrators are the authorities communicating to the decision-making neophytes (e.g., city councils, park personnel, and community members) or as an opportunity to elicit feedback and engage in community-based dialogue and deliberation. These results support universalism and equity based perspectives (Witesman & Walters, 2013) that suggest recreation is a contributor to well-being and may be viewed as an essential need rather than a discretionary service. When recreation administrators are called upon to defend what they do and "make the case," they can use empirically elicited public values alongside other measures of value such as programmatic success stories or evidence based programming.

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