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Financing Priorities in Local Governments: Where Do Park and Recreation Services Rank?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: This paper's two objectives were to examine the financial status of parks and recreation compared with 9 other "competitive" services delivered by local governments, and to identify any shifts that may have occurred in the past decade. Examining shifts in budget allocations among the 10 "competitor" sectors was perceived to be an accessible surrogate for identifying the most pressing issues facing public decision makers.

The data set was derived from local government entities in the United States for the period from 1989-1990 to 2002-2003. These data are collected by the Census Bureau from all 87,000 units of local government in years ending in "2" or "7." In the noncensus years, the data are collected from a survey of approximately 13,000 nonschool local governments, selected by a size-based sampling procedure.

The analyses revealed that only approximately one-fifth of the 140 (10 service areas by 14 years) annual change percentages exceeded 5%. When the analyses were undertaken on only operating budgets, even fewer annual change percentages of 5% or more were identified. As expected, capital budgets displayed substantially greater volatility.

Over the 14-year period of the analyses, real dollar budget allocations to parks and recreation increased by 63.2%, which was more than for any of the other 9 services. Despite the relatively large percentage gain over this period, parks and recreation services' share of total local government expenditures in 2002-2003 was only 2.4%. This ranked it eighth among the 10 service areas, with only corrections and libraries receiving a lower proportion of the budget.

A primary conclusion was that percentage allocations to service areas remained relatively stable over the 14-year period. The stability may be attributable to incremental budgeting procedures and the inflexibility of civil service regulations, both of which make it difficult to shift substantial resources among service areas. Nevertheless, by examining expenditure trends across service areas in their home municipalities, it seems likely that park and recreation agency managers could gain valuable insights into how to better position their services in the community.

KEYWORDS: Local government, parks and recreation, repositioning, service priorities, budgets

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Introduction

Acquiring additional resources for parks and recreation is a competitive process. It requires advocates to argue convincingly that using those resources for parks and recreation will contribute more to alleviating the problems/issues that constitute the prevailing political concerns of policy makers than if those resources were invested in other services (Crompton, 1993). Many decision makers, and the taxpayers they represent, are unaware of the potential of park and recreation services to address these issues. A growing body of research (cf. Crompton, 1999a, 1999b, 2004; Driver & Bruns, 1999) has indicated potential ways in which these services can alleviate an array of social, environmental, and economic issues in a community.

The analyses undertaken in this paper are intended to offer insights into the current position of parks and recreation as reflected in the budget allocations of local government decision makers, and the extent to which the field has been successful in recent years in acquiring a larger share of public resources. Kaczynski and Crompton (2004b) noted that "identifying a public park and recreation's competitors is a challenging undertaking. A majority of the agency's funding is likely to originate from the city's general fund. Thus, a park and recreation agency has to regard other public agencies . . . as its competitors" (pp. 5-6). The first objective of this paper is to examine the financial status of parks and recreation services compared with "competitor" services delivered by local governments in the United States. Second, shifts in that status that have occurred in the most recent 14-year period for which data are available are identified. Examining shifts in budget allocations of "competitor" agencies is perceived by the authors to be a surrogate for identifying the most pressing issues facing public decision makers.

At least three recent studies have undertaken analyses using principles and techniques that were similar to those used here. Jordan (2003) applied a principle termed Punctuated Equilibrium Theory to identify large budget and agenda shifts in six different service areas in 38 large U.S. cities (population 300,000 or greater) over a 27-year period from 1966 to 1992. The six functions examined were police, fire, sanitation, parks and recreation, highways, and public buildings. Budget "punctuations" were thought to signify important policy changes, and were defined as annual increases within the function that were greater than 35% or decreases that were greater than 25%. The analysis found that punctuations occurred for 1041, or 17%, of the 6156 (6 functions × 38 cities × 27 years) annual changes that were examined. Parks and recreation accounted for 214, or 21%, of the punctuations, although the specific years in which punctuations occurred were not reported. When examining all of the percentage annual changes (not just punctuations), Jordan reported that a slight majority (53.1%) of those for parks and recreation were budget increases. Overall, the three "allocational" services of fire, police, and sanitation, from which all members of the jurisdictions were suggested to benefit, experienced

significantly fewer punctuations than did the "nonallocational" services of parks and recreation, highways, and public buildings.

Using more recent data, Connolly and Smale (2001/2002) examined trends in revenue and expenditures within 19 Ontario, Canada, municipalities over the period 1988 to 1996. Their examination of expenditures did not include municipal agencies' outputs for capital projects. The service areas covered in their study comprised general government; protection; transportation; environment; health and social services; planning and development; and recreation and cultural services. The authors reported that in 1996, recreation and cultural services comprised approximately 10% of total municipal expenditures, and that this figure varied only minimally across cities of widely different populations (from 5,000 to 300,000). Expenditures for recreation and cultural services also were arguably the most stable when trends over the 9-year period were examined. Health and social services was the largest expenditure area of those examined (at 22% of the total), but both its variation across the sample of communities and its trend line over the study period were relatively volatile. Overall, recreation and cultural services ranked fifth out of the seven service areas in expenditures in 1996, ahead of only protection and planning and development. In examining all of the service areas, two of the authors' primary conclusions were that, "there is little empirical evidence to support the popular perception that municipal recreation services have been particularly targeted for cutbacks" (p. 230), and that "with the exception of transportation and health and social services, it is difficult to argue that there have been significant shifts in the financing of municipal services . . . . from 1988 to 1996" (p. 230).

The same data set used in this paper was used by Crompton and Kaczynski (2003) to examine trends in local government revenue and expenditures for park and recreation services in the United States from 1964-1965 to 1999-2000. They reported that parks and recreation accounted for approximately 2.0-2.5% of total (both capital and operating) local government expenditures, but cautioned that this percentage "may appear to be low . . . because the total expenditures of local governments include many local entities that do not deliver park and recreation services" (p. 133). They found that, during the prime tax revolt period starting in 1976-1977 and continuing through the early 1980s, park and recreation agencies' budgets, relative to those of all other services, did not decrease disproportionately. Surprisingly, the lowest parks and recreation-to-total expenditure ratios were observed during the late 1980s and 1990s, when there were substantial increases in expenditures for government services. This led the authors to suggest that

> In the broad context of the United States as a whole, park and recreation interests have been relatively successful in fending off disproportionate cuts in their budgets in difficult times, but have been less successful in securing proportionate increases in budgets when economic conditions improve. (p. 133)

In summary, the previous studies suggest that the budgets of local government services have remained relatively stable over the past two decades. However, although park and recreation agencies have generally held their own, the percentage of resources allocated to them still appears small in comparison with most other service areas. The previous study using U.S. data documented longitudinal trends in park and recreation expenditures without reference to comparisons with other service areas (Crompton & Kaczynski, 2003). This paper extends the previous work by analyzing expenditure data for nine other local government services in addition to parks and recreation. This provides a context within which to view the trends in parks and recreation and provides insights into repositioning and resource allocation strategies. Total expenditures are presented and they are subsequently disaggregated into capital and operating expenditures.

Methods

Data on local government expenditures for the years 1989-1990 to 2002-2003 were collected from the United States Census Bureau web site pertaining to State and Local Government Finances (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005b). The 2002-2003 data were the most recent available at the time of writing, and the initial year in the data set (1989-1990) coincides with the first year that disaggregated data on capital and operating expenditures were made available. The data were collected by the Census Bureau in two ways. First, a survey of all 87,000 local government jurisdictions is conducted every 5 years in census years ending in "2" and "7". Second, in noncensus years the data are derived from a survey of approximately 13,000 nonschool local governments, which are selected by a size-based sampling procedure (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005a).

Definitions of the data categories used in this study were provided by the Government Finance and Employment Classification Manual (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005a). The data analyzed here are confined to *local governments,* which comprise municipalities, counties, townships, special districts, and school district governments, with the latter category excluding "school systems that are dependent on a county, municipal, township, or state government to avoid double counting" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005a). The specific definitions are described in Figure 1.

Government expenditure data collected by the Census Bureau are classified into five primary categories: (1) intergovernmental expenditure, (2) direct general expenditure, (3) utility expenditure, (4) liquor store expenditure, and (5) insurance trust expenditure. Previous analyses by Crompton and Kaczynski (2003) and Crompton and McGregor (1994), which examined park and recreation's share of total government expenditures, aggregated all five categories to derive a total expenditure figure. In those studies, the emphasis was on documenting the total amount of public funds that were available and what percentage of them was allocated to park and recreation services. However, in this paper, only *direct general expenditure* data (excluding intergovernmental, utility, liquor store, and insur-

Figure 1
Definitions of Types of Local Governments

Government services are provided through a complex structure made up of numerous public bodies and agencies. The Census Bureau identified 87,504 governments during the 1997 Census of Governments. In addition to the Federal Government and the 50 state governments, the Bureau recognizes five basic types of local governments, as follows:

* County Governments (3,043), which exist in all states except Connecticut and Rhode Island and in the District of Columbia, are created to provide general government activities in specified geographic areas. They include entities called boroughs in Alaska, parishes in Louisiana, and counties in all other states.
* Municipal Governments (19,372), which are established to provide general government services for a specific population concentration in a defined area. They include cities, boroughs (except in Alaska), villages, and towns (except in the six New England states, Minnesota, New York, and Wisconsin). Composite city–county governments are treated as municipal governments for Census Bureau purposes.
* Township Governments (16,629), which are established to provide general government services for areas without regard to population concentrations. They include towns in the six New England states, Minnesota, New York, and Wisconsin, and townships in 11 other states.
* Special District Governments (34,683), which are established to provide only one or a limited number of designated functions and having sufficient administrative and fiscal autonomy to qualify as independent governments.
* School District Governments (13,726), which are created to provide public elementary, secondary, and/or higher education and having sufficient administrative and fiscal autonomy to qualify as independent governments. They exclude school systems that are "dependent" on a county, municipal, township, or state government.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2005). Government finance and employment classification manual. Retrieved from web site http://www.census.gov/govs/www/class.html

ance trust expenditures) were used, because these represent the aggregate commitment of local government spending that is assigned to specific public services. The other four categories are not disaggregated and distributed among particular service areas. Consequently, inclusion of these four generic categories of expenditures would not contribute to identifying the status of parks and recreation vis-à-vis the other services. However, if it were possible for the Census Bureau to make such allocations, it is unlikely that the conclusions drawn would be different, since these four categories constitute only 10-15% of total expenditures. Direct general expenditures, which account for approximately 85-90% of total government expenditures, are defined as "payments to employees, suppliers, contractors, beneficiaries, and other final recipients of government payment" that are specifically related to the government service areas described below, and include "expenditures for current operations, capital outlay, assistance and subsidies, interest on debt, and insurance benefits and repayments" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005a).

Figure 2 provides definitions of the 10 "competitive" local government service areas that were considered in this study: education; libraries; public

Figure 2
Descriptions of Government Service Categories

Service Category	Definition[1]
Education	Schools, colleges, and other educational institutions (e.g., for blind, deaf, and other handicapped individuals), and educational programs for adults, veterans, and other special classes.
Libraries	Establishment and provision of libraries for use by the general public and the technical and financial support of privately operated libraries.
Public welfare	Support of and assistance to needy persons contingent upon their need.
Hospitals	Financing, construction, aquisition, or maintenance of hospital facilities, provision of hospital care, and support of public or private hospitals.
Health	Outpatient health services, other than hospital care, including public health administration, research and education, nursing, treatment and immunization clinics, and other general health activities.
Police protection	Preservation of law and order; protection of persons and property from illegal acts; and the prevention, control, investigation, and reduction of crime.
Correction	Confinement and correction of adults and minors convicted of offenses against the law, and pardon, probation, and parole activities.
Fire protection	Prevention, avoidance, and suppression of fires and provision of ambulance, medical, rescue, or auxiliary services provided by fire protection agencies.
Housing and community development	Construction, operation, and support of housing and redevelopment projects and other activities to promote or aid public and private housing and community development.
Transportation	Aggregate of the functions of highways, air transportation, parking facilities, water transport and terminals, and transit.
Parks and recreation	Provision and support of recreational and cultural–scientific facilities maintained for the benefit of residents and visitors.

[1]Only brief definitions of each government service category are provided here. For more detailed descriptions, including examples and exclusions within each category, readers are encouraged to consult the *Government Finance and Employment Classification Manual* (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/govs/www/class.html)

welfare; hospitals and health; police protection; correction; fire protection; housing and community development; transportation; and parks and recreation. In aggregate, these 10 service areas account for approximately 78% of total local government direct general expenditures in any given year. (Of the remaining 22% aggregated under "other functions" in Tables 1 through 4, over 70% is classified as "other and unallocable" or "interest on general debt.")

The financial data collected for each year were reported in actual dollars. To facilitate longitudinal comparisons, the authors converted them into constant 2003 dollars. In previous analyses using this data set, Crompton and Kaczynski (2003) and Crompton and McGregor (1994) adjusted the actual dollars to 1990 and 1982 dollars, respectively, in part because those baseline years fell around the midpoints of the time periods that were examined in those studies. However, in this investigation, we decided that adjusting the data to 2003, the most recent year examined, would allow readers to better interpret the figures.

For data relating to total expenditures and noncapital (operating) expenditures, a price index for state and local government consumption and expenditures was used to convert actual dollars to adjusted dollars (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2005). For capital expenditures, a construction cost index was obtained from the *Engineering News-Record*, a publication of McGraw-Hill Construction (2005). The use of these indices facilitated comparisons of annual data on a longitudinal basis by establishing inflation-free trends. All subsequent discussion relates to adjusted dollars unless otherwise stated.

Results

Expenditures on local government services in the United States over the 14-year period are presented in Tables 1 through 3. In all three tables, each year's data are reported in four rows. The first row lists the actual expenditures allocated to each government service area (billions of dollars), whereas the second row outlines the percentage of total direct general expenditures accounted for by each service area. The third row presents the actual dollar amounts adjusted to equivalent 2003 dollars. Finally, the percentages in the fourth row represent the year-to-year change in these adjusted figures within each service area.

Annual Changes in Expenditures Within Service Areas

Examination of the annual change percentages in the latter rows for each year in Table 1 suggests that few substantial increases or decreases in total expenditures occur from one year to the next within any given service area. Indeed, approximately only one-fifth of the 140 (10 service areas by 14 years) annual change percentages exceeded 5%. Although several service areas experienced net gains of more than 5% in 1990-1991 and 1991-1992, only two service areas (hospitals and health, and housing and community development) realized even one such increase in any of the three recessionary years that followed. Only two service areas experienced annual gains of

Table 1
Total Direct General Expenditures by Service Area (billions)

		Total Direct General Exps	Education	Libraries	Public welfare	Hospitals & Health	Police protection	Correction	Fire protection	Housing & Com. Dev.	Transportation	Parks & Recreation	Other functions
1989-1990	Actual $	498.32	212.65	3.84	23.95	39.09	26.09	8.74	13.19	13.76	32.85	11.85	112.31
	% of total	100.00%	42.67%	0.77%	4.81%	7.84%	5.24%	1.75%	2.65%	2.76%	6.59%	2.38%	22.54%
2003	Adjusted $	698.84	298.22	5.39	33.59	54.82	36.59	12.26	18.50	19.30	46.07	16.62	157.50
	% change												
1990-1991	Actual $	536.28	228.83	4.16	26.85	42.61	27.99	9.55	13.80	14.89	35.07	13.19	119.34
	% of total	100.00%	42.67%	0.78%	5.01%	7.95%	5.22%	1.78%	2.57%	2.78%	6.54%	2.46%	22.25%
	Adjusted $	730.14	311.55	5.66	36.56	58.01	38.11	13.00	18.79	20.27	47.75	17.96	162.48
	% change	4.48%	4.47%	5.17%	8.84%	5.83%	4.15%	6.08%	1.57%	5.06%	3.64%	8.06%	3.16%
1991-1992	Actual $	562.62	239.90	4.22	29.25	46.47	30.57	10.30	14.36	15.85	35.82	13.04	122.84
	% of total	100.00%	42.64%	0.75%	5.20%	8.26%	5.43%	1.83%	2.55%	2.82%	6.37%	2.32%	21.83%
	Adjusted $	750.75	320.12	5.63	39.03	62.01	40.79	13.74	19.16	21.15	47.80	17.40	163.92
	% change	2.82%	2.75%	-0.58%	6.77%	6.89%	7.04%	5.71%	1.99%	4.33%	0.10%	-3.11%	0.88%
1992-1993	Actual $	593.99	251.92	4.39	30.02	50.25	31.45	10.54	15.37	16.98	37.20	13.50	132.37
	% of total	100.00%	42.41%	0.74%	5.05%	8.46%	5.29%	1.77%	2.59%	2.86%	6.26%	2.27%	22.28%
	Adjusted $	773.63	328.11	5.72	39.10	65.45	40.96	13.73	20.02	22.12	48.45	17.58	172.40
	% change	3.05%	2.50%	1.54%	0.18%	5.55%	0.42%	-0.12%	4.47%	4.56%	1.37%	1.05%	5.18%
1993-1994	Actual $	616.14	258.39	4.68	31.59	53.43	33.32	11.00	16.12	17.85	39.85	13.88	136.03
	% of total	100.00%	41.94%	0.76%	5.13%	8.67%	5.41%	1.79%	2.62%	2.90%	6.47%	2.25%	22.08%
	Adjusted $	782.03	327.96	5.94	40.10	67.82	42.29	13.96	20.46	22.66	50.58	17.62	172.66
	% change	1.09%	-0.05%	3.89%	2.55%	3.62%	3.25%	1.70%	2.21%	2.44%	4.39%	0.19%	0.15%
1994-1995	Actual $	653.66	276.76	5.00	32.69	56.46	35.32	11.77	17.01	19.42	40.56	14.92	143.75
	% of total	100.00%	42.34%	0.76%	5.00%	8.64%	5.40%	1.80%	2.60%	2.97%	6.21%	2.28%	21.99%
	Adjusted $	807.86	342.05	6.18	40.40	69.78	43.65	14.55	21.02	24.00	50.13	18.44	177.66
	% change	3.30%	4.30%	4.03%	0.76%	2.89%	3.22%	4.19%	2.75%	5.94%	-0.89%	4.67%	2.90%
1995-1996	Actual $	686.05	292.29	5.44	32.80	59.57	38.18	12.22	17.71	20.30	42.42	16.07	149.05
	% of total	100.00%	42.60%	0.79%	4.78%	8.68%	5.57%	1.78%	2.58%	2.96%	6.18%	2.34%	21.73%
	Adjusted $	829.64	353.47	6.58	39.67	72.04	46.17	14.78	21.42	24.55	51.30	19.43	180.25
	% change	2.70%	3.34%	6.46%	-1.82%	3.24%	5.77%	1.59%	1.87%	2.28%	2.33%	5.39%	1.46%
1996-1997	Actual $	723.60	307.43	5.99	32.51	58.91	40.95	12.83	19.41	20.80	45.64	17.31	161.82
	% of total	100.00%	42.49%	0.83%	4.49%	8.14%	5.66%	1.77%	2.68%	2.87%	6.31%	2.39%	22.36%
	Adjusted $	858.73	364.84	7.11	38.58	69.91	48.60	15.23	23.03	24.68	54.16	20.54	192.04
	% change	3.51%	3.22%	8.06%	-2.73%	-2.95%	5.25%	3.03%	7.55%	0.55%	5.58%	5.71%	6.54%
1997-1998	Actual $	765.70	331.80	6.26	32.52	62.41	43.31	13.80	20.27	22.28	48.05	18.47	166.53

Table continues

Table 1 (continued)
Total Direct General Expenditures by Service Area (billions)

	% change	4.09%	6.16%	2.80%	-1.61%	4.21%	4.03%	5.80%	2.72%	5.36%	3.56%	4.96%	1.23%
1998-1999	**Actual $**	813.99	357.07	6.52	32.95	64.97	45.56	14.83	21.26	22.85	51.94	19.57	176.47
	% of total	100.00%	43.87%	0.80%	4.05%	7.98%	5.60%	1.82%	2.61%	2.81%	6.38%	2.40%	21.68%
	Adjusted $	923.05	404.91	7.39	37.36	73.68	51.66	16.82	24.11	25.91	58.90	22.19	200.11
	% change	3.27%	4.54%	1.18%	-1.57%	1.13%	2.19%	4.39%	1.89%	-0.37%	5.01%	2.93%	2.94%
1999-2000	**Actual $**	865.11	383.28	6.82	34.67	67.81	48.22	15.77	23.10	23.43	54.88	20.99	186.14
	% of total	100.00%	44.30%	0.79%	4.01%	7.84%	5.57%	1.82%	2.67%	2.71%	6.34%	2.43%	21.52%
	Adjusted $	938.51	415.80	7.40	37.61	73.56	52.31	17.11	25.06	25.42	59.54	22.77	201.93
	% change	1.68%	2.69%	0.07%	0.66%	-0.15%	1.25%	1.73%	3.95%	-1.90%	1.08%	2.61%	0.91%
2000-2001	**Actual $**	926.79	411.22	7.40	39.96	72.26	50.72	16.56	24.97	24.18	61.33	23.39	194.80
	% of total	100.00%	44.37%	0.80%	4.31%	7.80%	5.47%	1.79%	2.69%	2.61%	6.62%	2.52%	21.02%
	Adjusted $	977.40	433.67	7.80	42.14	76.21	53.49	17.46	26.33	25.50	64.68	24.67	205.44
	% change	4.14%	4.30%	5.48%	12.04%	3.59%	2.25%	2.08%	5.08%	0.32%	8.64%	8.33%	1.73%
2001-2002	**Actual $**	986.37	432.54	7.84	39.69	79.55	55.08	18.22	25.98	27.83	63.26	25.14	211.24
	% of total	100.00%	43.85%	0.79%	4.02%	8.06%	5.58%	1.85%	2.63%	2.82%	6.41%	2.55%	21.42%
	Adjusted $	1,016.04	445.55	8.08	40.88	81.94	56.74	18.77	26.76	28.67	65.16	25.90	217.59
	% change	3.95%	2.74%	3.48%	-2.99%	7.53%	6.07%	7.47%	1.63%	12.42%	0.75%	4.98%	5.92%
2002-2003	**Actual $**	1035.74	450.65	8.50	41.36	86.50	57.50	18.50	27.85	30.67	66.91	27.13	220.17
	% of total	100.00%	43.51%	0.82%	3.99%	8.35%	5.55%	1.79%	2.69%	2.96%	6.46%	2.62%	21.26%
	Adjusted $	1035.74	450.65	8.50	41.36	86.50	57.50	18.50	27.85	30.67	66.91	27.13	220.17
	% change	1.94%	1.14%	5.25%	1.16%	5.56%	1.35%	-1.43%	4.07%	6.99%	2.68%	4.76%	1.18%

more than 10%—public welfare in 2000-2001 (12.04%), and housing and community development in 2001-2002 (12.42%). However, in many of the prior years, the budgets of both of these areas increased only negligibly or were cut, so these increases appear to be at least partially compensatory. Park and recreation agencies experienced their largest gains in 1990-1991 (8.06%) and 2000-2001 (8.33%).

Similar tables were constructed to independently analyze trends in capital and operating expenditure allocations. Even fewer year-to-year increases of greater than 5% were observed in the different service areas' operating budgets (Table 2) than were observed when total expenditures were examined. Parks and recreation's largest operating expenditure increase of 6.75% occurred in 2001-2002.

As expected, capital budgets were substantially more volatile (Table 3). Almost every service area experienced successive years in which there was a greater than 10% increase followed by a greater than 10% decrease (or vice versa). However, the overall effects of this volatility were relatively small because capital budgets typically accounted for 5-15% of the total expenditures within most areas. Three exceptions to this ratio were housing and community development and transportation, where capital expenditures often accounted for up to 30-40% of total expenditures, and parks and recreation, where approximately one-quarter of the funds are designated for capital projects in a typical year.

Table 4 reports the cumulative increase in total expenditures (in adjusted dollars) within each service area relative to the baseline year (1989-1990). For example, in the 5 years between 1989-1990 and 1994-1995, health-related expenditures rose by 27.29%, whereas those for parks and recreation grew by only 10.96%. Over the entire 14-year period, however, the growth in parks and recreation expenditures was 63.25%, which exceeded the level of growth for any of the other service areas examined. The growth in budgets for education (51.11%), libraries (57.84%), police protection (57.15%), and housing and community development (58.94%) were similar to that for parks and recreation, while the growth in public welfare (24.99%) and, to a lesser extent, transportation (45.24%) was substantially lower than that for the other government service areas.

Percentage of Total Expenditures by Service Area

When interpreting the percentage-of-total figures reported in the second row of each year in Table 1, the reader is reminded that not all local government entities included in the Census Bureau's sample deliver park and recreation services. If the total expenditures figure were derived from only those governments that did offer park and recreation services, then the percentages in Table 1 for this field (2.2-2.6%) would be much higher. Nevertheless, the percentage-of-total figures shown in Table 1 reflect the allocations to each service area and, by inference, the priority decision makers placed on funding those service areas.

Table 2
Noncapital (Operating) Expenditures by Service Area (billions)

		Total Direct General Exps	Education	Libraries	Public welfare	Hospitals & Health	Police protection	Correction	Fire protection	Housing & Com. Dev.	Transpor-tation	Parks & Recreation	Other functions
1989-1990	Actual $	434.74	193.91	3.32	23.69	36.77	24.93	7.33	12.08	9.88	19.75	8.57	94.51
	% of total	100.0%	44.6%	0.8%	5.4%	8.5%	5.7%	1.7%	2.8%	2.3%	4.5%	2.0%	21.7%
2003	Adjusted $	609.68	271.94	4.66	33.22	51.57	34.96	10.28	16.94	13.86	27.70	12.02	132.54
	% change												
1990-1991	Actual $	467.08	208.46	3.52	26.62	40.15	26.79	8.06	12.81	10.59	20.86	9.26	99.96
	% of total	100.0%	44.6%	0.8%	5.7%	8.6%	5.7%	1.7%	2.7%	2.3%	4.5%	2.0%	21.4%
	Adjusted $	635.93	283.82	4.79	36.24	54.66	36.47	10.97	17.44	14.42	28.40	12.61	136.09
	% change	4.3%	4.4%	2.9%	9.1%	6.0%	4.3%	6.8%	3.0%	4.1%	2.5%	4.9%	2.7%
1991-1992	Actual $	493.62	218.02	3.62	29.04	43.71	29.38	8.68	13.35	11.38	21.42	9.79	105.23
	% of total	100.0%	44.2%	0.7%	5.9%	8.9%	6.0%	1.8%	2.7%	2.3%	4.3%	2.0%	21.3%
	Adjusted $	658.68	290.92	4.83	38.75	58.33	39.20	11.58	17.81	15.19	28.58	13.06	140.42
	% change	3.6%	2.5%	0.8%	6.9%	6.7%	7.5%	5.5%	2.1%	5.3%	0.6%	3.6%	3.2%
1992-1993	Actual $	522.36	229.43	3.84	29.82	46.98	30.26	9.25	14.41	12.26	22.63	10.34	113.14
	% of total	100.0%	43.9%	0.7%	5.7%	9.0%	5.8%	1.8%	2.8%	2.3%	4.3%	2.0%	21.7%
	Adjusted $	680.34	298.82	5.00	38.84	61.19	39.41	12.05	18.77	15.97	29.47	13.47	147.36
	% change	3.3%	2.7%	3.5%	0.2%	4.9%	0.5%	4.0%	5.4%	5.2%	3.1%	3.1%	4.9%
1993-1994	Actual $	547.59	237.97	4.09	31.38	50.65	32.08	9.88	15.21	13.98	24.20	10.65	117.50
	% of total	100.0%	43.5%	0.7%	5.7%	9.2%	5.9%	1.8%	2.8%	2.6%	4.4%	1.9%	21.5%
	Adjusted $	695.03	302.04	5.19	39.83	64.29	40.72	12.54	19.31	17.74	30.72	13.52	149.14
	% change	2.2%	1.1%	3.8%	2.5%	5.1%	3.3%	4.1%	2.9%	11.1%	4.2%	0.4%	1.2%
1994-1995	Actual $	576.85	251.09	4.38	32.45	53.98	33.85	10.70	15.92	15.08	25.18	11.48	122.74
	% of total	100.0%	43.5%	0.8%	5.6%	9.4%	5.9%	1.9%	2.8%	2.6%	4.4%	2.0%	21.3%
	Adjusted $	712.93	310.32	5.41	40.11	66.71	41.84	13.22	19.68	18.64	31.12	14.19	151.69
	% change	2.6%	2.7%	4.3%	0.7%	3.8%	2.7%	5.5%	1.9%	5.0%	1.3%	5.0%	1.7%
1995-1996	Actual $	602.22	262.43	4.73	32.53	56.81	36.32	11.23	16.50	15.86	26.53	11.91	127.37
	% of total	100.0%	43.6%	0.8%	5.4%	9.4%	6.0%	1.9%	2.7%	2.6%	4.4%	2.0%	21.2%
	Adjusted $	728.26	317.36	5.72	39.34	68.70	43.92	13.58	19.95	19.18	32.08	14.40	154.03
	% change	2.2%	2.3%	5.7%	-1.9%	3.0%	5.0%	2.7%	1.4%	2.9%	3.1%	1.5%	1.5%
1996-1997	Actual $	627.93	274.27	5.17	32.24	56.10	39.01	12.02	17.89	15.54	27.70	12.67	135.32
	% of total	100.0%	43.7%	0.8%	5.1%	8.9%	6.2%	1.9%	2.8%	2.5%	4.4%	2.0%	21.6%
	Adjusted $	745.19	325.49	6.14	38.26	66.58	46.29	14.26	21.23	18.44	32.87	15.04	160.59
	% change	2.3%	2.6%	7.3%	-2.7%	-3.1%	5.4%	5.0%	6.4%	-3.8%	2.5%	4.4%	4.3%

Table continues

Table 2 (continued)
Noncapital (Operating) Expenditures by Service Area (billions)

1997-1998	**Actual $**	665.87	294.44	5.44	32.22	58.99	41.26	12.63	18.69	16.94	29.17	13.61	142.48
	% of total	100.0%	44.2%	0.8%	4.8%	8.9%	6.2%	1.9%	2.8%	2.5%	4.4%	2.0%	21.4%
	Adjusted $	777.29	343.71	6.35	37.61	68.86	48.16	14.74	21.82	19.77	34.05	15.89	166.32
	% change	4.3%	5.6%	3.5%	-1.7%	3.4%	4.0%	3.4%	2.8%	7.2%	3.6%	5.7%	3.6%
1998-1999	**Actual $**	702.85	314.95	5.70	32.61	61.55	43.41	13.54	19.83	17.44	30.35	14.11	149.36
	% of total	100.0%	44.8%	0.8%	4.6%	8.8%	6.2%	1.9%	2.8%	2.5%	4.3%	2.0%	21.3%
	Adjusted $	797.02	357.15	6.46	36.98	69.80	49.23	15.35	22.49	19.78	34.42	16.00	169.37
	% change	2.5%	3.9%	1.8%	-1.7%	1.4%	2.2%	4.1%	3.1%	0.0%	1.1%	0.7%	1.8%
1999-2000	**Actual $**	744.90	336.39	6.07	34.29	64.54	46.06	14.50	21.13	18.11	32.42	15.12	156.27
	% of total	100.0%	45.2%	0.8%	4.6%	8.7%	6.2%	1.9%	2.8%	2.4%	4.4%	2.0%	21.0%
	Adjusted $	808.10	364.93	6.59	37.20	70.02	49.97	15.73	22.92	19.65	35.17	16.40	169.53
	% change	1.4%	2.2%	1.9%	0.6%	0.3%	1.5%	2.4%	1.9%	-0.7%	2.2%	2.5%	0.1%
2000-2001	**Actual $**	796.33	361.04	6.56	39.61	69.03	48.64	15.35	23.13	18.89	34.03	16.04	164.01
	% of total	100.0%	45.3%	0.8%	5.0%	8.7%	6.1%	1.9%	2.9%	2.4%	4.3%	2.0%	20.6%
	Adjusted $	839.81	380.75	6.92	41.77	72.80	51.30	16.19	24.39	19.92	35.89	16.92	172.97
	% change	3.9%	4.3%	5.1%	12.3%	4.0%	2.7%	2.9%	6.4%	1.4%	2.0%	3.1%	2.0%
2001-2002	**Actual $**	844.16	377.60	6.84	39.23	75.65	52.68	16.80	23.97	21.47	36.66	17.53	175.73
	% of total	100.00%	44.73%	0.81%	4.65%	8.96%	6.24%	1.99%	2.84%	2.54%	4.34%	2.08%	20.82%
	Adjusted $	869.55	388.96	7.05	40.41	77.93	54.26	17.31	24.69	22.12	37.76	18.06	181.02
	% change	3.54%	2.15%	1.84%	-3.26%	7.04%	5.79%	6.90%	1.22%	11.02%	5.22%	6.75%	4.65%
2002-2003	**Actual $**	891.94	397.56	7.17	41.01	82.27	55.31	17.31	25.53	23.78	39.01	19.00	183.99
	% of total	100.00%	44.57%	0.80%	4.60%	9.22%	6.20%	1.94%	2.86%	2.67%	4.37%	2.13%	20.63%
	Adjusted $	891.94	397.56	7.17	41.01	82.27	55.31	17.31	25.53	23.78	39.01	19.00	183.99
	% change	2.57%	2.21%	1.76%	1.48%	5.58%	1.93%	0.03%	3.40%	7.52%	3.30%	5.22%	1.64%

Table 3
Capital Expenditures by Service Area (billions)

		Total Direct General Exps	Education	Libraries	Public welfare	Hospitals & Health	Police protection	Correction	Fire protection	Housing & Com. Dev.	Transportation	Parks & Recreation	Other functions
1989-1990	Actual $	63.58	18.74	0.52	0.26	2.32	1.16	1.41	1.11	3.88	13.10	3.28	17.80
	% of total	100.0%	29.5%	0.8%	0.4%	3.6%	1.8%	2.2%	1.7%	6.1%	20.6%	5.2%	28.0%
2003	Adjusted $	90.72	26.74	0.74	0.37	3.31	1.66	2.01	1.58	5.54	18.69	4.68	25.40
	% change												
1990-1991	Actual $	69.20	20.37	0.64	0.23	2.46	1.20	1.49	0.99	4.30	14.21	3.93	19.38
	% of total	100.0%	29.4%	0.9%	0.3%	3.6%	1.7%	2.2%	1.4%	6.2%	20.5%	5.7%	28.0%
	Adjusted $	96.64	28.45	0.89	0.32	3.44	1.68	2.08	1.38	6.00	19.84	5.49	27.06
	% change	6.5%	6.4%	20.5%	-13.4%	3.8%	1.2%	3.4%	-12.7%	8.5%	6.2%	17.3%	6.6%
1991-1992	Actual $	69.00	21.88	0.60	0.21	2.76	1.19	1.62	1.01	4.47	14.40	3.25	17.61
	% of total	100.0%	31.7%	0.9%	0.3%	4.0%	1.7%	2.3%	1.5%	6.5%	20.9%	4.7%	25.5%
	Adjusted $	93.46	29.64	0.81	0.28	3.74	1.61	2.19	1.37	6.05	19.50	4.40	23.85
	% change	-3.3%	4.2%	-9.1%	-11.4%	8.8%	-3.8%	5.5%	-1.0%	0.8%	-1.7%	-19.8%	-11.9%
1992-1993	Actual $	71.63	22.49	0.55	0.20	3.27	1.19	1.29	0.96	4.72	14.57	3.16	19.23
	% of total	100.0%	31.4%	0.8%	0.3%	4.6%	1.7%	1.8%	1.3%	6.6%	20.3%	4.4%	26.8%
	Adjusted $	92.83	29.15	0.71	0.26	4.24	1.54	1.67	1.24	6.12	18.88	4.10	24.92
	% change	-0.7%	-1.7%	-12.3%	-8.9%	13.4%	-4.3%	-23.8%	-9.1%	1.0%	-3.2%	-7.0%	4.5%
1993-1994	Actual $	68.55	20.42	0.59	0.21	2.78	1.24	1.12	0.91	3.87	15.65	3.23	18.53
	% of total	100.0%	29.8%	0.9%	0.3%	4.1%	1.8%	1.6%	1.3%	5.6%	22.8%	4.7%	27.0%
	Adjusted $	85.59	25.49	0.74	0.26	3.47	1.55	1.40	1.14	4.83	19.54	4.03	23.14
	% change	-7.8%	-12.5%	3.3%	1.2%	-18.1%	0.4%	-16.4%	-8.7%	-21.0%	3.5%	-1.5%	-7.2%
1994-1995	Actual $	76.81	25.67	0.62	0.24	2.48	1.47	1.07	1.09	4.34	15.38	3.44	21.01
	% of total	100.0%	33.4%	0.8%	0.3%	3.2%	1.9%	1.4%	1.4%	5.7%	20.0%	4.5%	27.4%
	Adjusted $	94.79	31.68	0.77	0.30	3.06	1.81	1.32	1.35	5.36	18.98	4.25	25.93
	% change	10.8%	24.3%	3.9%	13.0%	-11.8%	17.2%	-5.6%	18.4%	10.9%	-2.9%	5.3%	12.1%
1995-1996	Actual $	83.83	29.86	0.71	0.27	2.76	1.86	0.99	1.21	4.44	15.89	4.16	21.68
	% of total	100.0%	35.6%	0.8%	0.3%	3.3%	2.2%	1.2%	1.4%	5.3%	19.0%	5.0%	25.9%
	Adjusted $	100.72	35.87	0.85	0.32	3.32	2.23	1.19	1.45	5.33	19.09	5.00	26.05
	% change	6.2%	13.2%	11.5%	9.5%	8.3%	23.2%	-9.9%	8.1%	-0.4%	0.6%	17.7%	0.5%
1996-1997	Actual $	95.67	33.16	0.82	0.27	2.81	1.94	0.81	1.52	5.26	17.94	4.64	26.50
	% of total	100.0%	34.7%	0.9%	0.3%	2.9%	2.0%	0.8%	1.6%	5.5%	18.8%	4.9%	27.7%
	Adjusted $	110.88	38.43	0.95	0.31	3.26	2.25	0.94	1.76	6.10	20.79	5.38	30.71

Table continues

Table 3 (continued)
Capital Expenditures by Service Area (billions)

1997-1998	**Actual $**	99.83	37.36	0.82	0.30	3.42	2.05	1.17	1.58	5.34	18.88	4.86	24.05
	% of total	100.0%	37.4%	0.8%	0.3%	3.4%	2.1%	1.2%	1.6%	5.3%	18.9%	4.9%	24.1%
	Adjusted $	113.86	42.61	0.94	0.34	3.90	2.34	1.33	1.80	6.09	21.53	5.54	27.43
	% change	2.7%	10.9%	-1.6%	9.3%	19.8%	4.0%	42.2%	2.3%	-0.1%	3.6%	3.1%	-10.7%
1998-1999	**Actual $**	111.14	42.12	0.82	0.34	3.42	2.15	1.29	1.43	5.41	21.59	5.46	27.11
	% of total	100.0%	37.9%	0.7%	0.3%	3.1%	1.9%	1.2%	1.3%	4.9%	19.4%	4.9%	24.4%
	Adjusted $	123.85	46.94	0.91	0.38	3.81	2.40	1.44	1.59	6.03	24.06	6.08	30.21
	% change	8.8%	10.2%	-2.3%	10.7%	-2.3%	2.5%	7.7%	-11.6%	-1.0%	11.7%	9.8%	10.1%
1999-2000	**Actual $**	120.21	46.89	0.75	0.38	3.27	2.16	1.27	1.97	5.32	22.46	5.87	29.87
	% of total	100.0%	39.0%	0.6%	0.3%	2.7%	1.8%	1.1%	1.6%	4.4%	18.7%	4.9%	24.8%
	Adjusted $	130.47	50.89	0.81	0.41	3.55	2.34	1.38	2.14	5.77	24.38	6.37	32.42
	% change	5.3%	8.4%	-10.9%	8.9%	-6.9%	-2.2%	-4.1%	34.2%	-4.2%	1.3%	4.7%	7.3%
2000-01	**Actual $**	130.46	50.18	0.84	0.35	3.23	2.08	1.21	1.84	5.29	27.3	7.35	30.79
	% of total	100.0%	38.5%	0.6%	0.3%	2.5%	1.6%	0.9%	1.4%	4.1%	20.9%	5.6%	23.6%
	Adjusted $	139.07	53.49	0.90	0.37	3.44	2.22	1.29	1.96	5.64	29.10	7.84	32.82
	% change	6.6%	5.1%	10.0%	-9.5%	-3.0%	-5.4%	-6.4%	-8.3%	-2.3%	19.4%	23.0%	1.2%
2001-2002	**Actual $**	142.21	54.94	1.00	0.46	3.90	2.40	1.42	2.01	6.36	26.60	7.61	35.51
	% of total	100.00%	38.63%	0.70%	0.32%	2.74%	1.69%	1.00%	1.41%	4.47%	18.70%	5.35%	24.97%
	Adjusted $	146.86	56.74	1.03	0.48	4.03	2.48	1.47	2.08	6.57	27.47	7.86	36.67
	% change	5.61%	6.07%	15.33%	27.33%	16.98%	11.78%	13.69%	5.83%	16.48%	-5.60%	0.31%	11.73%
2002-2003	**Actual $**	143.80	53.09	1.33	0.35	4.23	2.19	1.19	2.32	6.89	27.90	8.13	36.18
	% of total	100.00%	36.92%	0.92%	0.24%	2.94%	1.52%	0.83%	1.61%	4.79%	19.40%	5.65%	25.16%
	Adjusted $	143.80	53.09	1.33	0.35	4.23	2.19	1.19	2.32	6.89	27.90	8.13	36.18
	% change	-2.09%	-6.43%	28.78%	-26.32%	5.02%	-11.64%	-18.85%	11.76%	4.90%	1.56%	3.45%	-1.34%

Table 4
Cumulative Percentage Increase in Total Direct General Expenditures by Service Area

	Total Direct General Exps	Education	Libraries	Public welfare	Hospitals & Health	Police protection	Correction	Fire protection	Housing & Com. Dev.	Transportation	Parks & Recreation	Other functions
1989-1990	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1990-1991	4.48	4.47	5.17	8.84	5.83	4.15	6.08	1.57	5.06	3.64	8.06	3.16
1991-1992	7.43	7.34	4.57	16.21	13.11	11.49	12.13	3.59	9.60	3.75	4.71	4.07
1992-1993	10.70	10.02	6.17	16.41	19.39	11.95	12.00	8.22	14.61	5.17	5.80	9.46
1993-1994	11.90	9.97	10.30	19.38	23.71	15.59	13.91	10.61	17.41	9.79	6.01	9.62
1994-1995	15.60	14.70	14.75	20.29	27.29	19.31	18.68	13.65	24.38	8.81	10.96	12.80
1995-1996	18.72	18.53	22.16	18.10	31.41	26.19	20.57	15.78	27.22	11.35	16.94	14.44
1996-1997	22.88	22.34	32.00	14.87	27.53	32.82	24.22	24.53	27.92	17.57	23.61	21.93
1997-1998	27.90	29.88	35.70	13.02	32.90	38.18	31.43	27.92	34.78	21.75	29.74	23.42
1998-1999	32.08	35.78	37.29	11.25	34.40	41.20	37.20	30.33	34.28	27.85	33.54	27.05
1999-2000	34.30	39.43	37.39	11.98	34.19	42.97	39.58	35.48	31.72	29.23	37.02	28.21
2000-2001	39.86	45.42	44.92	25.47	39.01	46.19	42.48	42.36	32.15	40.40	48.43	30.43
2001-2002	45.39	49.40	49.96	21.72	49.48	55.07	53.12	44.68	48.56	41.45	55.83	38.15
2002-2003	48.21	51.11	57.84	23.14	57.79	57.15	50.94	50.56	58.94	45.24	63.25	39.79

A primary conclusion emerging from these data is that the percentage-of-total expenditures accounted for by each service area remained remarkably stable over the 14-year period studied. This stability was similarly reflected when capital and operating expenditures were examined separately. In comparing the 10 service areas, total expenditures for education exceeded the combined total expenditures for all 9 of the other specific service areas shown in Table 1. Parks and recreation's share of the total (approximately 2.4%) was less than all of the other service areas except libraries (0.8%) and correction (1.8%), and was similar to the proportion assigned to fire protection and housing and community development. Total expenditures for transportation, health, and crime-related services (police and correction combined) were each two-and-a-half to three times greater than the expenditures for parks and recreation.

Discussion

One of the key findings of this study is the immutability of the proportionate allocations of the expenditure data. Both the annual change in expenditures within service areas, as well as the percentage of total expenditures accounted for by each service area, demonstrated a strong degree of stability over the entire study period. These trends appear to somewhat contradict the punctuations found by Jordan (2003) in her analysis, which was focused on a smaller sample of large cities.

The lack of volatility can likely be attributed to two main factors. The first is a reliance on incremental budgeting, whereby decision makers use the previous year's budget as the starting point for future allocations. The tendency is to approve the previous year's budget, often accompanied by a small percentage increase for inflation or expansion or a decrease to facilitate tax cuts (Crompton, 1999a). Incremental budgeting is attractive to elected officials because of its simplicity and because it reduces the annual burden of making difficult decisions about which services deserve major funding increases or decreases and which do not. However, a primary consequence of this process is that new programs whose costs would result in the customary percentage change being exceeded often do not make it into the new budget, and that obsolete programs may not receive the scrutiny needed to terminate them (Crompton, 1999a).

A second factor producing consistency in the data over time is the civil service regulations that are ubiquitous in government. For a majority of the public service areas examined, the data show that operating expenses comprise over 80% of total expenditures. A closer look at the operating expenditure data revealed that employee salaries and benefits are the primary expenditures for most government agencies. Civil service regulations governing these personnel, especially in unionized environments, place stringent limitations on a municipality's prerogative to hire and terminate employees, and thus to shift resources among service areas. Consequently, the major expenditure for government agencies tends to remain relatively stable from one year to the next. For example, Crompton

and Kaczynski (2003) reported that, over the first 11 of the 14 years examined in this study, the contingent of full-time employees within local park and recreation agencies grew from 144,000 to 153,000, or by only 6%.

The analyses showed that funding for parks and recreation comprised only 2.2-2.6% of total expenditures annually, and was lower than that for all other local government service areas except correction and libraries. Although the education, police, health, and transportation departments, for example, are likely to continue to receive priority in funding, it is the outcomes provided by these agencies, rather than the agencies themselves, that the public supports with their tax dollars. Outcomes such as crime protection, health, and transportation are generally deemed to be public goods from which the entire community benefits, whereas parks and recreation are perceived by many to be private or merit services that primarily benefit only those who use them. However, research has suggested that parks and recreation can contribute to many of the outcomes that are generally associated with other public agencies (Crompton, 1999a). To gain a greater share of total available resources, park and recreation agencies have to reposition their services as essential contributors to the principal public concerns in a community (Crompton, 2000; Kaczynski & Crompton, 2004a, 2004b). For example, if citizens' health is a growing concern, as evidenced by public surveys and increased appropriations to health-related agencies, a park and recreation agency can use the strategies of real, associative, psychological, and competitive repositioning (Crompton, 2000) to show how its services or amenities can make a significant impact on this issue. This process of changing stakeholders' perceptions of the agency's importance is likely to take a decade or more to achieve, but periodic monitoring of budgets similar to that undertaken in this study can suggest the degree of progress being made.

Indeed, some progress may be occurring. Over the 14-year period, funding for parks and recreation increased by a larger percentage than for any other service area. It may be postulated that improved documentation and communication of the benefits of park and recreation amenities over the past 15 years (Driver, Brown & Peterson, 1991; Driver & Bruns, 1999; Godbey, Graefe, & James, 1992) may have contributed to the field's ability to gain ground at the budget table. A recent study showed how repositioning using the benefits approach could substantially increase the amount of tax dollars citizens were willing to allocate to park and recreation services (Kaczynski, Havitz, & McCarville, 2005). However, further studies are needed that directly link the efforts of the benefits movement to the procurement of funding from traditional (i.e., government) and nontraditional (e.g., sponsorships) sources. In the meantime, concerns related to a lack of finances are likely to continue to dominate managers' agendas (Crompton, 1999a). Increased public demands, rising operating costs (especially in the area of utilities), and cyclical funding of capital projects all suggest that renewed efforts to secure additional resources will remain at the top of advocates' lists of concerns.

The analyses reported here identify both the growth rates and current financial status of park and recreation's "competitors." Similar analyses can be undertaken by individual agencies at the local level. Such data offer guidance as to which other services are likely to be most efficient for a park and recreation department to target as part of its competitive repositioning strategy. Whenever resources are allocated to one service rather than another, an opportunity cost is associated with that decision. This cost consists of the benefits that would have accrued from investing those resources in alternative service options. Hence, in this context, other public agencies, such as the police, health, transportation, or economic development departments, are viewed as competitors. Many of them have much larger budgets that dwarf those available to parks and recreation, and successful repositioning is likely to offer agencies access to these large pools of funds. Competitive repositioning means altering stakeholders' beliefs about what other public service agencies do, so elected officials recognize that resources allocated to them would yield a superior contribution to alleviating a given community concern if they were invested in particular park and recreation services.

Competitive repositioning may be conceptualized as "depositioning" another agency since it is challenging the legitimacy or authenticity of that agency's positioning claims and trying to demote them. An irony of this strategy is that if it is successful, then it is likely that associative repositioning will follow since addressing the given problem will now be perceived as requiring a broader approach in which park and recreation's contributions complement those of the other agency. Thus, the park and recreation agency will be required to associate, or partner, with the agency from which resources have been reassigned. Consequently, competitive repositioning has to be undertaken with caution, sensitivity, and subtlety to avoid a backlash of resentment from those in the other agency. For this reason, challenging the positioning claims of others is usually undertaken by advocates from outside the park and recreation agency, so the personal chemistry and relationships of managers in the two agencies is not poisoned.

The analyses in this study were conducted on national data using an aggregate yearly total for local government entities that was compiled by the Census Bureau. Inevitably, this aggregation obscures variations in the extent to which stability in expenditures occurs within individual jurisdictions. Similarly, the relative priority afforded to service areas is likely to differ markedly across jurisdictions (Gray, 1999). For example, Jacoby and Schneider (2001) used a spatial proximity model to distill the 1992 spending of the 50 state governments across 15 service areas (including most of the government functions examined here). They concluded that, "in principle, states *could* devote equal resources to combinations of 'particularized' benefits [including—as categorized by the authors—transportation, health care, and welfare] and collective goods [housing and community development, parks and recreation, police and law enforce-

ment, highways, and education]. In practice, however, they do not. Instead, states that spend more money on one of these policy categories invariably spend less on the other" (p. 563). Local government officials must similarly make complex policy decisions in allocating municipal resources. By examining expenditure trends across service areas in their home municipalities, it would seem that park and recreation agency managers could gain valuable insights into how to identify potential sources of additional resource allocations and develop strategies to better position their services in the community.

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