

# Administration & Society

<http://aas.sagepub.com/>

---

## **Public Service Motivation and the Assumption of Person— Organization Fit : Testing the Mediating Effect of Value Congruence**

Bradley E. Wright and Sanjay K. Pandey

*Administration & Society* 2008 40: 502 originally published online 9 June 2008

DOI: 10.1177/0095399708320187

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://aas.sagepub.com/content/40/5/502>

---

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

**Additional services and information for *Administration & Society* can be found at:**

**Email Alerts:** <http://aas.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

**Subscriptions:** <http://aas.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

**Reprints:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

**Permissions:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

**Citations:** <http://aas.sagepub.com/content/40/5/502.refs.html>

# Public Service Motivation and the Assumption of Person–Organization Fit

## Testing the Mediating Effect of Value Congruence

Bradley E. Wright

*University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

Sanjay K. Pandey

*University of Kansas, Lawrence*

This study contributes to our understanding of public service motivation by clarifying the mechanisms through which public service motivation influences employee attitudes previously linked to organizational performance. In particular, the authors find that the relationship between employee public service motivation and job satisfaction is mediated by the extent to which the employee perceives that his or her values are congruent with those of the public sector organization he or she works for. This study suggests that caution should be exercised when making claims regarding the effects of public service motivation and that greater emphasis should be placed on ways public sector organizations can foster employee–organization value congruence.

**Keywords:** *public service motivation; person–organization fit; job satisfaction*

**I**n the past decade, interest in the concept of public service motivation has continued to grow, as has its list of purported benefits. Recent studies have examined the relationship between public service motivation and job satisfaction, employee intentions to leave (Naff & Crum, 1999), organizational commitment (Crewson, 1997; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007b; Pandey, Wright, & Moynihan, 2008), interpersonal citizenship behaviors (Pandey et al., 2008), employee performance (Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Frank & Lewis, 2004; Naff & Crum, 1999), and organizational performance (Brewer & Selden, 2000; Kim, 2005). This interest in public service motivation is not all that surprising. The theory of public service motivation, that individuals may be predisposed to “respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations” (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 368), can play an

important role in public administration and help distinguish the field from other similar fields such as business administration. Public service motivation suggests that public employment can be seen as fulfilling a calling or vocation and not merely performing a job. Of more practical importance, public service motivation can also guide management practice by identifying unique opportunities and rewards available in public sector work that can compensate for the limited availability of monetary rewards.

Although public service motivation represents a potentially beneficial and unique feature of public organizations, there are many unanswered questions regarding how the public sector can capitalize on public service motivation. Previous studies, for example, have either looked at the effects of public service motivation without explicating the process that produces such effects (Brewer & Selden, 2000; Kim, 2005)<sup>1</sup> or produced inconsistent findings when investigating the effect of public service motivation on attitudes and behavior important to the organization (Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Frank & Lewis, 2004; Naff & Crum, 1999; Rainey, 1982). In this study, we attempt to explicate the mechanisms by which public service motivation influences job satisfaction which, in turn, has been shown to influence turnover and organizational performance (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Ostroff, 1992). Although previous studies have assumed that public service motivation will have a direct influence on employees job satisfaction (Naff & Crum, 1999; Rainey, 1982), our findings suggest that this relationship is mediated by the extent to which the employee perceives their values are congruent with those of the public sector organization in which they work.

## Defining Public Service Motivation

If we assume that individuals may be predisposed to “respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations” (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 368), the next step is to identify those motives. Early studies conceptualized these motives in terms of intrinsic motivation that drives altruistic behavior. According to this literature, although private sector organizations may be able to rely more on monetary rewards such as money and promotion to motivate employees to complete tasks that otherwise only benefit the owners, public sector organizations ask their employees to complete tasks that benefit society at large and help individuals in need. The enjoyment or self-satisfaction associated with serving society and helping the needy thus becomes a motivating force. To test this assumption, studies operationalized public service motivation as work-related values or reward preferences

such as the employees' desire to help others, benefit society, or engage in meaningful public service (Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Crewson, 1997; Frank & Lewis, 2004; Houston, 2000; Lewis & Frank, 2002; Rainey, 1982; Wittmer, 1991). Much of this initial work focused on establishing the existence of public service motivation, showing that public sector employees value intrinsic rewards more (Buchanan, 1975; Cacioppe & Mock, 1984; Crewson, 1997; Kilpatrick, Cummings, & Jennings, 1964; Rainey, 1982; Wittmer, 1991) and extrinsic or financial rewards less (Cacioppe & Mock, 1984; Jurkiewicz, Massey, & Brown, 1998; Khojasteh, 1993; Kilpatrick et al., 1964; Lawler, 1971; Newstrom, Reif, & Monczka, 1976; Rainey, 1982; Rawls, Ullrich, & Nelson, 1975; Wittmer, 1991) than their private sector counterparts. Although findings have not always been consistent, there is considerable empirical support for the assumptions that public employees place a higher value on helping others or on public service and a lower value on financial rewards (Boyne, 2002; Houston, 2000; Wright, 2001) than private sector employees.

A second, more comprehensive conceptualization of the motives grounded in public sector organizations was offered by Perry and Wise (1990) who suggested that public service motivation could be derived from three types of motives: affective, normative, and rational. Building on this conceptualization, Perry (1996) used these three motives to identify and operationalize four distinct dimensions of public service motivation: attraction to policy making, public interest, compassion, and self-sacrifice. From the rational motive, it was suggested that individuals could be attracted to policy making as way of maximizing their own needs of power and self-importance or to advocate a special interest that would provide personal benefits. A second motive for public service could be an individual's interest in particular public programs or services due to a "genuine conviction about [their] social importance" (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 369). Such affective attachment is captured by the compassion and self-sacrifice dimensions that represent service as an emotional response to humankind. The third motive that could be uniquely grounded in public service is an individual's sense of obligation to the society in which he or she lives.<sup>2</sup> Although potentially similar to the aforementioned affective dimension, this norm-based motive reflects the desire to serve the public interest as a result of feeling a duty to one's government and community. These three motives and four dimensions provide a more comprehensive and theory-based approach to the study of public service motivation than the previous intrinsic motivation approach that only recognized that altruistic motives for public service exist but did not distinguish between normative and affective motives or even consider the possibility of self-interested or rational motives.<sup>3</sup>

## Mixed Findings on the Consequences of Public Service Motivation

Given the potential benefits of public service motivation to the organization, it is surprising that few studies have conducted formal tests of its effects (Wright, 2001).<sup>4</sup> Two recent studies, however, have found that public service motivation increased organizational performance in the public sector (Brewer & Selden, 2000; Kim, 2005), even after controlling for other organizational characteristics and employee attitudes. Even so, neither study investigates the process by which public service motivation produces such an effect. As public service motivation is an individual characteristic, it should be expected to influence organizational performance through employee-level attitudes and behaviors. For example, Scott and Pandey (2005) report that employees with high level of public service motivation report lower levels of red tape, a perception that could be indicative of proactive coping behaviors.

In his classic and enduring treatise, Barnard (1938) suggests that there are two broad types of employee behavior that influence organizational performance: membership and performance behavior. Although employee performance can have a direct effect on organizational performance, maintaining membership in the organization has an indirect effect because it minimizes the costs associated with employee absenteeism and turnover. In theory, there is good reason to believe that public service motivation can influence organizational performance through either of these individual-level attitudes and behaviors. Employees with greater public service motivation are expected to be more satisfied with their jobs and perform them better because they value the opportunities to serve the public that government employment provides (Naff & Crum, 1999; Perry & Wise, 1990). As a result, employees with high public service motivation are more likely to see their work not only as rewarding but also compensating for the limited availability of economic rewards often associated with public employment. In other words, public employees are expected to work harder, perform better, and be more satisfied with their jobs because they are working to provide services that they see as important and therefore rewarding (Balfour & Wechsler, 1990; Naff & Crum, 1999; Perry & Wise, 1990).

Unfortunately, the few studies that have investigated the relationship between public service motivation and these employee-level behaviors have reported mixed findings. For example, although Alonso and Lewis (2001) confirm Naff and Crum's (1999) findings that employees with high public service values were more likely to receive better performance evaluations

when using the same data set, Lewis and colleagues (Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Frank & Lewis, 2004) were unable to find consistent relationships between performance and the importance employees place on opportunities to provide service to others or benefit society in two other data sets. These latter findings were, however, more consistent with an earlier study that found no relationship between a public service orientation and work ethic (Rainey, 1982). Although fewer studies have investigated the impact of public service motivation on employee job satisfaction or turnover intent, the findings that do exist are also not entirely consistent. In their study of federal employees, Naff and Crum (1999) found that public service motivation significantly increased employee job satisfaction and decreased turnover intent. Unfortunately, this result was only partially consistent with an earlier study that found that job satisfaction increased with the importance of meaningful public service but decreased with the importance employees placed on being helpful to others (Rainey, 1982).

### **The Mediating Role of Value Congruence**

One potential reason for these mixed findings is that these studies test for direct effects of public service motivation under the assumption that public organizations provide sufficient opportunities to satisfy the public service motivation of its employees. Unfortunately, just because public employment can provide opportunities for an individual to satisfy their public service motives does not mean that the employing organizations will actually provide opportunities that individuals feel satisfy their public service motive. For example, although some studies show that government employment provides more avenues for worthwhile accomplishment (Posner & Schmidt, 1982) and opportunities to help others or be useful to society (Frank & Lewis, 2004), others have found that public sector employees experience lower personal significance reinforcement (Buchanan, 1974), less ability to exert influence on their organizations (Cacioppe & Mock, 1984), and even view the private sector as having a better capacity to provide exciting, challenging, and fulfilling work (Gabris & Simo, 1995).

In fact, several scholars have even questioned the very assumption that the employee and the organization agree on what constitutes public service. Just as public service motives can take a variety of different forms, so too can the definition of public service or interest; and there is no guarantee that the organization and their employees will define them in the same way (Rainey, 1982). Employees may even agree with the organization's general goal or stated purpose but disagree with its specific policies or actions. The potential for this difference was implicitly recognized by Brewer and

Selden (1998) who posited that whistle-blowers would exhibit high levels of public service motivation. Rightly or wrongly, such employees are willing to perform in ways that contradict their organization's expectations to better serve the public.

Previous empirical findings have also suggested that the beneficial effects of public service motivation may be mitigated by factors that influence the degree to which employees feel that a particular organizational environment allowed them to fulfill their public service motives. In a series of studies conducted more than 30 years ago, Buchanan (1974, 1975) found that public employees would be less committed to their work to the extent that they do not feel that they are making important contributions to an organizational mission with which they identify. Thus, he concluded that the service ethic among public managers "may be more of an aspiration than a reality" (1975, p. 442) because their jobs do not always allow them to "make personal contributions to the lofty aims which attracted them to the service" (p. 440). More recently, Vinzant (1998) reached a similar conclusion in a study of social workers. In her study, Vinzant found that although social workers reported strong public service motives, many were dissatisfied with their job because they felt "that they were not serving the public and public service values that they felt were important" (1998, p. 359). Indeed, Moynihan and Pandey (2007a), based on a national sample of public organizations, show that job tenure has a negative effect on public service motivation.

Together, these studies do not necessarily rule out the potential benefits of public service motivation. They do, however, suggest that public service motivation's relationship with desired organizational outcomes may be more complicated than first thought. Public employees may work harder, perform better, and be more satisfied with their jobs, but only to the extent that they see a relationship between their public service motivation goals or values and those espoused by the work of their employing organization. If so, then person-organization value congruence should serve as an intervening or mediating variable that transmits the effect of public service motivation on job satisfaction.<sup>5</sup> The studies mentioned above suggest that employee public service motivation cannot guarantee employee-organizational value congruence in the public sector, but it should, at the very least, increase the likelihood of that congruence. In other words, the effect of public service motivation can be explained in two stages. First, individuals more predisposed to respond to the motives found in doing public service should be more likely to agree with the service mission and objectives of public organizations charged with performing such services. Second, the more an individual agrees with the organization's mission and objectives, the more likely

he or she is to find the tasks assigned by the organization satisfying. In other words, public service motivation's influence on employee attitudes and behaviors beneficial to the organization may be indirect, mediated through its effect on employee–organization value congruence.

The findings of several recent studies investigating public service motivation's relationship with work motivation are consistent with this mediation hypothesis. For instance, Frank and Lewis (2004) found that although public employees are more likely to both desire and experience interesting work and the opportunities to help others or benefit society, work effort was only related to receiving (not desiring) such work. Similarly, when testing different theoretical relationships between public service motivation and work motivation, Wright (2003) found that public service motivation only had an indirect effect through its influence on the importance with which employees view their tasks or job. No study, however, has tested a mediation model to explain the relationship between employee public service motivation and job satisfaction. To provide an additional test of the mediating effect of value congruence, this study focuses on public service motivation's relationship with job satisfaction. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis:* Public service motivation will have an indirect, positive effect on job satisfaction through its influence on employee–organization value congruence.

As noted above, when defining the motives grounded in public sector organizations, scholars have not just focused on the nonmonetary rewards associated with public sector employment but also monetary rewards more commonly associated with private sector employment. They contend that if some individuals are predisposed to motives available in the public sector, then they may also be less interested in the motives commonly found in the private sector (Cacioppe & Mock, 1984; Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2000; Jurkiewicz et al., 1998; Khojasteh, 1993; Kilpatrick et al., 1964; Newstrom et al., 1976; Rainey, 1982; Rawls et al., 1975). Although considerable empirical evidence supports such claims, recent research has shown that public employees with high public service motivation may still value monetary rewards (Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Wright, 2007). In light of these findings and the common contrast between monetary and nonmonetary rewards found in public service motivation research, our study investigates the relationship between public service motivation and job satisfaction while controlling for the effect of pay satisfaction. If public service motivation and individual–organization value congruence make important contributions to our understanding of employee job satisfaction, then they need to explain



public sector employee job satisfaction beyond what is predicted by employee perceptions regarding monetary rewards.

## **Method, Measurement, and Findings**

### **Sample Selection and Survey Administration**

To test the questions raised by this study, data were collected from a 2005 survey of managerial and professional employees in seven public sector organizations. These organizations were from two adjacent states in northeastern United States. Four of these organizations were local government organizations and three were state government organizations. The local government organizations came from the areas of city management, education, and public health, while the state-level organizations came from the health and human service arena. Given an overarching goal of obtaining a diverse sample composed of respondents from different organizational settings, a target of 30 respondents per organizations was set. It was not possible to use a uniform sampling scheme for all the organizations. Three of the organizations were smaller, and thus, a census was conducted in these organizations. Simple random samples were obtained from three organizations and a convenience sample from one.<sup>6</sup> The median number of respondents from the seven organizations was 29. We administered 331 questionnaires and received 206 completed responses, for a response rate of 62.2%. General characteristics of the survey respondents are provided in Tables 1 and 2.

### **Measures**

Each of the study variables was measured using the responses from multiple survey items taken from previously validated and commonly used measures. For example, to measure public service motivation, we used five items from Perry's (1996) 40-item scale of public service motivation commonly used as a short measure of public service motivation in previous studies (Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Brewer & Selden, 2000; Kim, 2005).<sup>7</sup> These items capture the three dimensions—commitment to public interest, compassion, and self-sacrifice—identified by Perry that represent the affective or normative motives most closely associated with the altruistic appeal of public sector values. The fourth dimension, attraction to policy making, was omitted because it represents a rational or self-interested motive that is less value or mission specific. Consistent with previous studies (Alonso & Lewis, 2001), we found that this fourth dimension was not strongly correlated with

**Table 1**  
**Sample Characteristics (*n* = 206)**

Variables	Percentage
Gender	
Female	58.9
Male	41.1
Education	
Some college	22
Bachelors	33
Some graduate school	16.5
Graduate degree	28.5
Organizational role	
Senior manager	10.8
Administrative or policy staff	9.4
Middle management	19.7
Frontline management	7.9
Professional staff	51.7
Salary grade	
\$50,000 or less	28.9
\$50,001 to \$75,000	51.3
\$75,001 to \$100,000	16.2
\$100,001 to \$150,000	2
\$150,001 or more	1.5

the other five public service motivation items (median item correlation with the other five public service motivation items was 0.08). In addition, when treated as a separate variable and included in the analysis, attraction to policy making was not found to have statistically significant relationships with either value congruence or job satisfaction.

Employee job satisfaction was measured using a three-item measure of overall job satisfaction (Seashore, Lawler, Mirvis, & Camman, 1982), and employee–organization value congruence was measured using three items from O’Reilly and Chatman’s (1986) internalization or value congruence measure and a fourth item from the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire related to an employee’s belief in and acceptance of organizational values (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). To control for the effect of monetary rewards, employee pay satisfaction was measured using three items from the Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1997). Responses for all questionnaire items were recorded using either a 5-point (job satisfaction, pay satisfaction, and public service motivation) or 7-point (value congruence) Likert-type scale (ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*).

**Table 2**  
**Sample Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Reliabilities ( $n = 206$ )**

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Potential Range	Observed Min.	Observed Max.	Correlations and Reliabilities													
						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9					
<b>Study variables</b>																			
1. Job satisfaction	12.35	2.90	3 to 15	3	15	(0.89)													
2. Value congruence	18.67	5.24	4 to 28	4	28	0.63*	(0.80)												
3. Public service motivation	18.45	3.20	5 to 25	11	25	0.20*	0.32*	(0.71)											
4. Pay satisfaction	9.79	3.03	5 to 15	3	15	0.39*	0.28*	0.19*	(0.74)										
<b>Controls</b>																			
5. Salary	—	—	1 to 5	1	5	0.02	0.09	-0.02	0.15*	—									
6. Organization tenure	10.95	9.64	—	0	38	-0.06	0.04	-0.08	0.01	0.32*	—								
7. Job tenure	5.80	6.93	—	0	38	-0.11	-0.06	-0.14*	0.06	0.17*	0.62*	—							
8. Age	44.5	11.00	—	25	69	0.13	0.17*	-0.05	0.04	0.35*	0.59*	0.41*	—						
9. Education	—	—	1 to 4	1	4	-0.12	0.09	0.01	0.09	0.27*	-0.04	0.10	0.06	—					

Note: Wherever appropriate, Cronbach's alpha is reported in parentheses.  
 \* $p < .05$ .

The appendix presents the questionnaire items and coding scales associated with all study measures.

A series of confirmatory factor analyses offered support for the discriminant validity of the measures used. First, it was tested whether the data could be explained by a single general factor. This single method factor model provided a poor fit suggesting that study scales tap into divergent content domains. A second analysis testing the hypothesized measurement model, however, provided a good fit to the data ( $\chi^2(84) = 98.22$ , Goodness of Fit Index = 0.93, Comparative Fit Index = 0.99, Standardized Root Mean Residual = 0.05, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation = 0.03, CFit = 0.91). In this latter model, all of the scale items were found to have statistically significant factor loadings ( $p < .05$ ) for their respective latent constructs (lambda values ranged from 0.45 to 0.92).

Table 2 provides the univariate and bivariate statistics of the study measures and demographic controls. Reliability estimates (Cronbach's coefficient alpha) ranged from 0.71 to 0.89 (Table 2) and support the use of these measures, with all four study measures above the 0.70 level suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Tests of univariate normality suggested that only one of the study measures (job satisfaction) had violated the assumption of normality ( $p > .5$ ), although it was still within range found to be acceptable for maximum likelihood estimation in structural equation modeling (Curran, West, & Finch, 1996).

When looking at the descriptive statistics, respondents tended to report relatively high levels of job satisfaction and public service motivation but more moderate levels of pay satisfaction and value congruence. The bivariate relationships were consistent with our expectations. Although all three independent variables had statistically significant positive associations with the dependent variable, value congruence had the strongest relationship with job satisfaction, whereas public service motivation's strongest relationship was with value congruence. Nonetheless, the measures appeared to have discriminant validity, as the largest bivariate correlation (between job satisfaction and value congruence) was only 0.63, which suggests that no measure shared greater than two fifths of its variance with any other measure.<sup>8</sup>

## Analysis

To test the mediation hypothesis, a series of covariance structure analyses of the data were conducted using LISREL Version 8.71. This type of analysis consists of two parts that not only subsumes but also improves on more common techniques such as confirmatory factor analysis, path analysis, and

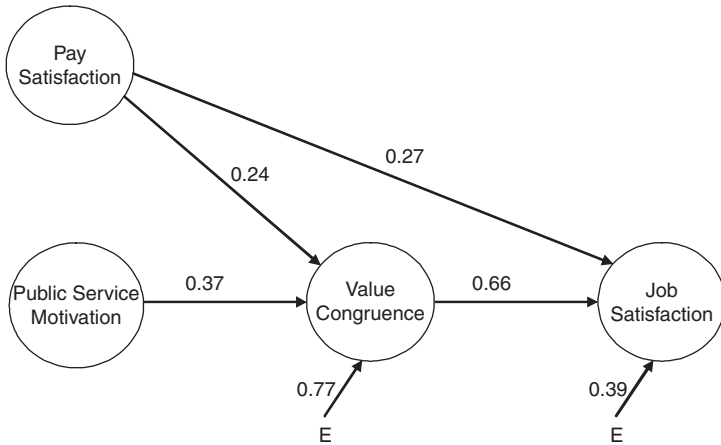
regression (Hayduk, 1987; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1992). In the first stage, the model performs a confirmatory factor analysis to construct the latent variables from their respective questionnaire items and assess the validity and reliability of the study measures (summary of results provided above). In the second stage, structural equation model subsumes conventional regression and path analysis models to test the hypothesized relationships among the latent variables. This approach is recommended in analyzing mediation effects because the measurement model mitigates measurement error that can produce biased estimates and the structural model does not estimate the required equations (see discussion below) independently (Baron & Kenny, 1986). To minimize concerns regarding multivariate nonnormality and its effect on standard errors, the hypothesis was tested using the Robust Maximum Likelihood estimator approach (Joreskog, Sorbom, du Toit, & du Toit, 2000; Satorra & Bentler, 1994).

Consistent with the mediation hypothesis, the model provided a good fit to the data ( $\chi^2(85) = 98.6$ ,  $p > .05$ , Goodness of Fit Index = 0.93, Comparative Fit Index = 0.99, Standardized Root Mean Residual = 0.05, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation = 0.03, CFit = 0.92) and found the expected relationships between public service motivation and value congruence as well as between value congruence and job satisfaction to be statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) and in the expected direction. Figure 1 presents the parameter estimates for the structural model as partial standardized regression weights. The  $t$  statistics for path coefficients for all three of the hypothesized relationships were statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ), providing additional evidence to support the accuracy of the theoretical model. Employee public service motivation and pay satisfaction together explained nearly one quarter (23%) of the variance in value congruence, whereas value congruence and pay satisfaction explain over half (61%) of the variation in employee job satisfaction.<sup>9</sup> In general, these results are consistent with the mediation hypothesis, confirming that public service motivation's influence on value congruence and value congruence's influence on job satisfaction are both statistically significant, even after controlling for the effect of employee pay satisfaction.<sup>10</sup> LISREL's estimate of public service motivation's indirect effect of job satisfaction was statistically significant ( $\beta = .24$ ,  $p < .05$ ).<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

This study contributes to our understanding of public service motivation by clarifying the mechanisms through which public service motivation

**Figure 1**  
**Full Mediation Model Results**



influences job satisfaction among professional and managerial employees. In particular, we find that the relationship between employee public service motivation and job satisfaction is not direct but mediated by the extent to which the employee perceives that his or her values are congruent with those of the public sector organization. Admittedly, although this focus on professional and managerial employees is consistent with much of the previous research on public service motivation, it does limit the generalizability of these results, as such employees may be more predisposed to exhibit public service motivation and identify with the organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Nonetheless, these findings are important for at least two reasons. First, the presence of an intervening variable can help explain the inconsistent findings of previous studies that tested only for a direct effect of public service motivation on employee job satisfaction (Naff & Crum, 1999; Rainey, 1982). In doing so, it may also suggest a way to resolve inconsistent findings regarding the relationship between public service motivation and employee performance and motivation (Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Frank & Lewis, 2004; Naff & Crum, 1999). Second, this link between public service motivation and job satisfaction supports the relationship found between public service motivation and organizational performance (Brewer & Selden, 2000; Kim, 2005), by illustrating one process

by which it produces such effects. Although this study finds that public service motivation is related to job satisfaction, others have established that job satisfaction has an important, albeit indirect, influence on organizational productivity by reducing costs associated with absenteeism and turnover (Brooke & Price, 1989; Farrell & Stamm, 1988; Moynihan & Pandey, 2008; Spector, 1997; Tett & Meyer, 1993).

At the same time, this study suggests that we should exercise some caution when making claims regarding the effects of public service motivation. In particular, there may be a tendency to view public service motivation as automatically increasing the public employee's satisfaction with (and commitment to) their work in public organizations. Although this may seem like a straightforward assertion, it does assume that the employee and the organization agree on what constitutes public service. At a more fundamental level, this brings to the fore the ability of public sector organizations to foster public service motivation. Perry (2000) called for developing and testing the effects of organizational institutions on public service motivation. Although research has shown that public service motivation can help drive individual behavior, linking the prevalence of these values directly to increased civic activities and volunteer work (Brewer, 2003; Houston, 2006), public service motivation's relationship with desired organizational outcomes is neither direct nor certain.

Although managers may be able to use the organization's mission to increase employee job satisfaction, the attractiveness of public employment should not be taken for granted. Instead, it must be nurtured through communication and performance feedback that highlights how the organization's values and goals coincide with those of the employee and how the employee's work contributes to both the organization and society (Buchanan, 1975; Vinzant, 1998; Weiss, 1996). When doing so, managers should also help their employees recognize that the role and value conflicts they experience at work often reflect the tenuous balance between the competing responsibilities of public service (Pandey & Wright, 2006). Employee job satisfaction may improve if public sector organizations do more to provide the rationale behind their policies and procedures so that employees can understand not only their necessity but also how they can coexist with performance expectations (Vinzant, 1998).

These recommendations are consistent with recent work linking public service motivation to employee motivation and performance (Paarberg & Perry, 2007; Wright, 2007). In a recent study of Defense Department civil employees, Paarberg and Perry found that although most employees held values consistent with public service motivation, managers of

high-performing work units were more likely to interpret broad organizational values into meaningful goals related to their employees' work. Thus, although previous studies suggest that public organizations do not always operationalize (or at the very least communicate) ways that individual and organizational activities are consistent with their employees' public service values (Brewer & Selden, 1998; Buchanan, 1975; Vinzant, 1998), more recent findings suggest ways in which they can (Paarlberg & Perry, 2007; Wright, 2007). In other words, public organizations are not just passive beneficiaries of employee public service motivation levels inculcated and developed through earlier life experiences (sociohistorical factors in Perry's usage). Instead, such benefits may depend on providing the appropriate supporting conditions within the organization (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007a; Perry, 2000).

---

## Appendix

---

### Study Measures

#### Job satisfaction

In general, I like working here.

In general, I don't like my job. (R)

All in all, I am satisfied with my job.

#### Pay satisfaction

I feel that I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do.

I feel satisfied with my chances for salary increases.

Raises are too few and far between. (R)

#### Individual and organizational value congruence

I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar.

If the values of this organization were different, I would not be as attached to this organization.

The reason I prefer this organization to others is because of what it stands for, its values.

What this organization stands for is important to me.

#### Public service motivation

Meaningful public service is very important to me.

I am often reminded by daily events about how dependent we are on one another.

Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements.

I am prepared to make enormous sacrifices for the good of society.

I am not afraid to go to bat for the rights of others, even if it means that I will be ridiculed.

---



## Notes

1. One recent exception has found that public service motivation increases organizational commitment through its influence on employee perceptions of an organization's mission valence (Pandey, Wright, & Moynihan, 2008).

2. Frederickson and Hart (1985) advance a somewhat similar notion, combining affective as well as norm-based obligations about the relationship between citizens (as contrasted with consumers) and public servants in a democracy: "We contend that the special relationship lies in a conception of political community which is defined by the existence of a pervasive patriotism based on benevolence" (p. 548).

3. Although certainly more sophisticated, this conceptualization of public service motivation is not without its weaknesses. For example, even though Perry (1996) found that a four-dimension confirmatory factor model fit better than a three-dimension model, the evidence was not entirely conclusive as the correlation (0.89) between two of the dimensions (self-sacrifice and public interest) suggested considerable redundancy. Certainly, a three-factor model would be more parsimonious and consistent with the three types of motives (rational, norm-based, and affective) underlying Perry's work. Unfortunately, the strong relationship between dimensions suggests considerable overlap between two of the three types of motives, as self-sacrifice represents affective motives and public interest represents normative motives. The inconclusiveness of these findings is consistent with research that conceptualizes organizational commitment in terms of rational, affective, and normative motives. Although confirmatory factor analyses of such organizational commitment measures fit the data better with separate affective and normative factors (Dunham, Grube, & Castenada, 1994; Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdorf, 1994; Meyer, Allen, & Gellatly, 1990), the high correlations between the two factors have led many scholars to question the need for both dimensions (Ko, Price, & Mueller, 1997; Morrow, 1983).

4. As a point of contrast, there are many theoretical accounts and empirical examinations of public service motivation as a dependent variable (e.g., DeHart-Davis, Marlowe, & Pandey, 2006; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007a; Perry, 2000).

5. This is consistent with previous work that suggests that mediators are often internal, psychological variables that describe how the relationship between two other variables will occur (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

6. A convenience sample was taken in this organization because a complete list with necessary details was not readily available. The convenience sample was obtained over several days by contacting and following up with employees in different work units in an attempt to get a diverse and representative sample.

7. Very few studies have used the complete 40-item (Brewer, Selden, & Facer, 2000) or 24-item (Perry, 1997) measure of public service motivation proposed by Perry (1996).

8. Additional analyses showed no significant differences in the study variables related to gender ( $p > .05$ ). Although no significant differences were found between professional and managerial employees on pay or job satisfaction, managers were found to have slightly but significantly higher value congruence and public service motivation ( $p < .05$ ).

9. Coefficients of determination for endogenous variables can be calculated from Figure 1 as 1 minus the error term for the latent variable (E).

10. In addition to the four study variables, we also controlled for the effects of gender, tenure, education, and salary level. To determine if the demographic variables, as a set, had a significant impact on the model fit, the model was also run constraining the paths from the control variables to the endogenous study variables (value congruence and job satisfaction) to

zero. A nested chi square test comparing the constrained model to the unconstrained model suggested that the demographic variables contributed little explanatory power to the overall model; and their inclusion did not alter the direction, significance, or strength of the relationships between the four study variables as reported in Figure 1.

11. To further test the hypothesized mediated relationship, an alternative model was then run positing a direct relationship between public service motivation and job satisfaction. This model did not significantly improve the overall model fit ( $\chi^2_{df}(1) = .4, p > .05$ ), and the path coefficient representing a direct relationship between public service motivation and job satisfaction was not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ). Together, these two models strongly suggests not only that value congruence fully mediates the relationship between public service motivation and job satisfaction but also that this relationship contributes to our understanding of job satisfaction beyond what can be explained by employee pay satisfaction.

## References

- Alonso, P., & Lewis, G. (2001). Public service motivation and job performance: Evidence from the federal sector. *American Review of Public Administration, 31*(4), 363-380.
- Balfour, D. L., & Wechsler, B. (1990). Organizational commitment: A reconceptualization and empirical test of public-private differences. *Review of Public Personnel Administration, 10*, 23-40.
- Barnard, C. I. (1938). *The functions of the executive*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*, 1173-1182.
- Boyne, G. A. (2002). Public and private management: What's the difference? *Journal of Management Studies, 39*(1), 97-122.
- Brewer, G. A. (2003). Building social capital: Civic attitudes and behavior of public servants. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 13*(1), 5-26.
- Brewer, G. A., & Selden, S. C. (1998). Whistle blowers in the federal civil service: New evidence of the public service ethic. *Journal of Public Administration Research & Theory, 8*(3), 413-439.
- Brewer, G. A., & Selden, S. C. (2000). Why elephants gallop: Assessing and predicting organizational performance in federal agencies. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 10*(4), 685-711.
- Brewer, G. A., Selden, S. C., & Facer, R. L. (2000). Individual conceptions of public service motivation. *Public Administration Review, 60*(3), 254-264.
- Brooke, P. P., & Price, J. L. (1989). The determinants of employee absenteeism: An empirical test of a causal model. *Journal of Occupational Psychology, 62*(1), 1-19.
- Buchanan, B. (1974). Building organizational commitment: The socialization of managers in work organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 22*, 533-546.
- Buchanan, B. (1975). Government managers, business executives, and organizational commitment. *Public Administration Review, 34*(4), 339-347.
- Cacioppe, R., & Mock, P. (1984). A comparison of the quality of work experience in government and private organizations. *Human Relations, 37*(11), 923-940.
- Crewson, P. E. (1997). Public-service motivation: Building empirical evidence of incidence and effect. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 4*, 499-518.

- Curran, P. J., West, S. G., & Finch, J. F. (1996). The robustness of test statistics to normality and specification error in confirmatory factor analysis. *Psychological Methods, 1*(1), 16-29.
- DeHart-Davis, L., Marlowe, J., & Pandey, S. K. (2006). Gender dimensions of public service motivation. *Public Administration Review, 66*(6), 871-885.
- Dunham, R. B., Grube, J. A., & Castenada, M. B. (1994). Organizational commitment: The utility of an integrative definition. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 79*, 370-380.
- Farrell, D., & Stamm, C. L. (1988). Meta-Analysis of the correlates of employee absence. *Human Relations, 41*(3), 211-227.
- Frank, S. A., & Lewis, G. B. (2004). Government employees: Working hard or hardly working? *American Review of Public Administration, 34*(1), 36-51.
- Frederickson, H. G., & Hart, D. K. (1985). The public service and the patriotism of benevolence. *Public Administration Review, 45*(5), 547-553.
- Gabris, G. T., & Simo, G. (1995). Public sector motivation as an independent variable affecting career decisions. *Public Personnel Management, 24*(1), 33-51.
- Griffeth, R. W., Hom, P. W., & Gaertner, S. (2000). A meta-analysis of antecedents and correlates of employee turnover: Update, moderator tests, and research implications for the next millennium. *Journal of Management, 26*(3), 463-488.
- Hackett, R. D., Bycio, P., & Hausdorf, P. A. (1994). Further assessments of Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model of organizational commitment. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 79*, 15-23.
- Hayduk, L. A. (1987). *Structural equation modeling with LISREL*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Houston, D. J. (2000). Public-service motivation: A multivariate test. *Journal of Public Administration Research & Theory, 10*(4), 713-727.
- Houston, D. J. (2006). "Walking the walk" of public service motivation: Public employees and charitable gifts of time, blood, and money. *Journal of Public Administration Research & Theory, 16*(1), 67-86.
- Jöreskog, K. G., & Sörbom, D. (1992). *LISREL VIII: Analysis of linear structural relations*. Mooresville, IN: Scientific Software.
- Joreskog, K., Sörbom, D., du Toit, S., & du Toit, M. (2000). *LISREL 8: New statistical features*. Lincolnwood, IL: Scientific Software International.
- Jurkiewicz, C. L., Massey, T. K., & Brown, R. G. (1998). Motivation in public and private organizations: A comparative study. *Public Productivity & Management Review, 21*(3), 230-250.
- Khojasteh, M. (1993). Motivating the private vs. public sector managers. *Public Personnel Management, 22*(3), 391-401.
- Kilpatrick, F. P., Cummings, M. C., Jr., & Jennings, M. K. (1964). *The image of the federal service*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Kim, S. (2005). Individual-level factors and organizational performance in government organizations. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 15*(2), 245-262.
- Ko, J., Price, J. L., & Mueller, C. W. (1997). Assessment of Meyer and Allen's three-component model of organizational commitment in South Korea. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 84*, 961-973.
- Lawler, E. E. (1971). *Pay and organizational effectiveness: A psychological view*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Lewis, G. B., & Frank, S. A. (2002). Who wants to work for the government? *Public Administration Review, 62*(4), 395-404.

- Mathieu, J. E., & Zajac, D. M. (1990). A review and meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of organizational commitment. *Psychological Bulletin*, *108*, 171-194.
- Meyer, J. P., Allen, N. J., & Gellatly, I. R. (1990). Affective and continuance commitment to the organization: Evaluation of measures and analysis of concurrent and time-lagged relations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *75*, 710-720.
- Morrow, P. C. (1983). Concept redundancy in organizational research: The case of work commitment. *Academy of Management Review*, *8*, 486-500.
- Moynihan, D. P., & Pandey, S. K. (2007a). The role of organizations in fostering public service motivation. *Public Administration Review*, *67*(1), 40-53.
- Moynihan, D. P., & Pandey, S. K. (2007b). Finding workable levers over work motivation: Comparing job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment. *Administration & Society*, *39*(7), 803-832.
- Moynihan, D. P., & Pandey, S. K. (2008). The ties that bind: Social networks, person-organization value fit, and turnover intention. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *18*(2), 205-227.
- Naff, K. C., & Crum, J. (1999). Working for America: Does public service motivation make a difference? *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, *19*(4), 5-16.
- Newstrom, J. W., Reif, W. E., & Monczka, R. M. (1976). Motivating the public employee: Fact vs. fiction. *Public Personnel Management*, *5*, 67-72.
- Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- O'Reilly, C., III., & Chatman, J. (1986). Organizational commitment and psychological attachment: The effects of compliance, identification, and internalization on prosocial behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *71*(3), 492-499.
- Ostroff, C. (1992). The relationship between satisfaction, attitudes, and performance: An organizational level analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *77*(6), 963-974.
- Paarberg, L. E., & Perry, J. L. (2007). Values management: Aligning individual values and organizational goals. *American Review of Public Administration*, *37*(4), 387-408.
- Pandey, S. K., & Wright, B. E. (2006). Connecting the dots in public management: Political environment, organizational goal ambiguity and the public manager's role ambiguity. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *16*(4), 511-532.
- Pandey, S. K., Wright, B. E., & Moynihan, D. P. (2008). Public service motivation and interpersonal citizenship behavior: Testing a preliminary model. *International Public Management Journal*, *11*(1), 89-108.
- Perry, J. L. (1996). Measuring public service motivation: An assessment of construct reliability and validity. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *7*(1), 5-22.
- Perry, J. L. (1997). Antecedents of public service motivation. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *7*(2), 181-197.
- Perry, J. L. (2000). Bringing society in: Toward a theory of public-service motivation. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *10*(2), 471-488.
- Perry, J. L., & Wise, L. R. (1990). The motivational bases of public service. *Public Administration Review*, *50*(3), 367-373.
- Porter, L. W., Steers, R. M., Mowday, R. T., & Boulian, P. V. (1974). Organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover among psychiatric technicians. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *59*, 603-609.
- Posner, B. Z., & Schmidt, W. H. (1982). Determining managerial strategies in the public sector: What kinds of people enter the public and private sectors? An updated comparison of perceptions, stereotypes, and values. *Human Resource Management*, *21*(2), 35-43.

- Rainey, H. G. (1982). Reward preferences among public and private managers: In search of the service ethic. *American Review of Public Administration, 16*(4), 288-302.
- Rawls, J. R., Ullrich, R. A., & Nelson, O. T. (1975). A comparison of managers entering or reentering the profit and nonprofit sectors. *Academy of Management Journal, 18*(3), 616-623.
- Satorra, A., & Bentler, P. M. (1994). Corrections to test statistics and standard errors in covariance structure analysis. In A. von Eye & C. C. Clogg (Eds.), *Latent variable analysis: Applications for developmental research* (pp. 399-419). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Scott, P. G., & Pandey, S. K. (2005). Red tape and public service motivation: Findings from a national survey of managers in state health and human service agencies. *Review of Public Personnel Administration, 25*(2), 155-180.
- Seashore, S. E., Lawler, E. E., Mirvis, P., & Camman, C. (1982). *Observing and measuring organizational change: A guide to field practice*. New York: John Wiley.
- Spector, P. E. (1997). *Job satisfaction: Application, assessment, causes, and consequences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tett, R. P., & Meyer, J. P. (1993). Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention, and turnover: Path analyses based on meta-analytic findings. *Personnel Psychology, 46*(2), 259-293.
- Vinzant, J. C. (1998). Where values collide: Motivation and role conflict in child and adult protective services. *American Review of Public Administration, 28*(4), 347-366.
- Weiss, J. A. (1996). Public management and psychology. In D. Kettl & B. Milward (Eds.), *The state of public management* (pp. 118-142). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Wittmer, D. (1991). Serving the people or serving for pay: Reward preferences among government, hybrid sector and business managers. *Public Productivity & Management Review, 14*(4), 369-383.
- Wright, B. E. (2001). Public sector work motivation: Review of current literature and a revised conceptual model. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 11*(4), 559-586.
- Wright, B. E. (2003, October). *Toward understanding task, mission and public service motivation: A conceptual and empirical synthesis of goal theory and public service motivation*. Paper presented at the 7th National Public Management Research Conference, Washington, DC.
- Wright, B. E. (2007). Public service and motivation: Does mission matter? *Public Administration Review, 67*(1), 54-64.

**Bradley E. Wright** is an associate professor of political science at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. His research has focused on how employee attitudes and behavior are influenced by characteristics of the organizational work environment.

**Sanjay K. Pandey** is an associate professor of public administration at the University of Kansas, Lawrence. He conducts research on public management and health policy.