

## **A Revised Conceptualization of Marketing in the Context of Public Leisure Services**

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This study evaluates the legitimacy of the premises underlying the prevailing conceptualization of public leisure services marketing. A critical theory approach was used, involving investigative research, negative case analysis, and theoretical triangulation. The investigative research revealed three main premises underpinning the prevailing conceptualization: an open-system model of formal organizations, voluntary exchange, and self-interest motivation. The negative case analysis identified three alternate premises: closed-system and contingency-choice models of organizations; redistribution and reciprocity exchange; and alternate motivations. A triangulation of the prevailing and alternative premises suggested a revised conceptualization of public leisure services marketing.

**KEYWORDS:** *Public leisure services marketing, critical theory, investigative research, negative case analysis, triangulation*

### **Introduction**

Conventionally, marketing has been viewed as being two things (Crompton & Lamb, 1986). First, a philosophy which states that the social and economic justification for an organization's existence is the satisfaction of clientele wants. Second, the set of activities used to implement that philosophy. This contemporary understanding of marketing had been widely embraced by the business sector by the end of the 1970s. This sector's criteria for evaluating marketing actions were efficiency (the cost of service) and effectiveness (the impact on clienteles).

Interest in marketing among those in public leisure services first emerged at the end of the 1970s in North America. It was stimulated primarily by the tax revolt movement which forced changes in the traditional ways in which leisure programs were financed and operated (Crompton, 1999). The efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery became a central political issue. To address it, many leisure services administrators looked to the business sector for inspiration, were appraised of marketing's

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role in that context, and sought to implement marketing principles and practices in the fundamentally different operating environment of the public sector.

Twenty years later, evidence suggests that these efforts have not been widely successful. A wide gap appears to exist between the principles of marketing developed in the literature and its professional practice in the field (Johnson Tew, Havitz & McCarville, 1999). Further, this implementation gap has been accompanied by, and may be partially attributable to, articulate skepticism by some scholars who challenge the appropriateness of marketing in the context of public leisure services. They argue that embracing marketing has resulted in focusing efforts on increasing revenue and improving efficiency, and that this has led to a distortion of public leisure agency objectives, abuse of the ethic of social service, and inappropriate commercialization (Dustin & Goodale, 1997; Godbey, 1991; Goodale, 1985; Schultz, McAvoy & Dustin, 1988).

Proponents argue that marketing and a social service ethic are compatible and that marketing is not synonymous with commercialism (Havitz, 1988; Howard & Crompton, 1980; O'Sullivan, 1991; Torkildson, 1991). They admonish skeptics that: "The performance of a government or social service agency is measured against three criteria: equity, effectiveness and efficiency . . . in prioritizing performance indicators, primary concern should be given to equity, then to effectiveness, and finally to efficiency" (Crompton & Lamb, 1986, p. 168). However, few opponents of marketing, be they academics or professionals, fully acknowledge the recognized primacy of the equity criterion advocated by marketing proponents.

Although marketing has been widely recognized as a central function of business organizations, it remains controversial among public leisure service scholars and has been implemented by relatively few agencies. The controversy that persists in the public leisure services field reflects that which has been aroused in a host of other fields in which the role of marketing has been discussed, including nutrition education (Vanden Heede & Pelican, 1995); macromarketing (Monieson, 1988); public administration (Allison, 1992; Murray, 1975; Rainey, Backoff & Levine, 1976); health education and promotion (Buchanan, Reddy & Hossain, 1994; Hastings & Haywood, 1991; Leather & Hastings 1987); public management (Joyner, 1970; O'Fairchellaigh, Graham & Warburton, 1991; Walsh, 1994); public relations (Ehling, White & Grunig, 1992); nonprofit management (Capon & Mauser, 1982; Octen, 1983); and the arts (Mokwa, Dawson & Prieve 1980). The consistent and persistent controversy across a wide spectrum of fields suggests that the attempted transition from the private for-profit to the public sector has resembled efforts to force the proverbial square peg into a round hole. Recognition of the failure leads to the question, *why has the adoption not taken root?*

One potential reason is that the basic premises on which a seamless transition depended may have been faulty. Hence, the purpose of this study was to critically appraise the premises which undergird the contemporary

conceptualization of marketing in the context of public leisure services. If alternate viable premises were revealed, then it is likely their adoption would yield alternate conceptualizations and a revised definition of marketing which may be more palatable to academic skeptics and offer more pragmatic guidance for effective implementation to professionals.

### Methods

Critical theory was used to better understand how the prevailing conceptualization of marketing was developed, including its historical context, and to develop alternate interpretations. Although the use of this approach in the leisure and marketing fields has been sparse (Monieson, 1988; Wish, Dholakia & Rose, 1982), it appeared to be useful for addressing the goals of this study because it provided a framework for revealing, analyzing, criticizing, rejecting, and modifying premises underlying the prevailing conceptualization of marketing (Comstock, 1997; Fay, 1987; Harvey, 1990; Morrow & Brown, 1994). Critical theory is designed to reveal the meanings, values and motives of social actors; to disclose contradictions caused by biased interpretations of key meanings (Comstock, 1997); and to locate and interpret social phenomena in specific historical contexts. It recognizes that explanations of social phenomena (thesis) often are subjective so there are likely also to be alternative explanations (antithesis), and that integrating the original and alternatives can sometimes lead to a superior explanation (synthesis).

There are three major thrusts in a critical theory inquiry. The first thrust relates to the task of finding out "what is essentially going on." The second concern is to find out why this approach, and any contradictions, anomalies or myths associated with it, has "historically been the case." Finally, there is a focus on identifying and analyzing the structures that have contributed to perpetuating the approach and any contradictions and to answer the question "what structures reproduce this state of affairs" (Harvey, 1990, p. 209).

The optimum reporting format for critical research has been termed by Harvey (1990) as "a story with a plot" (p. 221). The report typically presents the central question that is being addressed: the core arguments in skeleton form appear throughout the study but are gradually supported by data as the study proceeds; evidence is presented in the form of analogies, references to commonly known and observed facts, citations of previously published work, and in some cases original empirical data collected from key informants (Etzioni, 1988). Harvey (1990) emphasized that critical social research is "an imaginative and creative process" that "cannot be summed up in a procedural recipe" (p. 102).

The critical theory inquiry used three analytical and evaluation techniques: investigative research, negative case analysis, and theoretical triangulation (Douglas, 1976; Kidder, 1981; Patton, 1990). The *investigative research* was comprised of three steps. First, through a literature review the authors responsible for developing the initial conceptualization of public sector marketing were identified and professional biographies provided by their uni-

versity departments on the Internet were reviewed. Second, the social science disciplines and concepts used by these authors as the premises for developing their conceptualization of public sector marketing were identified. Finally, major assumptions underlying the prevailing conceptualization of public sector marketing were crystallized.

The *negative case analysis* evaluated the integrity of the premises underlying the prevailing conceptualization of leisure services marketing by assessing them against the logic of alternate explanations. The negative case analysis included a search for information that disconfirmed the legitimacy of the accepted premises, and offered alternative premises or *rival hypotheses*.

*Theoretical triangulation* involved validating conclusions by using multiple observers, theories, methods and data sources in order to overcome biases that may arise from using a single method, observer, theory, or data source (Patton, 1990). A matrix was developed which triangulated the prevailing and alternative premises.

A summary of the protocol used in the study is provided in Table 1. The table reports that some empirical procedures (peer debriefing, in-depth interviews, presentations, discussions) were also included to supplement the non-empirical procedures which are the subject of this paper. Results of the empirical procedures can be found elsewhere (Novatorov & Crompton, 2001).

### *Results of the Investigative Research*

The principles of investigative social research were espoused by Douglas (1976). They emerged in response to the perceived limitations of quantitative analysis and the assumptions that research was a cooperative endeavor. Douglas pointed out that there were occasions when social science research had to be undertaken in milieus characterized by misinformation, evasion, lies, fronts, taken-for-granted meanings, problematic meanings, and self-deceptions. The work of social scientists in these environments Douglas believed was analogous to that of detectives, investigative journalists, judges, and prosecutors.

Levine (1974) conceptualized the investigative approach as an adversary model:

By an adversary model, I mean that we are dealing with a situation in which there are claims and counterclaims, and arguments and counter arguments, each side advanced by an advocate who attempts to make the best possible case for his position. The scientific community, in the form of an editor, a referee, or a program committee, acts as a judge does in a preliminary hearing, deciding whether there is a sufficient case made in the particular study to take it to trial before the scientific community (p. 669).

Douglas's (1976) principles of investigative research were operationalized in this study by a five step process. First the views of the original authors who contributed to development of the concept of public sector marketing were identified through a literature review. Second, these authors' affiliations

*TABLE 1*  
*Protocol Adopted in the Study*

Objectives	1. To identify the reasons and concerns of those public administrators and marketing scholars who do not accept the usefulness of marketing in the public sector (negativists).	2. To deconstruct, comprehend, interpret, and critically appraise the current conceptualization of public sector marketing from the viewpoint of negativists identified in step 1.	3. To reconstruct, redefine, reinterpret, and reoperationalize the current controversial conceptualization of public sector marketing into a new conceptualization in the context of park and recreation services.
Research Questions	What are the major concerns and reasons for non-acceptance of the public sector marketing concept among reluctant public administrators and marketing scholars?	What are the assumptions, conceptualizations and disciplinary perspectives underlying the concept?	Can a superior conceptualization be developed which is likely to be acceptable to a large proportion of public park and recreation administrators?
Analytic and Data Collection Techniques	Non-empirical procedures: Investigative Research.	Non-empirical procedures: Investigative Research & Negative Case Analysis	Non-empirical procedures: Theoretical Triangulation. Empirical procedures: Peer debriefing, In-depth Interviews. Presentations, Discussions.
Sources of Evidence	Studies and works published in the Park and Recreation, Public administration, and Marketing literatures.	Marketing textbooks and studies; studies published in the social science literature. The Internet, WWW.	Pool of concepts found during investigative research and negative case analysis. Peer, scholars, practitioners, experts.

and their professional biographies were analyzed. Third, social science disciplines that influenced the development of public sector marketing were identified. Fourth, concepts borrowed by marketers from the social science disciplines identified in step three were reviewed and analyzed. Fifth, the original meanings of concepts identified in step four were identified; compared with their interpretation when they were introduced into the marketing literature; and discrepancies were reported.

Four primary findings emerged from the investigative research-procedures. First, the prevailing conceptualization of public leisure services marketing was strongly influenced by studies published in the general marketing literature in the United States by authors from the social exchange

school of thought in marketing who were associated with Northwestern University. Second, the backgrounds of these authors were rooted in the traditions of the Chicago school of thought in the social sciences. These two findings revealed the early conceptual and disciplinary influences which were central to development of the concept of public sector marketing. A third finding of the investigative research was that conceptualization of public leisure services marketing first originated in Europe in the United Kingdom in the late 1960s, and in the United States during the late 1970s. Fourth, the prevailing conceptualization of public leisure services marketing is based on three major premises: (a) an open-system model of formal organizations, (b) the exchange paradigm, and (c) self-interest motivation. These findings are discussed in the following sub-sections.

### *Conceptual and Disciplinary Influences*

The investigative research found that emergence of the conceptualization of public leisure services marketing was influenced by three movements in the marketing field. They were: (i) a broadening of the scope of traditional marketing, which had previously been limited to commercial products (Kotler & Levy, 1969; Zaltman & Sternthal, 1975); (ii) introduction of the idea of generic and social concepts of marketing (Kotler, 1972; Kotler & Zaltman, 1971); and (iii) acceptance of the marketing-as-exchange paradigm (Bagozzi, 1975).

Universities' home pages on the world wide web listed the biographies and affiliations of marketing scholars who introduced the notion of applying marketing to nonprofit organizations. A review of them indicated that the most prominent advocates (Kotler, Bagozzi, Levy and Zaltman) were faculty members of the Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University. Their conceptualization and championing of marketing principles based on voluntary exchange into non-business contexts in the 1970s and 1980s, "destined them to be labeled as the most controversial school of thought in the history of marketing" (Sheth, Gardner & Garrett, 1988, p. 26). However, while their ideas initially were widely perceived to be radical and controversial, subsequently they have become ubiquitous and now represent mainstream thinking both in business schools and in non-business fields that have embraced marketing.

Further investigative research suggested that the philosophical and methodological roots of these prominent advocates of the social exchange school of marketing were derived from the Chicago school of thought in economics. Three of them (Kotler, Zaltman, and Levy) were trained at different times at the University of Chicago. The academic traditions of the Chicago school occupy a special niche in social science. The school promotes the neoclassical, libertarian, or laissez-faire economic paradigm whose most prominent and influential advocate in the decades of the 1960s, 70s and 80s was probably Milton Friedman. Chicago school members are characterized as "those who would marketize most of the public sector and who see gov-

ernment as the problem, not the solution, to most economic ills" (Lindeen, 1994, p. 24). The school advocates decentralization, deregulation, privatization, and unlimited individual choice as preferred policy in the search for social prosperity. It argues that limiting individual choice, regulation, and centralizing power and decision-making in government institutions, has political and economic shortcomings. These include lack of responsiveness towards clientele and political institutions, ineffectiveness, poor decisions, lack of coordination, delay, unfair procedures, price-fixing, subsidies and cross-subsidies that create inefficiencies, limiting competition, restricting choice, retarding the evolution of technology, and acting as a drag on productivity (Smith, 1995).

In the leisure services field, overtones of the Chicago school philosophy can be found in the suggestions to decentralize governments' functions and shift "power and authority *away from* city government and into the hands of other groups" (Belshaw, 1976, p. 93). These ideas were implemented through manifestations of the tax revolt, such as California's Proposition 13 and Massachusetts' Proposition 2½, which had the effect of significantly reducing government resource allocations for public leisure services.

#### *The Emergence of Marketing in the Context of Public Leisure Services*

Much of the early theoretical and conceptual foundations of public leisure marketing in Europe stemmed from graduate theses undertaken by students and guided by faculty at Loughborough University in England. One of the outcomes of a national reorganization of local governments in the UK in the late 1960s and early 1970s was the formation for the first time of comprehensive municipal leisure departments. In response to the demand for trained administrators that these departments created, an M.S. course in recreation management was launched in 1969 by the business school at Loughborough University. The 10 students graduating from this course received the first degrees in recreation awarded in Europe. Some of the pioneering work emanating from Loughborough was summarized in Cowell and Henry (1977). This work was strongly influenced by Kotler's (1968) early marketing text and by his efforts to generalize marketing beyond the context of business (Kotler & Levy, 1969).

In the United States, the theoretical beginnings of public leisure marketing were initiated by Crompton, who had been a graduate of the first MS course at Loughborough University. Marketing as a component of the leisure management system was briefly discussed in the first issue of *Leisure Sciences* (Crompton, 1977). The first extended discussion in the leisure field of the concept of marketing as a philosophical orientation and as a set of activities, appeared in a widely adopted textbook (Howard & Crompton, 1980). After this introduction, the locus of research focused on the application of different marketing tools to public park and recreation agencies, such as pricing, and strategic planning (Crompton, 1981a; 1981b; 1983a; 1983b).

Development of the theory of leisure marketing was significantly accelerated in the US with the launching of the *Journal of Park and Recreation*

*Administration* in 1983 by the Academy of Park and Recreation Administration. During its early years, this journal became the leading North American outlet for reporting studies concerned with such recreation marketing topics as analyses of leisure market potential (Howard, 1985; Howard & Crompton, 1984), market research, consumer studies, and market segmentation (Cato & Kunstler, 1988; Crompton, 1983b; Havitz & Fridgen, 1985; Warnick & Howard, 1985), and the application of different marketing evaluation and audit techniques (Crompton & Lamb, 1986; Guadagnolo, 1985; Howard & Selin, 1987).

The investigative research suggested that most definitions of marketing in the context of leisure services are consistent with the broadened and generic definition of marketing which was based on the exchange paradigm and advocated by representatives of the social exchange school. For example, Crompton (1983a), borrowing from Kotler's (1972) concept of generic marketing, defined recreation marketing as: "a set of activities aimed at facilitating and expediting exchanges with target markets" (p. 7). This definition also was adopted by the National Park Service (National Park Service, 1983). Similarly, O'Sullivan (1991) borrowed Kotler's (1975) broader definition by defining recreation marketing as "human activity directed towards satisfying needs and wants through exchange processes" (p. 1). Perhaps, the most comprehensive definition of public leisure marketing, because it included marketing management aspects, was suggested by Howard and Crompton (1980):

Marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges with target markets for the purpose of achieving agency objectives. It relies heavily upon designing offerings consistent with clients' wants, and on using effective pricing, communication and distribution to inform, motivate, and service the markets (p. 320).

Again, this draws from Kotler's (1975) pioneering conceptualization of non-profit marketing. Similar definitions were used by Crompton and Lamb (1986), Leadly (1992), and Torkildsen (1991).

### *Main Underlying Premises*

The social exchange school of marketing suggests that marketers are interested in "understanding what the organization exchanges with each public; i.e., what each party gives and gets . . . [and what are] the motivations underlying their transactions and satisfaction received" (Kotler, 1975, p. 17). The three premises of this school of thought which underlie the prevailing conceptualization of leisure services marketing are: (1) an open-system model of formal organizations; (2) the concept of voluntary exchange; and (3) self-interest motivation (Kotler, 1975). Earlier it was noted that criticism of the social exchange school has occurred across a wide spectrum of fields. In all of them, these three premises have been consistently reiterated and presented as the basic premises underlying the conceptualization of marketing.



*Open-system model of formal organizations.* No differences between public and private organizations are recognized by the social exchange school of marketing. It assumes that all organizations are “a purposeful coalescence of people, materials, and facilities seeking to accomplish some purpose in the outside world” (Kotler, 1975, p. 5). Primary functions of all organizations are: (1) inputs—the attraction of sufficient resources; (2) throughputs—conversion of these resources into outputs; and (3) outputs—distribution of throughputs to the public. This conceptualization of a formal organization as a resource conversion machine, is consistent with the precepts of an open-system model, or organizations whose primary goal is to respond to external and internal pressures.

The social exchange school of marketing distinguishes between effective (*responsive*) and non-effective (*unresponsive*) styles of response to external and internal pressures. *Unresponsive organizations* are perceived to be bureaucratic (in the negative sense of the word), to routinize operations, replace personal judgement with impersonal policies, specialize the jobs of employees, and follow a rigid hierarchy of command. They are perceived to be maladapted to the external environment, because they resist change, respond poorly to external pressures, and are ineffective in performing resource converting functions. Thus, they are relatively unresponsive to public needs. In contrast, *responsive organizations* respond effectively to external and internal pressures, are sensitive to public needs, willing to change and adjust their offerings, and seek to thrive through providing high satisfaction to their stakeholders.

The notion of a fully responsive organization is synonymous with a “doctrine known as ‘the marketing concept’” (Kotler, 1975, p. 43). It implies “a consumer needs orientation, backed by integrated marketing aimed at generating consumer satisfaction, as the key to satisfying organizational goals” (Kotler, 1975, p. 46). The major thesis advocated by the social exchange school of marketing is that all formal organizations should be fully responsive. That is, Kotler argues, they should employ, or at least strive toward adaptation of the marketing concept as the primary guiding principle for their operations.

*Voluntary exchange.* A central tenet of the social exchange school is that *all* formal organizations seek to attain their goals through the mechanism of voluntary exchange, so voluntary exchange became the central generic concept of marketing (Kotler, 1972). Voluntary exchanges are not perceived to be limited to such conventional resources as “goods, services, and money . . . [but] include other resources such as time, energy, and feelings” (Kotler, 1972, p. 49).

*Self-interest motivation.* The social exchange school of marketing contends that pursuit of personal self-interest is the most effective motivation for facilitating exchange between formal organizations and their publics. Although Kotler (1975) avoided the term *self-interest*, Bagozzi (1975), who acknowledged receiving Kotler’s advice, openly recognized self-interest motivation in the context of public sector marketing:

... exchanges are also present in relatively unconscious systems of social and economic relationships. Thus, a modern economy may experience a covert coordination of activities through exchanges that occur when many individuals, groups, and firms pursue their own self-interest. That is what Adam Smith meant by his reference to an "invisible hand" (p. 34).

Although Bagozzi made cursory allusion to alternative collectivistic assumptions underlying the exchange mechanism (Ekeh, 1974; Levi-Strauss, 1969) he did not clearly articulate or discuss the relative merit of these assumptions. Shapiro (1973) similarly endorsed the central role of self-interest in the context of nonprofit marketing: "I shall not bother discussing the concept of self-interest; it can be taken for granted" (p. 124).

### Results of the Negative Case Analysis

Results of the negative case analysis revealed that alternates existed elsewhere in the social science literature to all three of the major premises underlying the social exchange school's conceptualization of public sector marketing.

#### *Closed-System and Contingency-Choice Models of Organizations*

The search for alternate premises to the open-system model in the organizational behavior literature suggested that the closed-system and contingency-choice perspectives of formal organizations were legitimate, and in many contexts, were better fit alternatives to the open-system model for public agencies.

The closed-system model stems from Weber's classic model of bureaucracy. Weber (1946) defined an organization as "a system of continuous purposive activity of a specified kind" (p. 151). This perspective suggests that an organization has a clear and explicit goal which determines its internal structure and the tasks it should undertake to achieve this goal. Tasks are divided among members of the organization, so each member is given responsibility for an area of activity that matches his/her competence. Decision-making in a closed-system organization is based on an established normative order and is manifested by clearly specified rules and a chain of command. A written contract delineates the individual's duties and level of remuneration (Weber, 1946).

The closed system perspective focuses on enhancing the efficiency of activities within agencies, and tends to ignore the effects of outside factors. This reflects better than the open-system model the *modus operandi* reality of many public sector agencies in that they are somewhat insular to the external environment (Crompton & Lamb 1986). The closed system lacks the power of the open-system model to deal with external environmental change and demands of the broad array of stakeholders beyond direct users. However, it possesses some characteristics that are well-suited to governments (Mescon,

Albert & Khedouri, 1985). For example, equity is a central concept of bureaucracy and this is consistent with a central mandate of governments that all people be given equal treatment under the law. The closed system's emphasis on rules and regulations and the defined, relatively narrow, parameters for discretionary action contribute to operationalizing equal treatment. The system is thus "universalistic rather than particularistic" (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 261).

Despite the pervasiveness of the closed system model among public agencies (Mescon et al. 1985), it has a number of dysfunctional characteristics (Schermerhorn, Hunt & Osborn, 1994). These include: overspecialization which leads to conflict between divisions or sub-divisions; rigidity and inflexibility in response and actions caused from always following "official" channels; adherence to rules becoming an end in itself rather than a means for encouraging innovative responses to resolving users' problems; and rules which inherently can establish only minimum standards so they encourage the lowest acceptable level of service.

It is likely that the rapid speed of change stimulated by technological innovation and the increased complexity of contemporary problems means that in a growing number of public leisure agency contexts the dysfunctional components of bureaucracy may come to outweigh the benefits the closed system offers. The difficult challenges associated with making bureaucratic structures more workable, responsive and effective appear to have contributed to the enhanced support for the alternative contingency choice approach which appears to be emerging.

The contingency-choice approach first emerged in the 1960s as an attempt to develop a balanced model of a formal organization that encompasses elements from both the open and closed system approaches. It does not imply that the concepts of open and closed systems are of no value, but rather it attempts to adapt and integrate them to particular situations (Mescon et al., 1985). The contingency approach is not a set of prescriptive guidelines, but a way of thinking about organizational issues.

Contingency-choice recognizes that public leisure agencies typically have multiple, and often conflicting goals, and that there is no one best way to organize to meet them. Organizational structures cannot simply be transferred from one agency to another or even within an agency from one division to another without considering implications of the different environments within which they operate (Schermerhorn, et al., 1994). Thus, the focal point of the contingency approach is the *situation*; the specific set of stakeholders' demands and other external factors that influence the agency at a particular time (Mescon et al., 1985). This emphasizes the importance of situational thinking requiring managers to diagnose the situation confronting their agency and then to design an organizational structure that will be most effective to meeting the agency's objectives.

Many public leisure agencies are relatively complex organizations. Their various divisions often deal with different levels of environmental uncertainty and stakeholder accessibility, so they need to be designed differently. A rel-

actively open system may be most effective for a division managing marina or stadium facilities that operate as enterprise accounts. However, this is unlikely to be appropriate for more routinized and public good types of services such as maintenance of parks or monitoring contracts; or for outreach programs associated with serving youth. The contingency approach offers multiple ways to stimulate the agency (Mescon et al., 1985). There can be many levels of management or only a few. Middle managers and supervisors could be given considerable latitude in decision making, or top management could reserve the right to make most important decisions. Urban forestry and horticulture may be independent divisions, or sub-divisions of a park maintenance division. Senior managers decide which structural arrangements are most appropriate to their agency's unique situation.

#### *Redistribution and Reciprocity Exchange*

The negative case analysis suggested that the arrangement of formal organizations with their environments can be explained not only by voluntary exchange, but also by redistribution and reciprocity. Redistribution involves payment to, and disbursement by, a central political authority (Dalton, 1971; Polanyi, et al., 1957; Polanyi, 1944; Sahlins, 1965). It implies a hierarchically structured group with a center. The primary mechanism of redistribution is sharing. Members of a group pool their resources at a center, and this pooled or common resource is then shared among the group members according to commonly accepted distributive rules. The tax systems of industrial countries are examples of redistributive arrangements.

Sahlins (1965, 1972) contrasted redistribution which was perceived as a *within relation*, with reciprocity which was perceived to be a *between relation* mechanism. He argued that reciprocity had an underlying pattern of symmetry derived from obligatory gift-giving between people who stand in some socially defined relationship with each other such as friends or kinsfolk. Sahlins (1965) recognized that reciprocity had a *continuum of forms* ranging from *the assistance freely given* or *pure gift* at one end of the spectrum, to *self-interested seizure* or *appropriation by chicanery or force* at the other pole. Accordingly, he classified reciprocity as ranging from a *generalized reciprocity, the solidarity extreme*, through a *balanced reciprocity, the midpoint*; to a *negative reciprocity, the unsociable extreme*.

#### *Alternate Motivations*

The central role of self-interest motivation and the philosophy of individualism in explaining behavior are recognized in many fields including sociology, anthropology, social psychology, marketing, and especially economics (Bagozzi, 1975; Belshaw, 1965; Frazer, 1919; Homans, 1969; Kotler, 1975; Shapiro, 1973; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). However, alternate motivations are also recognized and discussed by many in those fields. These alternate motivations are described by such phrases as a *visible hand*, *collectivism*, *coercion*

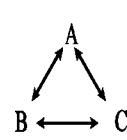
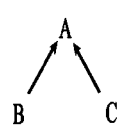
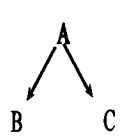
*mutually agreed upon, quid pro without the quo, pure gift, one-way transfer, grant economy, bureaucratic management, or simply by government and public administration* (Berdyayev, 1948; Boulding, 1970; Dustin et al., 1995; Hardin, 1968; Pandya & Dholakia, 1992; Shafritz & Russell, 1997; Von Mises, 1944).

**Results of Triangulation**

Results of triangulating the alternate premises (vertical axis) with types of organizations (horizontal axis) are summarized in the matrix shown in Figure 1. The narrative in this section describes the concepts and relationships depicted in the figure. The outcomes of the cross-tabulation are graphically illustrated on the bottom row of the horizontal axis. The premises that were revealed by the negative case analysis are listed alongside the categories of organization, motivation and social arrangement which were identified by the investigative research as being the central features of a conceptualization of public leisure services marketing. The premises are ordered under the headings of profit, bureaucratic and nonprofit management. Nonprofit organizations are perceived to occupy middle ground somewhere between government and private for profit organizations.

The triangulation suggests three alternate conceptualizations of public leisure services marketing: the prevailing conceptualization based on volun-

**Types of Organizations**

		<i>Profit Management</i>	<i>Bureaucratic Management</i>	<i>Non-Profit Management</i>
<b>Alternate Premises</b>	<i>Organization</i>	Open-System Model	Closed-System Model	
	<i>Motivation</i>	Public Interest through pursuit of self-interest, based on quid-pro-quo	Public Interest through "coercion mutually agreed upon;" Malevolence; Threat	
	<i>Social Arrangement</i>	Voluntary exchange	Redistribution	
	Graphical Illustration of Alternate Conceptualizations			

*Figure 1.* Alternate Conceptualizations undergirding the Marketing of Public Leisure Services.

tary exchange, and two alternatives based on redistribution and reciprocity. The bottom horizontal row of Figure 1 graphically illustrates these three alternates.

These three alternate conceptualizations should not be regarded as mutually exclusive. Rather, they should be regarded as context specific in that an agency may find it necessary to adopt alternate conceptualizations in different contexts. For example, a municipality operating a golf course as an enterprise fund may find the voluntary exchange principle to be consistent with its mandate to recoup all capital, operating and overhead costs from revenues generated by the course users. The same agency undertaking a community development initiative in a neighborhood may regard reciprocity as its central approach, while at-risk youth programs in a high crime neighborhood may be guided by the redistribution principle. The contextual nature of the conceptualizations recognizes that the three types of social arrangements are not tied exclusively to the three types of organization (for-profit, non-profit and government).

Effective public leisure agencies recognize the need to seek support from multiple constituencies or publics beyond direct users of their services. These publics may include non-user resident taxpayers, legislators, foundations, media, potential donors, corporate sponsors, suppliers of goods and services to the agency, and friends of the parks groups. Agencies adopt implicit, or occasionally explicit, marketing strategies to gain the support of these groups. Again, it is likely that to be effective, different conceptualizations of marketing will be embraced when dealing with different publics. Voluntary exchange may be appropriate when negotiating sponsorship partnerships with corporate entities, but reciprocity is likely to be more appropriate for friends of the parks groups, and emphasis on redistribution principles to provide social benefits may be key to winning support of the media or foundations.

### *The Voluntary Exchange Conceptualization of Marketing*

The first column in Figure 1 represents a conceptualization of marketing based on an open-system model of formal organizations, motivated by pursuit of self-interest, and using voluntary exchange to interact with the environment. The perspective views a leisure services agency as being the center of a system that responds directly and quickly to an array of different interest groups. It reflects a department that has been delegated wide discretion to interact with, and respond directly to, the needs of its various external interest groups, including the central government (e.g. city manager or city council) in its jurisdiction. The department is given broad sideboards, defined by financial boundaries and general goals, but within those sideboards it has substantial independence to respond quickly to changes in the environment in which it operates.

This encourages decentralized decision-making, because success is perceived to depend on being able to respond quickly and adapt to dynamic external and internal pressures. The organization is encouraged not to be

come preoccupied with following pre-established goals. It puts emphasis on efforts to attract additional resources from its external environment beyond those regularly provided by the agency's governing body; to convert these resources into leisure programs and services; and to efficiently distribute these services. The organization is viewed as the primary decision-maker.

Voluntary exchange is emphasized rather than coercion or selfless giving to attract, convert, and distribute resources. It is based on the assumption that the collective need for leisure services in a community is served best when the managers of an agency, its employees, and its users, pursue their own self-interests. From this perspective, a leisure service agency's interaction with its interest groups can be diagrammatically represented as  $A \Leftrightarrow B$ ,  $B \Leftrightarrow C$ , and  $C \Leftrightarrow A$ ; where " $\Leftrightarrow$ " signifies "gives to and receives from," and where "A" is a city council or the city manager's office, "B" is a leisure services agency, and "C" is a group of citizens.



### *The Redistribution Conceptualization of Marketing*

The middle column of Figure 1 shows a conceptualization of marketing based on a closed-system model of formal organizations; *coercion mutually agreed upon* motivation; and a redistribution of resources. From this perspective, a leisure services agency is viewed as a bureaucratic organization. The agency is seen as a substantively constrained subsystem of a larger political system, and as having relatively little freedom for responsive action without approval from a dominant political center that governs the system. The leisure services department is subject to tight central control enforced by the city manager's office and/or by a city council. Almost all decisions have to *go through channels* and be authorized by the central authorities before actions can be taken.

This perspective stresses the pursuit of clearly specified goals and procedures, and a pyramidal hierarchy of positions and regulations. They are designed in accordance with a philosophy that says, *If this is the goal, then these are the most rational procedures for achieving it*. The tasks, spheres of activity, and authority to make decisions are clearly delineated, tightly defined and proscribed. They are assigned to members of the agency based on their position in the hierarchical pyramid. All decisions are centralized and employees in the middle and low echelons of the pyramid have very limited and discrete decision-making authority.

The leisure services agency under this conceptualization, achieves its goals through redistribution, which entails obligatory payments of money (taxes) by community members to a democratically elected government. The government uses the receipts for its own maintenance; as emergency stock in case of individual or community disaster; and for the provision of different needed community services, including leisure. Redistribution disbursements in the form of public services are determined democratically by political and legislative decisions and voting procedures. This conceptualization postulates that the collective need for leisure services in a community is best met when

agency managers and employees serve the public interest rather than their own self-interest.

From this perspective, a leisure service agency's interaction with its interest groups can be represented diagrammatically as:  $B \Rightarrow A$ ;  $C \Rightarrow A$    $BC \Leftarrow A$ , where: " $\Rightarrow$ " signifies "redistributive payments"; " $\Leftarrow$ " signifies "redistribution disbursements;" "" signifies "a period of time"; and "A" is a city council or the city manager's office with a subordinated leisure services agency, while "B" and "C" are groups of citizens.

### *The Reciprocity Conceptualization of Marketing*

The third column of Figure 1 views a leisure services agency as a non-profit management organization based on the contingency-choice model of formal organizations, which is characterized by altruistic motivation and reciprocal arrangements. This type of organization has a flat hierarchy indicating decentralized decision-making; makes efforts to attract additional resources from external sources; and tries to respond quickly to interest groups. However, it has clearly specified goals, and a mission that is tightly defined by law or by its founders and sponsors which cannot be changed. The organization tries to balance two operational tenets which often conflict: not to violate its clearly specified mission, and to attract additional resources from donors and from clients by responding quickly to interest groups.

The reciprocity perspective suggests that the collective need for leisure services in a community is served best when managers, employees and interest groups rely on altruism and benevolence motives. According to this philosophy, managers and employees, and community members are prepared to sacrifice their own self-interests to further the collective interest and to offer generous help and assistance in providing resources to deliver leisure services.

Generalized reciprocity is characterized by there being at least three parties involved which benefit each other only indirectly, not directly (Bagozzi, 1975; Sahlins, 1965). From this perspective, a leisure service agency's interaction with its interest groups can be represented diagrammatically as  $A \Rightarrow B \Rightarrow C \Rightarrow A$ , where " $\Rightarrow$ " signifies "gives to"; and where "A" is a city council or city manager's office, "B" is a leisure services agency, and "C" is a group of citizens.

### Discussion

The investigative research showed that the prevailing conceptualization of public leisure services marketing was based on an open-system view of organizations, the exchange paradigm, and self-interest motivation. However, the negative case analysis revealed alternate premises which appear to better reflect the environment in which most leisure service agencies operate most of the time. The open-system model assumption fits the activities of business organizations engaged in maximizing profit, because business concerns are



encouraged to compete for scarce financial resources with other businesses in a competitive environment. Such action leads to positive economic outcomes for customers. However, transposing such a conceptualization uniformly to a public leisure services agency is likely to be inappropriate, because it fails to differentiate between the missions and environments of profit and bureaucratic oriented organizations (Allison, 1992; Rainey, Backoff & Levine, 1976).

Profit and bureaucratic organizations operate in different economic and political environments. Public agencies often enjoy the status of monopolists with no direct competitors and with relatively stable funding in the form of tax-support from the public-at-large who own these organizations. Von Mises (1944) noted: "In public administration there is no connection between revenue and expenditure. The public services are spending money only; the insignificant income derived from special sources is more or less accidental" (p. 47). The main goal of most public agencies is effective implementation of tasks mandated by the public at large. These tasks are accomplished through rigid compliance with detailed rules and regulations established by the authority or superior body that politically represents the public at large. The open-system interpretation of public agencies is inconsistent with the pursuit of such a goal.

The term *bureaucracy* does not necessarily have negative connotations, and the term *overbureaucratized* when used to characterize an organization does not necessarily imply an unresponsive organization as was suggested by the social exchange school (Kotler, 1975). If business concerns are bureaucratized, it is likely that they will be unresponsive and there is a need to flatten the bureaucracy to secure higher responsiveness through application of the marketing concept, as the social exchange school suggests. However, if public organizations are bureaucratized it does not necessarily mean that they are unresponsive. On the contrary, Blau and Scott (1962) argue that "the maintenance of efficient bureaucratic mechanisms that effectively implement the objectives of the community" (p. 55) is the major task of commonweal organizations. They argue that the de-bureaucratization of commonweal organizations (or Kotler's suggestion to apply the marketing concept to make them more responsive) may lead to public organizations jeopardizing their ability to effectively implement community objectives.

Interpreting a formal organization's interaction with its environment as being a voluntary exchange of values fits well with business organizations and a profit management philosophy. However, a review of the original sources (Blau, 1964; Blau & Scott, 1962) used by the social exchange school (Kotler, 1975; Kotler & Murray, 1975) to justify their position suggests some contradictions and inconsistencies when voluntary exchange is extended to explaining public agencies' interactions with their environment. For example, contrary to the assertions of the social exchange school, whose members adopted the Blau and Scott (1962) taxonomy of organizations, Blau (1964) specifically noted that voluntary exchange was not applicable to public or-

ganizations because it would lead to conflict with the bureaucratic rules of conduct which govern the actions of public organizations:

Officials in a bureaucracy are expected to treat clients in a detached manner in accordance with official rules, and this requires that officials abstain from exchange relationships with clients, because exchange transactions would make them obligated to and dependent for rewards on clients. Even if it is only the gratitude and approval of clients an official wants to earn, his concern with doing so can hardly fail to influence his decisions and lead him to depart from official procedures. If officials become dependent on clients either for rewards they personally seek or for services of clients the organization needs, they must enter into exchange transactions with clients, which means that they cannot strictly follow bureaucratic procedures in their relations with clients (p. 261).

Consciously or unconsciously the social exchange school of marketing overlooked the main condition governing the functioning of public organizations suggested by Blau (1964):

An essential element of professional and bureaucratic detachment is the absence of exchange relations with clients. Exchange transactions create obligations that make it impossible to conform undeviatingly to professional or bureaucratic standards (p. 263).

Thus, the concept of voluntary exchange alone is inappropriate for explaining public agencies' interactions with their environment. The concepts of redistribution or reciprocity appear to be superior for operationalizing and explaining most such interactions, because they recognize that the "absence of exchange relations with clients" requirement is a crucial tenet of bureaucratic management.

Self-interest motivation also fits well with the environment of business organizations and the goal of profit maximization. However, there is a contradiction between self-interest motivation and the code of ethics practiced by public administrators. Contrary to the interpretation of the social exchange school, Blau and Scott (1962) argue that self-interest plays a limited role in the governance of public organizations in which the welfare of clients and participants is presumed to be paramount. This concern usually is embedded in codes of ethics adopted by a profession. The codes are underpinned by an assumption that while customers are able to look after their own self-interest in a store, the same individuals often do not know what will best serve their interests in relationships with professional service organizations. Thus, using the example of a university, which was also adopted by Kotler (1975), Blau and Scott (1962) argued that "students are best served when professional educators determine what and how they are to be taught" (p. 52) and not when students themselves decide what and how they need to study. In the context of leisure services, some users of a recreation center may want an agency to provide gaming machines and alcohol at the center. However, leisure professionals have a responsibility to ascertain if the community believes that providing such opportunities is in its long term interest.

Blau and Scott (1962) articulated clear differences between the motivations of business and public decision-makers:

. . . while the businessman's decisions are expected to be governed by his self-interest—as epitomized in the phrase “caveat emptor”—the professional's decisions are expected to be governed not by his own self-interest but by his judgement of what will serve the client's interest best. The professions are institutionalized to assure, in the ideal case, that the practitioner's self-interest suffers if he seeks to promote it at the expense of optimum service to clients (p. 52).

According to the Code of Ethics of the American Society for Public Administration (Van Wart, 1996), members of public sector organizations are required to “serve the public interest beyond serving oneself” (p. 528). Similarly, the National Recreation and Park Association's Professional Code of Ethics (n.d.) requires members to “Promote the public interest and avoid personal gain or profit from the performance of job duties and responsibilities” (p. 1). These guidelines are consistent with Blau's (1964) contention that public servants must *abstain from exchange relationships* with clients and serve the public interest in a *detached manner with personal disinterest*.

Many have noted that the limited resources available to a leisure services agency are subjected to unlimited recreational demands. Managing this conundrum requires resorting to a *mutually agreed upon coercion* solution. For example, Crantz (1982) noted that: “the public park movement has been an experiment in collective reform and expenditure. Individual experience in the parks has ultimately been a means to collective ends. . . . Social consciousness, the opposite of selfishness, was essential to good citizenship and successful democracy” (p. 207). Similarly, Leopold (1953) advocated wildlife preservation through the adoption of a self-restraint ethic which recognized that recreational resources are part of a community, and commonly held recreational resources are vulnerable to degradation from overuse. Dustin et al. (1995), in this same vein, transposed Hardin's philosophy of the tragedy of the commons to the tragedy of the recreation commons, illustrating the fallacy of self-interest motivation and unlimited consumption in the context of recreation resources.

These views suggest that self-interest motivation has limited usefulness; in many contexts it is contrary to the mission of public leisure services; and, hence, it is an inadequate or incomplete conceptualization of public leisure services marketing. It appears that *coercion mutually agreed upon*, and benevolence or altruistic motivation are likely to be superior descriptors of the *modus operandi* of leisure service managers in many of the contexts in which they operate.

#### *Impact on Marketing Mix Decisions*

Marketing mix decisions are responsive to the environment in which they are made. The factor which most ubiquitously and definitely differentiates the external environments of the public and private sectors is the man-

date that public sector services be equitably distributed. There are multiple operationalizations of equity, and they are diverse and frequently controversial (Crompton & Wicks, 1988). Voluntary exchange embraces the notion of market equity which directs that benefits accrue exclusively to a given group of residents so the level of service they receive should be determined by how much those residents pay for it in taxes or fees. One implication of adopting this operationalization is that those who are financially disadvantaged by the operation of the private sector become disadvantaged by the public sector as well. Such an outcome is likely to be perceived by some as contributing to "a tearing away of the social fabric of trust, mutual aid, common values, and assumptions about life in community" (Dustin & Goodale, 1997, p. 21); by others as being morally abhorrent; and in some contexts it is legally unacceptable (Crompton & Lamb, 1986).

The redistribution and reciprocity conceptualizations are consistent with the compensatory and equal opportunity operationalizations of equity which are the alternatives to market equity. Compensatory equity involves allocating services so that disadvantaged groups, individuals or areas receive extra increments of resources (Crompton & Lamb, 1986). Equal opportunity entails allocating equal amounts of services to all residents regardless of need or the amount of fees or taxes paid. This latter standard of equity is probably the operationalization which is most widely embraced by public leisure service agencies, reflecting traditional egalitarian values which recognize equal treatment under the law.

The two alternate conceptualizations of marketing which emerged in this study embraced compensatory or equal opportunity models of equity. They are likely to be superior alternatives to the voluntary exchange conceptualization in many situations because they are better suited to attaining a public leisure service agency's goals. Crompton and Lamb (1986) noted, "the most critical question facing agencies often is not how to develop marketing mixes to optimally service relatively responsive target markets, but rather what strategies may be most useful for attracting those who are apathetic, disinterested, or reluctant to use a service" (p. 142).

For example, a state park which is supported mainly through state funding may find through research that local visitors contribute substantially more to the park's budget than non-locals because they visit it more often and, therefore, pay more in user fees. From a marketing concept perspective, it would be beneficial for the park's management to focus their advertising and selling efforts exclusively on local residents and ignore the non-local segments of visitors. This is the strategy likely to be pursued by a commercial organization. However, the park is supported by state funds which suggests that by focusing exclusively on local residents and ignoring non-locals, the park violates its constitutional responsibility to serve and benefit all its owners who are the public at large in the state consisting of both local and non-local residents.

This type of conundrum is endemic across the marketing mix decisions confronting managers in public leisure agencies and it cannot be explained

or resolved by the prevailing voluntary exchange conceptualization of marketing. Embracing the two alternate conceptualizations means that price decisions will be made to facilitate appropriate income redistribution rather than to enhance the efficient allocation of resources and revenue generation; it means that costs and benefits associated with service delivery decisions will be evaluated not only in the context of their impact on direct users, but also on their wider impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of a community; it means recognizing that the use of public land is not simply an act of individual utility maximization, as economic theory describes, but is an activity in which one interacts with the land in a way that creates a relationship with it which benefits the land, society and the individual (Watson & Herath, 1999); it means conducting research among the unserved segments of society and responding to the needs of the forgotten (Schultz et al., 1988); and it means that promotion of a fitness program should perhaps be directed at those who are unfit and disinterested rather than those who are fit and involved, knowing that in terms of cost per user this is likely to be an inefficient strategy.

### Conclusion

The analysis in this paper suggests that the prevailing conceptualization of public leisure services marketing is based on the premises of an open-system organization, voluntary exchange, and self-interest motivation. Results of the investigative research, negative case analyses, and triangulation suggest that these premises are inappropriate for many of the contexts within which public sector leisure agencies operate. We believe this inappropriateness to be the underlying cause of the skepticism voiced by some academics about the appropriateness of marketing in the delivery of public leisure services, and the difficulty experienced by leisure service administrators in implementing marketing.

One of the traditional challenges confronting those who advocate a marketing approach to the delivery of public leisure services is resistance from many who believe *marketing* is synonymous with *commercialism* (Crompton & Lamb, 1986; Havitz, 1988). This view was exemplified by Schultz et al. (1988) whose prognosis was that adopting marketing in public leisure agencies would lead to "business management by entrepreneurs who will market products to consumers" (p. 52) and that "conducting research among the unserved segments of society and responding to the needs of the forgotten" (p. 53) would be ignored. Their concern was that marketing was causing many to forget that this field is not a business but is a humanistic and social service.

Marketing advocates have responded to such criticisms rather defensively by acknowledging that the prevailing business paradigm of marketing needs "important modifications" (Havitz, 1988, p. 34) when applied to social

service agencies. However, to this point nobody has proposed an alternative conceptual paradigm that better fits public leisure service delivery.

We believe the plural perspective presented here has the potential to meet Havitz's (2000) challenge to build a consensus among those holding disparate beliefs on the role of public leisure services marketing. The inappropriateness of the business paradigm of marketing in many situations is recognized. By embracing the redistribution and reciprocity models it responds to the concerns of critics such as Schultz et al. (1988). No longer are advocates of marketing required to go through a somewhat contortious rationale to try and *adapt* the business model to fit all contexts—to force square pegs into round holes.

The plurality approach recognizes that the range of services offered by public leisure agencies is diverse. Some are private services whose benefits are perceived to accrue exclusively to users. Since users receive all the benefits, they are expected to generate all the income needed to cover the cost of services. Often such services are operated out of enterprise funds which mandate agencies to *operate like a business*. In these contexts—typically they are confined to activities/facilities such as golf, adult athletics, marinas, and stadia—the profit management conceptualization of Figure 1 may be appropriate.

Most services offered by public leisure agencies, however, are classified as public or merit services where either all benefits are perceived to extend to most members of a community, or some benefits are perceived to accrue to non-users in addition to those received by users (Dustin & Goodale, 1997). Since the wider community receives benefits, these services are wholly or partially funded by taxes. Goodale (1985) has noted that “public goods and services are attempts at realizing distributive justice and this inevitably involves some redistribution of resources or income transfer” (p. 17). Thus, it seems likely that in these contexts, the bureaucratic management and non-profit management conceptualizations of Figure 1 will be superior for guiding an agency's marketing actions.

This suggests that the Howard and Crompton (1980) definition of public leisure services marketing, which was cited earlier in the paper and was derived from the social exchange school, should be revised as follows:

Public leisure services marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation of leisure programs designed sometimes to facilitate voluntary exchange with users, but more frequently to facilitate redistributive or reciprocal arrangements within a community that were established by a central governing body. It relies heavily upon designing leisure services that reflect a community's leisure needs; adopting approved (by government) prices, communication mechanisms, and quality standards; and personnel who are committed to meeting the leisure needs of the community.

We believe that this definition offers a conceptualization for leisure service agencies that is “. . . specifically public sector marketing, rather than a pale

imitation of a private sector approach within the public sector" (Walsh, 1994, p. 68).

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