

The Effects of Public Service Motivation on Job Choice Decisions: Exploring the Contributions of Person-Organization Fit and Person-Job Fit

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Abstract

This study contributes to our understanding of PSM's influence on sector and job choice in two ways. First, while most research focuses on the person-organization fit to explain PSM's influence on job choice (assuming that individuals with higher PSM will be more likely to select public employment because the missions of public sector organization are congruent with the employees public service values), this study will begin to separate the effects of person-organization fit from person-job fit. In addition to looking at PSM's influence on sector choice, this study will investigate some characteristics of the job that may moderate PSM's influence on employee job choice decisions. Second, this research will attempt to isolate the causal direction of the relationship between PSM and sector of employment by studying job preferences of individuals beginning their graduate training (and prior to their employment) in a profession that plays prominent roles in the public, nonprofit and private sectors.

INTRODUCTION

As a fast growing field of research, public service motivation (PSM) focuses “on the motives and actions in the public domain that are intended to do good for others and shape the well-being of society (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008a, 3). As with any vibrant theory, PSM has evolved in subtle but potentially important ways. Nearly twenty years ago, Perry and Wise defined PSM as “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations” (368). More recently, however, others have defined PSM more broadly as “a general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people” (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999, 23) or “motives associated with serving the public good” (Perry & Hondehem, 2008b, 3).

Although these definitions have a great deal of conceptual overlap, they differ in the emphasis placed on the role of public sector organizations in public service motivation. That said, the change does not reflect a fundamental shift in the PSM but rather the need to distinguish public *service* motivation from public *sector* motivation (Brewer & Selden, 1998; Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). While much of the initial work on PSM implied that its applications are both specific to and generic across public sector organizations, more recent research suggests that PSM is not only applicable to the private sector (Steen, 2008) but also that its effects may depend less on the sector of employment than the degree to which an organization shares the individual’s public service values or provides opportunities for the employee to operationalize/satisfy these values (Bright, 2008; Pandey, Wright & Moynihan, 2008; Steijn, 2008; Taylor, 2008; Wright & Pandey, 2008, forthcoming).

Much of the current research, however, has confounded the effects of person-organization fit and person-job fit. Even if public sector organizations share an employee’s public service

values, employees may not find that their jobs satisfy their PSM. Alternatively, many occupations or jobs may allow individuals to perform valuable public service even in the private sector (Steen, 2008; Wright & Christensen, 2007). To determine the role that PSM plays in employment decisions, therefore, will require a better understanding of how PSM relates to both person-organization fit and person-job fit. As Leisink and Steijn (2008) recently suggest, “job applicants who value public service motivation will be more strongly attracted to a job in the public sector if their need for public service motivation is both matched by the job and the organization, and that this attraction is lower if only one of these two domains fits this need” (126).

The confounding of person-organization fit and person-job fit mechanisms may help explain findings of several studies that have questioned PSM’s influence on sector employment choice. PSM, for example, has been found to predict an individual’s desire to work for government but not whether these same individuals actually work for government (Lewis & Frank, 2002; Tschirhart et al., 2008). Others have found that while PSM may not predict the sector of employment for an individual’s first job, it does increase the likelihood that subsequent jobs will be in the public sector (Wright & Christensen, 2007). Even one of the studies most commonly cited in support of PSM found that public employees had significantly higher PSM than private employees in only about half of the years analyzed (Crewson’s 1997). Such findings suggest that the relationship between PSM and sector employment choice is also not entirely straight forward.

These findings also raise other important questions about the ability of public sector organizations to foster public service motivation (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). While Perry (2000) has called for more research developing and testing the effects of organizational

institutions on public service motivation, others have noted that more research is needed to investigate the importance of PSM relative to other factors influencing job or sector choice (Leisink & Steijn 2008). Unfortunately much of the current research has confounded PSM's effect on occupational choice with the organization's potential ability to socialize or influence the PSM of their employees as a result of its reliance on cross-sectional data collected only after individuals have selected a sector of employment or academic study (Wright, 2008; Wright & Grant, 2009). This confounding may also help explain the mixed findings regarding PSM's effect of employment choice (Crewson, 1997; Lewis & Frank, 2002; Tschirhart et al., 2008; Wright & Christensen, 2007) as recent studies focusing solely on students from a broad range of programs found that PSM influences the attractiveness of public sector employment opportunities (Vandenabeele, 2008; Wright & Christensen, 2009).

PSM research, therefore, needs to disentangle both the mechanism (person-job fit versus person-organization fit) and the causal direction of PSM's relationship with sector and job choice decisions. This study contributes to our understanding of PSM's influence on sector and job choice in two ways. First, while most research focuses on the person-organization fit to explain PSM's influence on job choice (assuming that individuals with higher PSM will be more likely to select public employment because the missions of public sector organization are congruent with the employees public service values), this study will begin to separate the effects of person-organization fit from person-job fit. In addition to looking at PSM's influence on sector choice, this study will investigate some characteristics of the job that may moderate PSM's influence on employee job choice decisions. Second, this research will attempt to isolate the causal direction of the relationship between PSM and sector of employment by studying job preferences of

individuals beginning their graduate training (and prior to their employment) in a profession that plays prominent roles in the public, nonprofit and private sectors.

PSM'S ROLE IN DETERMINING JOB AND ORGANIZATIONAL FIT

In many ways, the research on PSM and job choice parallels the broader literature on person-environment fit (Leisink & Steijn, 2008; Wright & Grant, 2009). Consistent with the literature on person-organization fit, individuals with higher PSM are expected to be more likely to select public employment because the missions of public sector organizations are more congruent with the employee's public service values (Leisink & Steijn 2008; Perry & Wise, 1990; Vandenabeele, 2008; Wright & Christensen, 2007). This assumes that sector can serve as a proxy for organizational values. Research recent has provided considerable support for the assumption that PSM increases personal-organization fit, finding that PSM increases the likelihood that public employees feel their organization's mission is important (Pandey, Wright & Moynihan, 2008; Wright & Pandey, forthcoming) and that their personal values are congruent with those of their organizations (Bright, 2008; Wright & Pandey, 2008). While these studies directly test the underlying person-organization mechanism driving the relationship between PSM and sector of employment, they are limited in that they only studied this relationship only with public sector samples and only after they have begun their employment. Vandenabeele (2008) provides additional support for the assumption that sector can serve as a proxy for organizational values finding that PSM predicts the attractiveness of different employment sectors among Dutch-speaking graduate students before they are exposed to organizational socialization processes. We hope to confirm this later finding using an sample of graduate students in the United States. Thus, consistent with the tenants of person-organization fit and the expectation that "the greater an individual's public service motivation, the more likely the

individual will seek membership in a public organization” (Perry & Wise 1990, 370), we test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: PSM will better predict the likelihood of accepting jobs in the public sector than the likelihood of accepting jobs in the private sector.

In addition to assumptions regarding the fit between organizational and employee values, PSM also assumes that the employee’s job provides sufficient opportunities to fulfill their public service motivation (Leisink & Steijn 2008; Steijn, 2008; Taylor, 2008). Unfortunately, research exists that questions this assumption. Several studies, for example, have shown that public employees do not always feel that their jobs allow them to “make personal contributions to the lofty aims which attracted them to the service” (Buchanan, 1975, 440; see also Vinzant, 1998) perhaps due to the prevalence of red tape or other organizational constraints (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007; Vinzant, 1999). Consistent with these findings, at least two recent studies have found that person-job fit moderates the effect of PSM in public sector settings. For example, Steijn (2008) found that PSM’s effect on public employee job satisfaction and intention to stay in their jobs was stronger when employees felt that their work was useful to society. Similarly, Taylor (2008) found that employee PSM did not predict organizational commitment or job satisfaction unless employees also felt that their job provides opportunities to satisfy their PSM.

Research has begun to identify specific job characteristics that may influence the degree to which employee PSM may be satisfied. In particular, recent research on task significance suggests that employees with strong communal motives may be more responsive to relational job design features because contact with beneficiaries of their work both fulfills and even cultivates their motivation to make a prosocial difference (Grant, 2007, 2008, Grant et al., 2007). Such interaction can help enhance and fulfill employee public service motivation in at least three ways

(Grant 2007). First, without direct contact with beneficiaries of their work, “employees can find it difficult to know how their work is affecting others” (Grant, 2007, 400). In other words, it enables employees to directly see the consequences of their work for other people. Second, contact with beneficiaries provides employees greater access to feedback from others (the beneficiaries themselves) who show that they value (or even appreciate) their work. Finally, contact also helps employees identify with and become more emotionally committed to the people affected by their work. Evidence to support these expectations has been found in both the private and public sector (Grant, 2008a, 2008b; Grant et al., 2008).

Admittedly, not all employee contact with beneficiaries will be positive or rewarding. In many cases, public employees may fail to see the impact of their work or experience gratitude from those they serve. In fact, many interactions may provide negative feedback from clientele (Savicki & Cooley, 1994; Morris & Feldman, 1996; Zapf, 2002) or involve stigmatized groups that employees may perceive as less deserving of assistance (Batson, Chang, Orr & Rowland, 2002). Perhaps as a result, frustrations derived through direct service contact have been identified as an important factor contribution to employee burnout (Kim & Wright, 2007). This suggests that the motivational impact of contact with beneficiaries may be stronger when those interactions are more favorable or, alternatively, when they involve individuals just beginning their careers and thus have less experience with (or expectations of) such negative feedback. The emphasis a job places on helping others through direct service interaction, therefore, should increase the ability of PSM to predict the likelihood a person will accept the job regardless of the employment sector. Thus, consistent with the recent work on prosocial motivation and person-job fit, we expect that the service orientation of a job will have a moderating affect on the relationship between PSM and the likelihood of accepting a particular job such that:

Hypothesis 2a: PSM is more likely to increase the likelihood of accepting a public sector job when that job is service oriented.

Hypothesis 2b: PSM is more likely to increase the likelihood of accepting a nonprofit job when that job is service oriented.

Hypothesis 2c: PSM is more likely to decrease the likelihood of accepting a private sector job when that job is less service oriented.

When looking at the values that differ between employment sectors and influence person-organization fit, scholars have not just focused on the intrinsic rewards associated with public sector employment but also financial 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. While considerable empirical evidence supports such claims (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), other studies have failed to find sector differences in preference for monetary rewards (Crewson 1997; Gabris & Simo 1995; Lyons, Duxbury, & Higgins, 2006; Maidani 1991; Schuster 1974). Consistent with these later findings, several recent studies have found that the importance individuals place on income fails to predict not only whether respondents work for government (Lewis & Frank, 2002; Tschirhart et al., 2008; Wright & Christensen, 2007) but also their desire to work for government (Lewis & Frank, 2002; Tschirhart et al., 2008).

This does not mean, however, that financial incentives do not play a role in job choice decisions. A growing number of studies suggest that public employees, even those with high public service motivation, may still value monetary rewards (Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Newstrom,

Reif & Monczka 1976; Rainey 1982; Vandenabeele, 2008; Wittmer 1991; Wright, 2007; Wright & Pandey, 2008). Thus, while an individual's interest in financial rewards is often used in PSM research as a proxy for sector values that may drive person-organization (or even person-sector) fit, it also represents a type of individual need or preference that can be fulfilled by the characteristics of a specific job. Regardless of the sector in which they work, individuals have financial needs that their jobs help satisfy. They also often have to choose between jobs that offer different financial compensation packages. Such decisions typically require weighing tradeoffs between the type or location of job and its financial rewards. Thus even if individual reward preferences and organizational rewards do reflect sector values or differences, the availability of financial rewards is an important when determining person-job fit and making employment decisions regardless of sector. While the research on effect PSM on the relationship between pay and job choice is mixed, we follow the commonly held view and expect that PSM will have a negative moderating effect on the relationship between salary and the likelihood of accepting a job such that:

Hypothesis 3a: The relationship between salary and job acceptance will be weaker for public sector jobs as the applicants PSM increases.

Hypothesis 3b: The relationship between salary and job acceptance will be weaker for nonprofit sector jobs as the applicants PSM increases.

Hypothesis 3c: The relationship between salary and job acceptance will be weaker for private sector jobs as the applicants PSM increases.

METHOD

Our data are from first year law students (1Ls, Class 2011) at two top-tier law schools.¹ We worked with career services officers at the two schools to invite students to respond to an online survey that used a policy capturing design to ascertain information about a student's career decisions. Policy-capturing is a widely used methodology (e.g., Feldman & Arnold, 1978; Hitt & Barr, 1989; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Olson, Dellomo, & Jarley, 1992; Ravlin & Meglino, 1987; Rynes, Schwab, & Heneman, 1983; Slovic & Lichtenstein, 1971) that is "used to examine decision processes in which the levels of critical factors are varied and combined to create hypothetical situations" (Weber & Rynes, 1991, 91). In this study we used a survey-based experiment to manipulate employment sector, service and salary aspects of hypothetical job offers to analyze the role these factors play, in conjunction with respondents' public service motivation, in career decisions. Evidence (Levin, Louviere, Schepanski, & Norman, 1983; Olson et al., 1992) suggests that experimental policy-capturing designs are predictive of actual decisions.

Data

The questionnaire was administered online early in the fall semester of 2008. Our timing seeks to avoid potential socialization effects that might predispose students to work in either the private or public sector (Erlanger & Klegon, 1978). An electronic gift certificate was sent to each student who participated in the survey.²

After the initial invitation, career services personnel sent several email reminders about the survey to the 1L listservs. The final sample exhibits an average response rate of 47 percent. Our

¹ According to U.S. News 2008 Law School Rankings.

² The authors gratefully acknowledge the support of a faculty research grant from their home institution that facilitated this study. We are also indebted career services personnel at each of the law school for their generous assistance.

usable sample size is approximately 210 students. Both sample and population characteristic, when available, are reported in Table 1. The similarity between the sample respondents and population for each school suggest that the respondents were generally representative of the targeted population.

- Table 1 -

Measures

Likelihood of Accepting an Offer. We asked respondents to consider specific aspects (see service and salary measures discussed below) of several hypothetical, legal job offers and to indicate the likelihood that they would accept these various offers. Our policy-capturing design draws on past research (Cable & Judge, 1994; Feldman & Arnold, 1978; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Kristof-Brown, Jansen, & Colbert, 2002; Ravlin & Meglino, 1987; Rynes & Lawler, 1983; Rynes et al., 1983) that explores the impact of organization values and salary on the decision to accept a job offer.

We asked respondents to consider job offers within three separate sectors: private, public, and nonprofit/public interest. Because we are more interested in choices within each sector, we present three separate analyses below that each hold sector constant across our manipulated variables. We also informed respondents that geographic preference, opportunities for promotion, and area of expertise were constants in their decision-making process. Thus our dependent variable is thus a seven-point Likert scale response (0=very unlikely; 6=very likely) operationalized as follows: “Indicate the extent to which you would accept an offer possessing the following characteristics. For each job scenario, assume (1) that the work is in your - preferred geographic area, (2) that the job draws upon your area of legal expertise and (3) that each job is at least average in promotion/growth-opportunities within its area.”

Service. We varied service aspects of each job offer to reflect the hiring organization's value of service in a particular job. We manipulated expected level of service dichotomously to indicate jobs had more (or less) opportunities for pro bono work (private sector), client interaction (public sector) or client representation (nonprofit sector).

Salary. Salary was also manipulated dichotomously. We worked with the career services officers at each of the law schools in our sample to identify an appropriate "average" starting salaries and appropriate "high" starting offers among each of the school's average recruiters.

The following illustrate how these manipulated scenarios were presented to respondents considering offers in the private sector. (1) The job is for an attorney in a private firm where pro bono hours are encouraged but are not deducted from total billable hours required each year. The starting salary is HIGH. (2) The job is for an attorney in a private firm where pro bono hours are encouraged and deducted from total billable hours required each year. The starting salary is HIGH. (3) The job is for an attorney in a private firm where pro bono hours are encouraged but are not deducted from total billable hours required each year. The starting salary is LOW. (4) The job is for an attorney in a private firm where pro bono hours are encouraged and deducted from total billable hours required each year. The starting salary is LOW.

Public Service Motivation. Individual public service motivation has long been posited as an important predictor of job choice. Our measure of PSM reflects a widely used (Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Brewer & Selden, 2000; Kim, 2005; Pandey, Wright, & Moynihan, 2008; Wright & Pandey, 2008) shortened version of Perry's (1996) original scale. The questions used to capture a rater's PSM are:

- 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 I will be ridiculed.

These items used a seven-point Likert scale, anchored at 0 with “Strongly Disagree” and at 6 with “Strongly Agree.” The coefficient alpha for this measure was .77.

Demographic Variables. Our survey included demographic questions that may affect job choice (Boudreau, Boswell, Judge, & Bretz, 2001; Judge & Bretz, 1992). These include respondent’s age, gender, marital status, whether the respondent has children, and the respondent’s academic achievement/ability. The latter is measured both in terms of undergraduate GPA and Law School Admission Test (LSAT) score.

Descriptive statistics and the correlation matrix of variables in our model are included in Table 2.

- Table 2 -

ESTIMATION & RESULTS

Our data are arranged with each job decision as a case. Because we presented respondents with 12 job offers, four in each sector, we have reason to suspect some degree of spatial/cross-section autocorrelation. In short, across each set of 12 observations completed by the same respondent, error terms are potentially correlated and ordinary least squares (OLS) estimation is not appropriate because OLS estimators are less efficient and potentially biased in dealing with correlated error terms. Our approach is twofold. First, we used robust standard errors in anticipation that error terms across observations may not be constant – the problem of heteroskedasticity. Second, we used generalized least squares (GLS) as the more appropriate

estimation technique (Hanushek & Jackson, 1977; Judge & Bretz, 1992) to yield both efficient and unbiased estimates in light of the underlying data generating process.

Table 3 summarizes how likelihood of job offer acceptance is influenced by respondent public service motivation, our experimental manipulations, and respondent demographics. The results of our analysis are grouped by sector: public, private, and nonprofit/public interest. We preface our findings by noting that while Table 3 contains all effects of interest, including multiplicative terms, we also ran our models without the interactions.³ The interaction terms result in a statistically significant, albeit modest, increase in the overall variance explained by the models: two percent for public and nonprofit sector offers, and one percent for private offers.

Controls and Direct Effects. Consistent with some of the information respondents gave about job aspirations, respondents from one of our schools were more likely to accept a legal job in the public sector. Respondents with children were less likely to accept a position in the nonprofit sector, while females were more likely to accept a position in that sector. Academic aptitude had little correlation with job choice, except within the private sector where respondents with higher LSAT scores were less likely to accept private employment offers.

The regression coefficients for service, salary and PSM are more difficult to interpret given the inclusion of the multiplicative terms in the model. In typically main effects only models (without interaction terms), these coefficients refer to the effects of the independent variables on job acceptance generally across all levels of the other independent variables. In models that include these independent variables as part of interaction terms, the main effects must be interpreted as conditional relationships such the main effect of service, for instance, reflects the influence of service on job acceptance when PSM is zero (Jaccard, Turrisi, & Wan, 1990). Thus

³ Results available from authors.

these results (Table 3) suggest that when PSM is zero, service has a statistical significant but negative effect ($b = -1.06, p < 0.05$) on job acceptance. In other words, individuals are less likely to accept a job that emphasizes service if they have no PSM. The same relationship is found when interpreting the first-order regression coefficient of service on the acceptance of nonprofit jobs ($b = -0.94, p < 0.05$). When individuals lack PSM, service has no effect on the acceptance of private sector positions ($p > 0.05$). The regression coefficients for salary must be interpreted similarly. When PSM is zero, salary increases the likelihood that individuals will accept a position in both the public and private sector ($b = 0.84$ and 1.95 , respectively) but has no effect on the acceptance of jobs in the nonprofit sector.

The regression coefficient for PSM is also must be interpreted as a conditional effect or the effect of PSM when both salary and service are zero. In other words, when jobs offer more limited service emphasis and a lower salary, PSM only increases the likelihood of accepting a job in the nonprofit sector ($b = 0.06, p < 0.05$) after controlling for everything else in our model. Thus, in partial contradiction of hypothesis 1, PSM does not predict the likelihood that individual accept either public or private sector positions. This suggests that, after controlling for factors relating to person-job fit, looking just at the relationship between employment sector and employee PSM may not be a good proxy for person-organization fit. That said, PSM did have an independent effect on job acceptance in the nonprofit sector.

Moderated Effects. Of particular interest is how respondents' PSM and our manipulated independent variables jointly influence job acceptance decisions. Table 3 indicates that an offer's service orientation moderates a respondent's tendency to accept that offer according to a respondent's public service motivation. In other words, the likelihood of accepting an offer based on an individual's PSM changed according to the service emphasis of the offer.

Mentioned previously, the “direct” effect⁴ of public service motivation on job acceptance was evident only in the nonprofit sector and the effects of our moderator, service, in the public and nonprofit sectors. However the interaction effects (PSM X Service) are significant across all three sectors. Public service motivation, then, has “multiple effects” (Franzese & Kam, 2007, 20) on the decision to accept an offer. These effects are present in all sectors when an offer has a service emphasis, and also in the nonprofit sector even when the offer has no service emphasis.

Figures 1-3 expound the differing effects of service on public service motivation relative to our second set of hypotheses. Figure 1 provides a visual confirmation of Hypothesis 2a, respondents with stronger PSM are much more likely to accept a job offer in the public sector when the job has a greater emphasis on service. We likewise confirm Hypothesis 2b as a similar pattern is seen for nonprofit sector offers (see Figure 3). Hypothesis 2c suggests that high-PSM respondents will be less likely to accept a private sector job that less service oriented. In partial contradiction with Hypothesis 2c, Figure 3 illustrates that respondents with stronger PSM are not significantly less likely than respondents with weaker PSM to accept a private sector job with a lower service emphasis offer. That said, in partial support of hypothesis 2c, high-PSM respondents are much more likely than low-PSM respondents to accept a high-service offer in the private sector. In other words, the relationship between salary and job acceptance in the private sector is stronger for individuals with weaker PSM. We thus find mixed evidence for Hypothesis 2c. Take altogether, these findings generally support the importance of person-job fit

⁴ While some (Franzese & Kam, 2007) eschew the language of main or direct effects because it confuses *coefficients* and *effects*, we use the language here because our moderator is dichotomous. When the moderator equals zero, the main/direct effects of PSM are useful and interpretable (Edwards, 2008).

when explaining the relationship between PSM and job choice as individuals with stronger PSM are significantly more likely to accept a job (regardless of sector) in which service is emphasized.

While service moderates the influence of PSM on job choice decisions across all sectors, PSM significantly moderates the influence of salary on job acceptance only for private sector offers (Table 3). We therefore find little support for Hypotheses 3a and 3b, but support for 3c. Figure 4 displays that the salary-job acceptance relationship is weaker for high-PSM respondents than for low-PSM respondents. This suggests that there is a three-way interaction between sector, salary and PSM such that a higher salary is much more important to the job acceptance decisions for respondents with lower PSM but only in the private sector. For public sector jobs, on the other hand, salary only has a direct effect such that higher salaries increase the likelihood that an individual would accept a job regardless of their PSM levels. For nonprofit sector jobs, however, salary did not have an effect on job acceptance in any form.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of PSM in a number of important ways. While most research focuses on the person-organization fit to explain PSM's influence on job choice, this study attempted to isolate the independent effects of both person-organization fit and person-job fit. Consistent with many previous studies, we operationalized person-organization fit by assuming that individuals with higher PSM will be more likely to select public employment because the missions of public sector organizations are congruent with their public service values. Unfortunately, our findings do not support this common assumption. After controlling for characteristics that influence person-job fit, PSM by itself neither increased the likelihood that individuals would accept a public sector job nor decreased the likelihood that they would accept a private sector job. This finding may suggest that person-organization fit is

less important than person-job fit when looking at initial job choice decisions. While this may be correct, this finding does not rule out the potential importance of either PSM or person-organizational fit. It may just suggest that simply linking PSM and employment sector is insufficient to determine person-organization fit. In addition to providing a potential explanation for past studies finding only mixed support for the effects of PSM on sector choice (Crewson's 1997; Lewis & Frank, 2002; Tschirhart et al., 2008; Wright & Christensen, 2007), this latter interpretation is consistent with a growing number of studies that suggest that PSM does not automatically increase employee attraction to or satisfaction with public employment. While several scholars have warned that there is no guarantee that public organizations will define public service in the same way or even share the same exact values as their employees with high PSM (Brewer & Selden, 1998; Rainey 1982), others have found that PSM it is only one of several factors that influence person-organization fit in the public sector (Wright & Pandey, 2008, forthcoming).

In addition to testing the effect of person-organization fit, our study also investigated the role that PSM may play in determining person-job fit. Here our findings are much clearer. Regardless of employment sector, individuals with stronger PSM are more likely to accept jobs that emphasize service to others whether that be pro bono work (private sector), client interaction (public sector) or client representation (nonprofit sector). In addition, while individuals were more likely to accept the better paying jobs in the public sector regardless of their PSM levels, in the private sector we found that higher salaries are more important to the job acceptance decisions for respondents with weaker (as opposed to stronger) PSM. These findings not only suggest that PSM plays an important role in job choice decisions but also identifies two specific job characteristics—service emphasis and salary—that moderate PSM's influence on employee

job choice decisions. These findings are consistent with those of other recent studies that have found that public employment will not always provide opportunities that satisfy the public service motives of their employees (Buchanan, 1974, 1975; Vinzant, 1999) and that PSM's effect on public employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment was stronger when employees felt that their work provided opportunities to satisfy their PSM (Steijn, 2008; Taylor, 2008). Thus public sector organizations and managers should consider the messages they send during the recruiting process. In addition to important salary considerations, individuals are attracted to positions that emphasize the ability to help others through direct service provision and contact with beneficiaries.

Finally, in addition to isolating and testing different mechanisms (person-job fit versus person-organization fit) by which PSM influences employment decisions, this study contributes to our understanding of PSM by addressing some of the weaknesses of previous public service motivation research (Wright, 2008; Wright & Grant, 2009). First, it investigates PSM's relationship to job preferences prior to respondents' acceptance of their first legal job and does so with a sample that is both relevant to public service but not systematically predisposed to its values. This allows stronger assertions regarding the causal direction by avoiding confounding the effects of attraction-selection and socialization (Wright & Christensen, 2007). Second, the policy capturing design involves experimentally manipulating different cue values (thus minimizing variable intercorrelations) to determine how individuals weight, combine, or integrate informational cues when making decisions. Previous research suggests that this type of design is preferable to other self reported attribute methods (such as directly asking individuals to rate or rank the variables of interest in order of importance) because it requires individuals to make overall judgments about multi-attribute scenarios that are more similar to actual decision

problems and it weakens social desirability effects by indirectly assessing the importance of explanatory variables (Arnold & Feldman, 1981; Rynes et al., 1983).

In conclusion, while many studies have focused on the direct effect of PSM on important individual or organization outcomes, our study suggests that other organizational and job characteristics are important before such benefits can be realized. In particular, our findings suggest that sector is not necessarily an accurate proxy for organizational values or activities. Instead, in order to understand the potential effects of PSM, we must consider (rather than take for granted) the degree to which an organization actually shares the individual's public service values and provides opportunities for the employee to act on or satisfy these values (Bright, 2008; Pandey, Wright & Moynihan, 2008; Steijn, 2008; Taylor, 2008; Wright & Pandey, 2008, forthcoming).

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Table 1
Characteristics of School Population and Sample

| | <i>Population*</i> | | <i>Sample</i> | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| | <i>School 1</i> | <i>School 2</i> | <i>School 1</i> | <i>School 2</i> | <i>Average</i> |
| Gender | | | | | |
| Female | 35 % | 47 % | 38 % | 54% | 48 % |
| Age | | | | | |
| Mean | - | - | 25.6 | 26.0 | 25.8 |
| Race | | | | | |
| Nonwhite | 18 % | 42 % | 14 % | 49 % | 33 % |
| Married | - | - | 53 % | 18 % | 33 % |
| Have children | - | - | 26 % | 6 % | 15 % |
| Academic profile | | | | | |
| Median Undergrad GPA | 3.73 | 3.32 | 3.78 | 3.50 | 3.60 |
| Median LSAT | 164 | 159 | 164 | 160 | 162 |

* School characteristics are taken from the National Association for Legal Career Professionals Directory of Law Schools, 2008-2009.

Table 2*Descriptive and Correlation Information*

| Variable | Mean | SD | Min | Max | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | |
|---------------------------------|--------|------|------|-----|-------|-------|---|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|----|--|
| 1 Likelihood of accepting offer | 2.71 | 1.87 | 0 | 6 | - | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 PSM | 19.55 | 5.00 | 0 | 30 | .17* | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 Service (1= high) | .50 | .50 | 0 | 1 | .18* | - | - | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 Salary (1=high) | .50 | .50 | 0 | 1 | .27* | - | - | - | | | | | | | | |
| 5 Undergrad GPA | 3.57 | .30 | 2.49 | 4 | .07* | .05* | - | - | - | | | | | | | |
| 6 LSAT Score | 161.84 | 5.34 | 130 | 175 | -.01 | -.01 | - | - | .15* | - | | | | | | |
| 7 Sex (1=female) | .48 | .50 | 0 | 1 | .06* | .01 | - | - | -.04* | -.17* | - | | | | | |
| 8 Married (1=married) | .34 | .47 | 0 | 1 | -.01 | .09* | - | - | .16* | .17* | -.29* | - | | | | |
| 9 Children (1=children) | .15 | .36 | 0 | 1 | -.03 | .03 | - | - | -.00 | .12* | -.27* | .58* | - | | | |
| 10 Age | 25.91 | 4.67 | 20 | 49 | -.08* | -.02 | - | - | -.30 | -.13* | -.14* | .28* | .38* | - | | |
| 11 Sample | 1.56 | .50 | 1 | 2 | -.08* | -.17* | - | - | -.43* | -.38* | .17* | -.36* | -.28* | .07* | - | |

Notes

Pairwise correlations, * $p < 0.05$

Intercorrelations between the manipulated independent variables, service and salary, and other variables are zero by design. As such, we use the same notation (-) as we use in identifying the perfect correlations along the diagonal.

Table 3
*Generalized Least Squares Estimates of Factors Influencing
 Likelihood of Accepting a Legal Job in a Particular Sector*

| Independent Variable | Legal jobs in the public sector | | | Legal jobs in the private sector | | | Legal jobs in the nonprofit sector | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|---------|------|----------------------------------|---------|------|------------------------------------|---------|------|
| | b | β | SE | b | β | SE | b | β | SE |
| PSM | .02 | .07 | .02 | -.02 | -.07 | .02 | .06 * | .18 | .02 |
| Service | -1.06 * | -.31 | .29 | -.22 | -.07 | .28 | -.94 * | -.28 | .26 |
| Salary | .84 * | .25 | .29 | 1.95 * | .64 | .28 | .45 | .14 | .26 |
| Undergrad GPA | .14 | .02 | .43 | .04 | .01 | .37 | .13 | .02 | .40 |
| LSAT | -.01 | -.04 | .02 | -.04 * | -.14 | .02 | .02 | .06 | .02 |
| Sex | .24 | .07 | .20 | -.14 | -.05 | .18 | .53 * | .16 | .19 |
| Married | -.17 | -.05 | .23 | -.10 | -.03 | .24 | -.05 | -.01 | .24 |
| Children | -.48 | -.10 | .32 | .49 | .11 | .29 | -.63 * | -.13 | .31 |
| Age | .01 | .02 | .02 | -.04 | -.12 | .03 | -.01 | -.02 | .02 |
| Sample | -.47 * | -.14 | .23 | -.36 | -.12 | .21 | -.28 | -.09 | .22 |
| Fit interactions | | | | | | | | | |
| PSM X Service | .10 * | .60 | .02 | .04 * | .24 | .01 | .08 * | .53 | .01 |
| Salary X PSM | .01 | .09 | .02 | -.04 * | -.26 | .01 | .02 | .11 | .01 |
| Intercept | 2.91 | | 4.37 | 11.93 * | | 3.74 | -3.39 | | 3.81 |
| N | 724 | | | 723 | | | 723 | | |
| R ² | .29 | | | .23 | | | .30 | | |

Notes

* $p < 0.05$, SE (Robust standard errors)

Figure 1

Change in Public Sector Job Acceptance by Service X PSM Manipulations

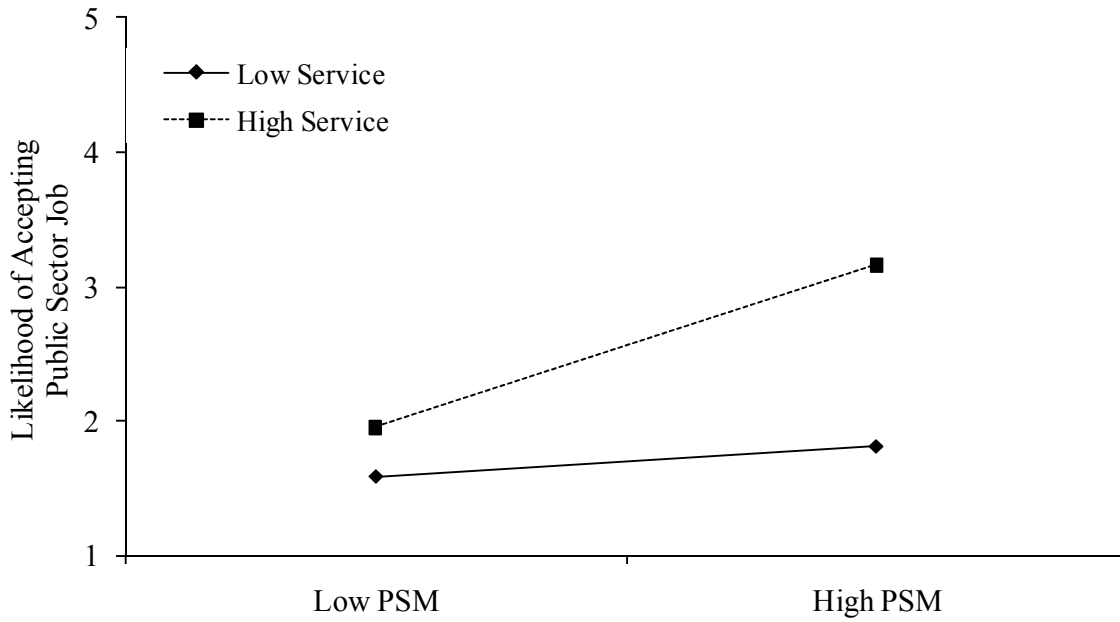


Figure 2

Change in Private Sector Job Acceptance by Service X PSM Manipulations

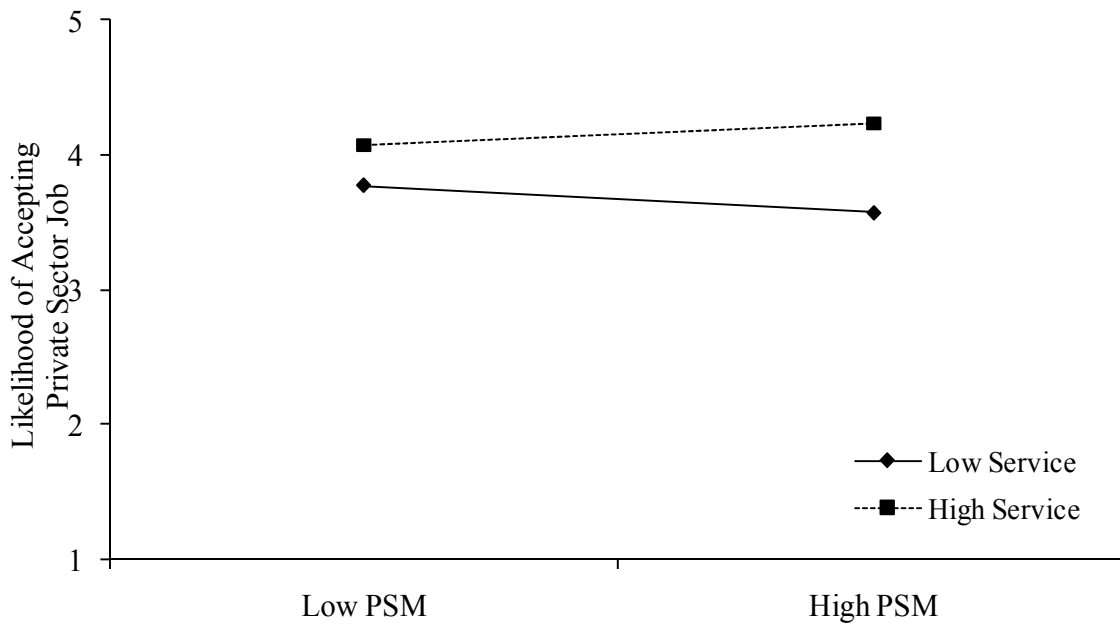


Figure 3

Change in Nonprofit Sector Job Acceptance by Service X PSM Manipulations

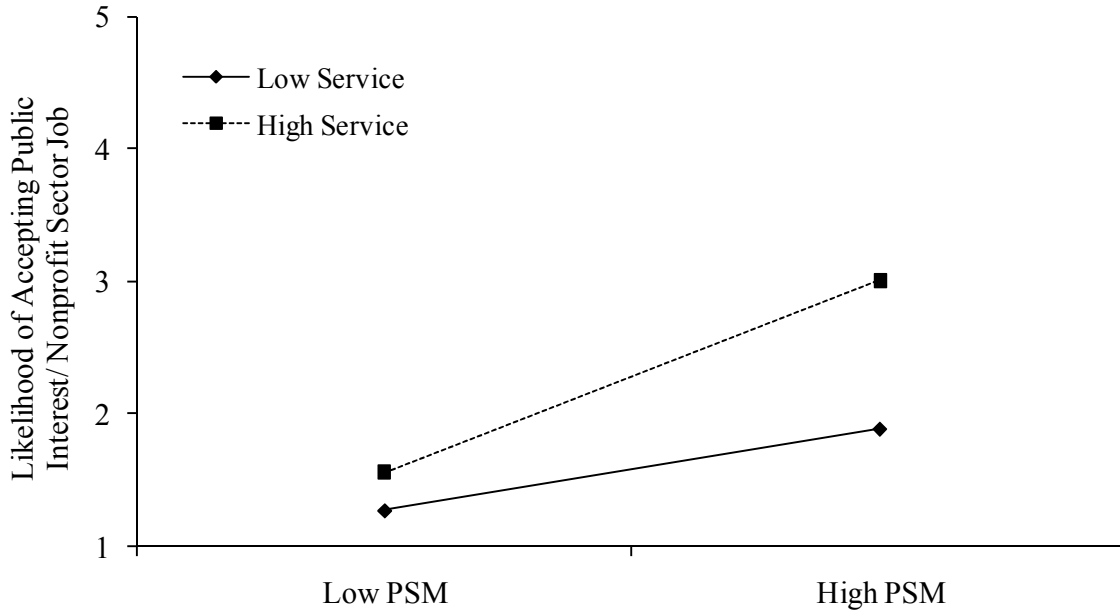


Figure 4

Change in Private Sector Job Acceptance by Salary X PSM Manipulations

