

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

Robert K. Christensen*, **Bradley E. Wright[†]**

**University of Georgia; [†]University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

ABSTRACT

Although most research focuses on person-organization fit to explain public service motivation (PSM)'s influence on job choice, this study investigates the independent effects of both person-organization fit and person-job fit using a policy capturing research design and a sample of first-year law students. Our findings suggest that PSM may play a more important role in person-job fit than person-organization fit. Consistent across three sectors of employment, individuals with stronger PSM were 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). After controlling for characteristics that influence person-job fit, PSM neither increased the likelihood that individuals would accept a public sector job nor decreased the likelihood that they would accept a private sector job. Among other things, our findings suggest that sector may be an inaccurate proxy for values that are often taken for granted in PSM studies.

INTRODUCTION

As a rapidly expanding field of research, public service motivation (PSM) focuses “on motives and action in the public domain that are intended to do good for others and shape the well-being of society” (Perry and Hondeghem 2008a, 3). As with any vibrant theory, PSM has evolved in subtle but potentially important ways. Nearly 20 years ago, Perry and Wise (1990, 368) defined PSM as “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations.” More recently, however, others have defined PSM more broadly as “a general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people” (Rainey and Steinbauer 1999, 23) or “motives associated with serving the public good” (Perry and Hondehem 2008b, 3).

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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 and Selden 1998; Perry and Hondeghem 2008b). Although 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 on the organization's publicness (Bozeman 1987; Moynihan and Pandey 2007). In short, PSM's effects may be a function of 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, and Moynihan 2008; Steijn 2008; Taylor 2008; Wright and Pandey 2008, 2010). In fact, one recent study found that although PSM does increase the attractiveness of government employment, individuals with higher PSM may be most attracted to government organizations that display a higher degree of publicness (those that stress welfare, education and culture) (Vandenabeele 2008). In other words, individuals with high PSM may find some public sector jobs or organizations may be more attractive than others perhaps due to important differences in mission, practices or even reputation.

Much of the current research, however, has confounded the effects of person-organization fit and person-job fit. For example, to what extent do individuals with higher PSM find certain public organizations more attractive than others because the values and missions of such organizations are more consistent with those associated with PSM or because such organizations are more likely to provide jobs with specific responsibilities that are more likely to fulfill an individual's PSM? 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 and Christensen 2010). 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). Therefore, our theoretical focus on job and organization fit, rather than sector fit,¹ is intentional and one that we hope might even lead to a more informed understanding of person-sector fit as a function of job and organization.

Investigating the separate effects 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 (Lewin and Frank 2002; Tschirhart et al. 2008). This may be due to job availability or one's career stage as one recent study found that although 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 and Christensen 2010). Even one of the studies most commonly cited in support of PSM found that public employees had

1 For an argument in favor of person-sector fit, see Rayner et al. (2011).

significantly higher PSM than private employees in only 8 of the 14 years analyzed (Crewson 1997). Such findings suggest that the relationship between PSM and sector employment choice is not entirely straightforward.

These findings also raise other important questions about the ability of public sector organizations to foster public service motivation (Moynihan and Pandey 2007). Although 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 and Steijn 2008). Unfortunately, much of the current research has not been able to isolate PSM's effect on occupational choice from the organization's ability to socialize or influence the PSM of their employees (Wright 2008; Wright and Grant 2010). This distinction is important because it may help explain the mixed findings regarding PSM's effect of employment choice (Crewson 1997; Lewis and Frank 2002; Tschirhart et al. 2008; Wright and Christensen 2010) as recent studies have consistently found that PSM increases the attractiveness of public sector employment opportunities among students across a broad range of academic programs (Christensen and Wright 2009; Vandenabeele 2008). PSM researchers, therefore, need to disentangle both the mechanism (person-job fit vs. 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, although 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 job-specific characteristics 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 and Steijn 2008; Wright and Grant 2010). 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 and Steijn 2008; Perry and Wise 1990; Vandenabeele 2008; Wright and Christensen 2010). This assumes that sector can serve as a proxy for organizational values. Recent research 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, and Moynihan 2008; Wright and Pandey, 2010) and that their personal values are congruent with those of their organizations (Bright 2008; Wright and Pandey 2008).

Although these studies directly test the underlying person-organization mechanism driving the relationship between PSM and sector of employment, they are limited by the use of samples consisting only of public sector employees. At least one study designed to avoid this particular bias does add support for the claim that employment sector can serve as proxy for organizational values. In his study of Dutch-speaking graduate students, Vandenberghe (2008) found that PSM predicts the attractiveness of different employment sectors. 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 and Wise 1990, 370), we test the following hypotheses:

H₁ 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 and Steijn 2008; Steijn 2008; Taylor 2008). Unfortunately, research exists that questions this fundamental 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 and Pandey 2007; Vinzant 1998). 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. Perhaps these findings can be accounted for by identifying characteristics that make certain classes or categories of jobs more fulfilling to employees with higher PSM.

Researchers have begun to identify specific job characteristics that may influence the degree to which employee PSM may be satisfied. In particular, recent studies on task significance suggest 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, 2008b; Grant et al. 2007). Such interactions 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, relation-based interactions enable 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. 2007). Therefore, although individuals may be generally more likely to seek jobs that provide service opportunities due to the greater task significance they may provide (Grant 2007), we expect this relationship to be stronger when an individual has higher PSM because such service can provide better opportunities

to satisfy these specific prosocial motives. In other words, we expect that the service orientation of a job will have a moderating effect on the relationship between PSM and the likelihood of accepting a particular job.

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, client interactions can often be a source of negative feedback (Morris and Feldman 1996; Savicki and Cooley 1994; Zapf 2002) or involve stigmatized groups that employees may perceive as less deserving of assistance (Batson et al. 2002). Perhaps as a result, frustrations derived through direct service contact have been identified as an important factor contributing to employee burnout (Kim and 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 as they may 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 that a person beginning their career will accept the job regardless of the employment sector. Thus, consistent with the recent work on prosocial motivation and person-job fit, we hypothesize:

- H_{2a} PSM is more likely to increase the likelihood of accepting a public sector job when that job is service oriented than when that job does not exhibit an emphasis on service.
- H_{2b} PSM is more likely to increase the likelihood of accepting a nonprofit job when that job is service oriented than when a that job does not exhibit an emphasis on service.
- H_{2c} PSM is more likely to increase the likelihood of accepting a private sector job when that job is service oriented than when that job does not exhibit an emphasis on service.

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. Although considerable empirical evidence supports such claims (Cacioppe and Mock 1984; Houston 2000; 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 financial rewards (Crewson 1997; Gabris and Simo 1995; Lyons, Duxbury, and 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 and Frank 2002; Tschirhart et al. 2008; Wright and Christensen 2010) but also their desire to work for government (Lewis and Frank 2002; Tschirhart et al. 2008).

This does not mean, however, that financial incentives do not play an important role in job choice decisions. A growing number of studies suggest that public employees, even those with high public service motivation, may still value financial rewards (Alonso and Lewis 2001; Newstrom, Reif, and Monczka 1976; Rainey 1982;

Vandenabeele 2008; Wittmer 1991; Wright 2007; Wright and Pandey 2008). One recent survey not only found that yearly salary increases were important to the acceptance decision of nearly all (97%) newly hired entry-level federal employees but also that pay was one of the top four most important factors in their decision to accept their job (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board 2008). Thus, although an individual's interest in financial rewards is often used in PSM research as a proxy for sector values that may shape 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. In other words, regardless of the sector in which they work, pay can be an important factor in determining person-job fit as individuals have financial needs that they expect their jobs to help satisfy.

When making job decisions, individuals often have to make decisions that require weighing trade-offs between financial rewards and other desired job characteristics (location, service orientation, sector, etc.). So although we might expect that higher salaries will increase the likelihood that individuals will accept a job regardless of the employment sector, this relationship may still be weaker for individuals with higher PSM in situations that require trade-offs between pay and service characteristics. When faced with making choices between higher salaries and higher service orientations, we expect that individuals with higher PSM will be more likely to accept jobs with lower salary when it also provides a greater service emphasis. Thus, even if the findings linking PSM to financial and sector preferences are mixed, we expect that PSM will have a negative moderating effect on the relationship between salary and the likelihood of accepting a job such that:

- H_{3a} The relationship between salary and job acceptance will be weaker for public sector jobs as the applicant's PSM increases.
- H_{3b} The relationship between salary and job acceptance will be weaker for nonprofit sector jobs as the applicant's PSM increases.
- H_{3c} The relationship between salary and job acceptance will be weaker for private sector jobs as the applicant's PSM increases.

METHODS

To test our hypotheses, we used a policy capturing research design and a sample of first-year law students (1Ls, Class 2011) at two top-tier law schools.² We worked with career services officers at the two schools to invite students to respond to an online survey to ascertain information about student's career decisions. Policy capturing is a widely used methodology (e.g., Feldman and Arnold 1978; Hitt and Barr 1989; Judge and Bretz 1992; Kristof-Brown, Jansen, and Colbert 2002; Olson, Dellomo, and Jarley 1992; Ravlin and Meglino 1987; Rynes, Schwab, and Heneman 1983; Slovic and 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 and Rynes 1991, 91). In this study, we used a survey-based vignettes 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 suggests

2 According to 2008 *U.S. News Law School Rankings*.

Table 1
Characteristics of School Population and Sample

	Population ^a		Sample		
	School 1	School 2	School 1	School 2	Average
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 undergraduate GPA	3.73	3.32	3.78	3.50	3.60
Median LSAT	164	159	164	160	162

^aSchool characteristics are taken from the National Association for Legal Career Professionals Directory of Law Schools, 2008–2009.

that experimental policy-capturing designs are predictive of actual decisions (Levin et al. 1983; Olson et al. 1992).

Data

The online questionnaire was administered early in the fall semester of 2008 to avoid potential socialization effects that might predispose students to work in either the private or public sector (Erlanger and Klegon 1978). Although we attempted to limit most socialization effects by surveying the students early in their legal studies, we recognize that their interest in a legal career itself may have resulted in (i.e., pre-law curriculums) or be a result of socialization forces relevant to their sector or service preferences. For example, many of these students may already be grappling with the conflict between upholding justice (society's interests) and advancing future client's (self) interests. In addition, approximately 90% of lawyers are employed in the private sector (America Bar Association 2000). Unfortunately, the impact of this type of socialization is difficult to measure or control.

After the initial invitation, career services personnel sent several e-mail reminders about the survey to the 1L listservs at the respective schools. To maximize the rate of participation in our study, a \$10 electronic gift certificate was offered (and ultimately sent) to each student who participated in the survey. The final sample exhibits an average response rate of 47%. Our usable sample size is 182 students. Both sample and population characteristics, 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.

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 and Judge 1994; Feldman and Arnold 1978; Judge and Bretz 1992; Ravlin and Meglino 1987; Rynes and 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 employment sectors: private, public, and nonprofit/public interest.³ To make the study conditions as realistic as possible, how we operationalized the service and salary conditions varied by sector. Although such differences limit our ability to make direct statistical comparisons between sectors, we focus our analyses on the choices *within* each sector by conducting separate analyses for each sector. We also informed respondents that geographic preference, opportunities for promotion, and area of expertise were constants in their decision-making process. 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 text illustrates 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 *\$Average*.
- (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 *\$Average*.

³ We acknowledge that our use of the wording “public interest” attorney in the nonprofit sector may be overly restrictive of the career opportunities for lawyers in the nonprofit sector; we used this wording due to our concern that respondents, early in law school, may not be fully aware of what job options exist in the nonprofit sector (The American Bar Association, e.g., does not track the number of lawyers working in the nonprofit sector). Law students will be more familiar with public interest career options as pre-law advising publications frequently highlight such careers and best law schools for students interested in public interest law. Although public interest law can be accomplished in private and government organizations, this work is often associated with work-performed nonprofit organizations. Indeed, the Web pages of one of the law schools in our sample explicitly encourages prospective and current students interested in public interest law to intern with nonprofit organizations in their geographic area. Nonetheless, we combined “public interest attorney” with the wording “in the nonprofit sector” in an attempt to distinguish the nonprofit employment opportunities from those in the private and public sectors.

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 and Lewis 2001; Brewer, Selden, and Facer 2000; Kim 2005; Pandey, Wright, and Moynihan 2008; Wright and 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 et al. 2001; Judge and 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 grade point average (GPA) and Law School Admission Test (LSAT) score.

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

RESULTS

Our data are arranged with each job decision as a case. Because we presented each respondent with all 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 such estimators are less efficient and potentially biased. We conducted our analyses accordingly using generalized least squares (GLS), a more appropriate estimation technique to yield both efficient and unbiased estimates (Hanushek and Jackson 1977; Judge and Bretz 1992). In essence, in modeling the likelihood of job offer acceptance with GLS, we have provided estimator information in addition to that required by OLS, namely information about covariance and variance of the errors. In Stata, this is done with the `xtreg` command and by designating a panel variable (i.e., the respondent) to recognize the potential dependency among a respondent's multiple observations (spatial autocorrelation) in the policy capturing design. In addition, we used robust standard errors in the event that the data generating processes underlying the error terms across observations are otherwise heteroskedastic,

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 although table 3 contains

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	Undergraduate 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*	—

Note: 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.

Pairwise correlations, * $p < .05$.

Table 3
GLS Estimates of Factors Influencing Likelihood of Accepting a Legal Job in a Particular Sector

Independent Variable	Legal jobs in the <i>public</i> sector			Legal jobs in the <i>private</i> sector			Legal jobs in the <i>nonprofit</i> sector		
	<i>b</i>	β	SE	<i>b</i>	β	SE	<i>b</i>	β	SE
PSM	.02	.07	.02	-.02	-.07	.02	.06*	.18	.02
Service	-1.10*	-.31	.31	-.30	-.07	.29	-.99*	-.28	.28
Salary	.86*	.25	.31	2.06*	.64	.29	.42	.14	.28
Undergraduate GPA	.19	.02	.43	-.07	.01	.39	.21	.02	.40
LSAT	-.01	-.04	.02	-.04*	-.14	.02	.02	.06	.02
Sex	.29	.07	.21	-.12	-.05	.18	.55*	.16	.21
Married	-.16	-.05	.23	-.06	-.03	.25	-.06	-.01	.24
Children	-.34	-.10	.33	.49	.11	.29	-.55	-.13	.32
Age	.01	.02	.03	-.03	-.12	.02	-.00	-.02	.02
Sample	-.44	-.14	.24	-.43	-.12	.23	-.23	-.09	.22
Fit interactions									
PSM \times Service	.10*	.60	.02	.04*	.24	.01	.09*	.53	.01
Salary \times PSM	.01	.09	.02	-.04*	-.26	.01	.02	.11	.01
Intercept	2.61		4.49	12.57*		3.31	-4.29		3.93
N	692			691			691		
R^2	.28			.23			.30		

Note: SE (robust standard errors).

* $p < .05$.

all effects of interest, including multiplicative terms, we also ran our models without the interactions.⁴ 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

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, whereas 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.

To test hypothesis 1, we regressed the likelihood of accepting a job for each sector onto respondent PSM while controlling for the other variables previously identified. The regression coefficients for and the main effects of PSM are more difficult to interpret given the inclusion of the multiplicative terms in the model. In 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 PSM reflects its influence when both salary and service are coded as zero (Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan 1990). In other words, when jobs offer more limited service emphasis and an average salary, PSM only

⁴ Results available from authors.

increased the likelihood of accepting a job in the nonprofit sector ($b = 0.06, p < 0.05$) after controlling for everything else in our model.⁵ 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.⁶ That said, PSM did have an independent effect on job acceptance in the nonprofit sector.

Moderated Effects

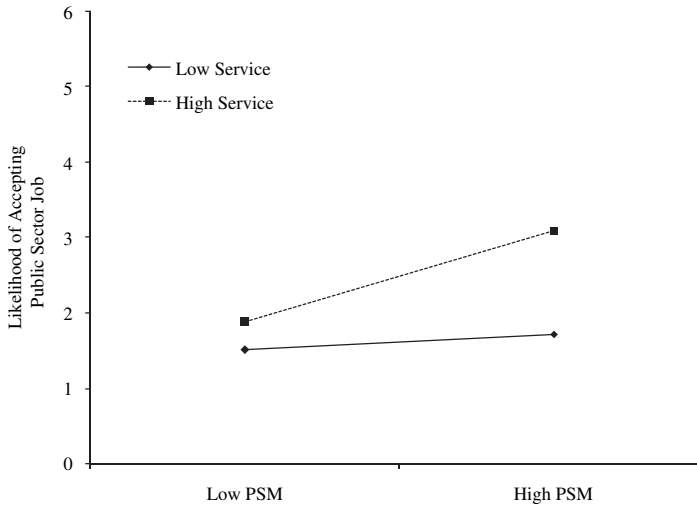
Of particular interest is how respondents' PSM and our manipulated independent variables jointly influence job acceptance decisions. Table 3 indicates that an offer's service orientation moderates a respondent's tendency to accept that offer according to a respondent's public service motivation. Although the "direct" effect⁷ of public service motivation on job acceptance was evident only in the nonprofit sector, the interaction effects (PSM \times Service) are significant across all three sectors. In other words, the likelihood of accepting an offer based on an individual's PSM changed according to the service emphasis of the offer. Public service motivation, then, has "multiple effects" (Franzese and 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. Furthermore, because our moderator is dichotomous/mean centered, we can say that when offers emphasize service (PSM \times Service) the relative size of PSM's effect is one of the largest predictors of job acceptance (see table 3, β s).

5 The main effects of salary and service must also be interpreted as conditional effects such that service has a statistically significant ($p < .05$) but negative effect on job acceptance in both the public and nonprofit sectors ($b = -1.10$ and -0.99 , respectively) when the respondent's PSM is zero. The regression coefficients for salary suggests that if 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.

6 The strength of the relationship between PSM and employment sector of their legal first job may be weakened by a number of factors specific to the legal field. For example, attorneys may be able to move across sectors more freely during their careers than other professionals, and law students may plan to take public sector jobs to make themselves more attractive to private sector employers later on in their career. To assess the degree to which these issues may weaken the study's conclusions, supplemental analyses were conducted to determine the relationship between the respondents' preference for a particular sector for their first job and their long-term career interests. The survey asked each respondent to rate the strength of their interest in a variety of different private (private practice small firm, private practice large firm, corporate counsel), government (federal, state, local agencies or court systems), and nonprofit/legal aid employment in terms of both their first job after law school as well as their interest in "spending the majority of their career in" the same categories of jobs/employers. After averaging the ratings across types of employers for each sector, the correlations between respondents interest in having their first job in a particular sector and spending the majority of their career in that same sector were very high (the correlation between their interest in having their first job in the public sector and spending the majority of their career in the public sector was 0.78, whereas the corresponding correlations for both the private and nonprofit sector was 0.83). In addition, the correlations between respondents' interest in starting their legal careers in the public or nonprofit sector and spending the majority of their career in the private sector were negative but weaker ($r = -0.16$ and -0.25 , respectively). These findings support our conclusions as they suggest that the student's interest in a particular sector for their first legal job is strongly associated and, therefore, may accurately represent their long-term career interests.

7 Although some (Franzese and 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 can be interpreted or coded as zero, the main/direct effects of PSM are useful and interpretable (Edwards 2008).

Figure 1
Change in Public Sector Job Acceptance by Service \times PSM Manipulations



Figures 1–3 expound the differing effects of service on public service motivation relative to our second set of hypotheses. Respondents' PSM is displayed on the *X*-axis, split at the mean to parsimoniously indicate two groups: those low and those high in PSM. The *Y*-axis reflects a respondent's likelihood of accepting a particular job, where 6 is very likely and 0 is very unlikely. 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

Figure 2
Change in Private Sector Job Acceptance by Service \times PSM Manipulations

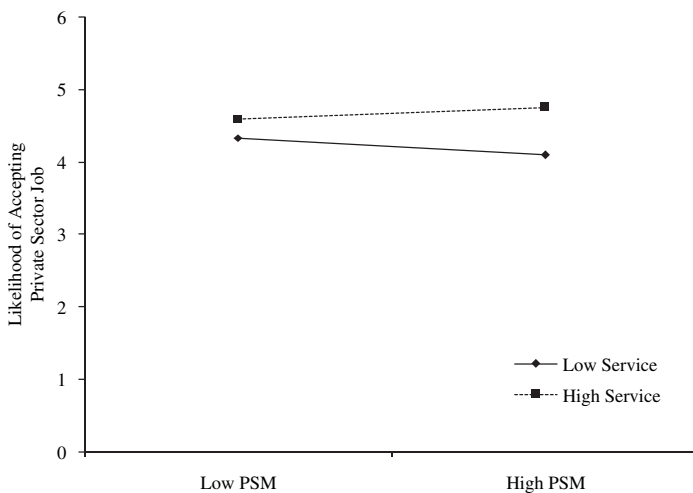
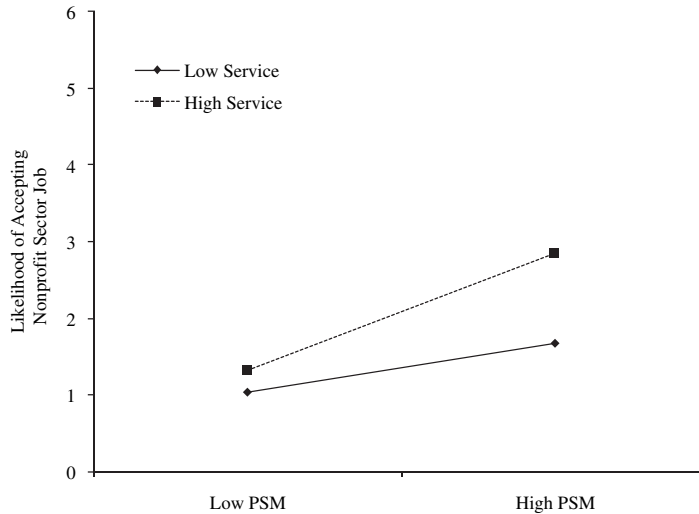


Figure 3
Change in Nonprofit Sector Job Acceptance by Service \times PSM Manipulations

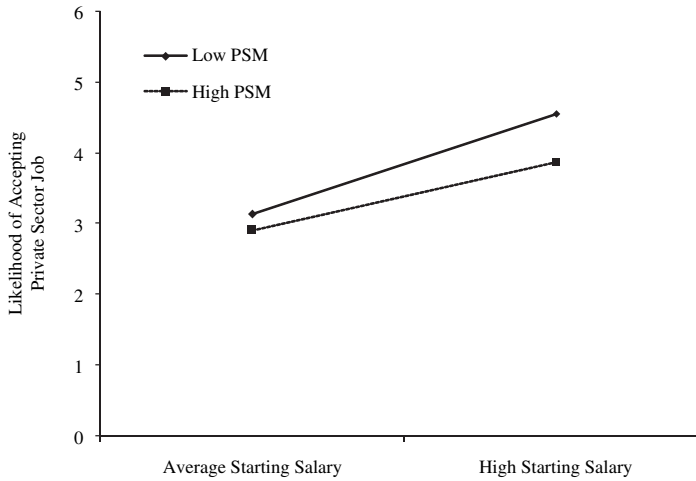


the job has a greater emphasis on service. We likewise confirm Hypothesis 2b as a similar pattern is seen for nonprofit sector offers (see figure 3). Hypothesis 2c suggests that high-PSM respondents will be less likely to accept a private sector job that is less service oriented. In partial contradiction of Hypothesis 2c, figure 2 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 slightly yet significantly ($p < 0.05$; see table 3) more likely than low-PSM respondents to accept a high-service offer in the private sector. In other words, the relationship between service and job acceptance in the private sector is stronger for individuals with weaker PSM.⁸ We thus find mixed evidence for Hypothesis 2c. Taken altogether, these findings generally support the importance of person-job fit when explaining the relationship between PSM and job choice. Individuals with stronger PSM are significantly more likely to accept a job (regardless of sector) in which service is emphasized.

Although 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,

⁸ It is entirely possible that all lawyers (regardless of their levels of PSM) may find private firms that allow them to deduct pro bono work from the billable hours be more attractive than those that do not. Such a practice, for example, might mean that the lawyer will be recognized or rewarded for their pro bono work and will not be expected to do such work in addition to their normal responsibilities. To the extent that this is true, however, service orientation's effect on accepting a job in the private sector should be less likely to be moderated by PSM (hypothesis 2c). Yet even with this uncertain interpretation of the service orientation operationalization in the private sector job scenarios, the data still support hypothesis 2c.

Figure 4
Change in Private Sector Job Acceptance by Salary \times PSM Manipulations



but support for 3c. Figure 4 displays that the salary-job acceptance relationship is weaker for high-PSM respondents than for low-PSM respondents. Like figures 1–3, the Y-axis is the likelihood of a respondent accepting a particular job. The X-axis in this case, however, categorizes job offers by our two salary manipulations per sector: average and high salary. 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. Although 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. This does not, however, rule out the potential importance of either PSM or

person-organizational fit. Rather, we interpret these findings to suggest that simply linking PSM and employment sector may be insufficient to determine person-organization fit.

In addition to providing a potential explanation for past studies that found only mixed support for the effects of PSM on sector choice (Crewson's 1997; Lewis and Frank 2002; Tschirhart et al. 2008; Wright and Christensen 2010), our 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. For example, although 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 values, as their employees with high PSM (Brewer and Selden 1998; Rainey 1982), others have found that PSM is only one of several factors that influence person-organization fit in the public sector (Wright and Pandey 2008, 2010). In fact, in one recent survey found that the ability for the employees to make a difference with their work was cited by only 9% of newly hired entry-level federal employees as the most important factor that influenced their decision to work for government (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board 2008).

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 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). We also investigated the role of financial compensation in job choice. Although individuals were more likely to accept the higher 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 suggests that PSM plays an important role in job choice decisions due to its interaction with other specific job characteristics such as service emphasis and salary. 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 1998) 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, our findings have some potentially important implications for public sector organizations and managers, suggesting that certain job characteristics or even job classes may be more attractive than others to individuals motivated by prosocial or altruistic values. In addition to important salary considerations, such individuals are attracted to positions that emphasize the ability to help others through direct service provision and contact with beneficiaries. Therefore, whenever possible, managers should consider designing jobs to maximize their service potential as well as emphasizing this job characteristic during the recruiting process.

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 and Grant 2010). 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 2008; Wright and Christensen 2010; Wright and Grant 2010). 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 multiattribute scenarios that are more similar to actual decision problems and it weakens social desirability effects by indirectly assessing the importance of explanatory variables (Arnold and Feldman 1981; Rynes et al. 1983).

In conclusion, although 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 also 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 offers jobs that are more likely to provide opportunities for the employee to act on or satisfy these values (Bright 2008; Pandey, Wright, and Moynihan 2008; Steijn 2008; Taylor 2008; Wright and Pandey 2008, 2010).

APPENDIX

Job Choice Scenarios

In an effort to better understand your career preferences, 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. 0 = Very Unlikely to 6 = Very Likely.

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) based on data for that sector and law school/hiring area).

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) based on data for that sector and law school/hiring area).

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 (\$ Average) based on data for that sector and law school/hiring area).

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 (\$ Average) based on data for that sector and law school/hiring area).

The job is for a government agency attorney. The emphasis is helping others. Your primary tasks involve client interaction in the area of client service provision. The starting salary is (\$ High) based on data for that sector and law school/hiring area).

The job is for a government attorney. The emphasis is document preparation and review. There is no particular emphasis is on interacting with recipients of government services. The starting salary is (\$ High) based on data for that sector and law school/hiring area).

The job is for a government agency attorney. The emphasis is helping others. Your primary tasks involve client interaction in the area of client service provision. The starting salary is (\$ Average) based on data for that sector and law school/hiring area).

The job is for a government attorney. The emphasis is document preparation and review. There is no particular emphasis is on interacting with recipients of government services. The starting salary is (\$ Average) based on data for that sector and law school/hiring area).

The job is for a public interest attorney in the nonprofit sector. The emphasis is helping others. Your primary tasks involve client interaction in the area of client representation. The starting salary is (\$ High) based on data for that sector and law school/hiring area).

The job is for a public interest attorney in the nonprofit sector. The emphasis is document preparation and review. There is no particular emphasis is on client representation. The starting salary is (\$ High) based on data for that sector and law school/hiring area).

The job is for a public interest attorney in the nonprofit sector. The emphasis is helping others. Your primary tasks involve client interaction in the area of client representation. The starting salary is (\$ Average) based on data for that sector and law school/hiring area).

The job is for a public interest attorney in the nonprofit sector. The emphasis is document preparation and review. There is no particular emphasis is on client representation. The starting salary is (\$ Average) based on data for that sector and law school/hiring area).

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