The Miss Marple Enigma: Public Service Motivation as the Opportunity, and Will to commit Public Value.

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Abstract:
The study of motivation of public servants, and of public service motivation specifically, is an imperative research field in present-day public administration studies. Definitions of public service motivation imply implicit understanding not only of motivation, but also of public values. The distinction between public values and public service motivation is argued as being analytical and not empirical in nature. However, there is no direct causal relation between values and behavior: some values may result in action, others not. Alike there is no direct link between motivation and behavior. Interpretation is needed to account for the effect, or lack of effect, of motivation. In this article, it is argued that public service motivation research can benefit from the research on public values, and also should take a next step to go from studying what possibly motivates people to the acting out of public values. As the famous detective Miss. Marpel argued: opportunity, motive, and actual action all have to be present. What is more, public service motivation is perhaps not just a personal trait, but as much a social, group construct.

Keywords: public service motivation, public values, commitment, morale
1. Introduction

In a context of government budget cuts and downsizing, the need to uphold the work motivation and thus performance of those working in the civil service is appreciated as a major concern (cf. Sievert, 2012). This has made the study of public service motivation (PSM) an almost imperative topic for present-day public administration. Central to PSM research is the idea that individuals scoring high on a PSM scale hold a personal orientation towards serving the public good (Perry and Hondeghem 2008). Rainey’s (1982) analysis of the desire of managers to engage ‘in meaningful public service’, laid the foundation for the concept, while the work by Perry and colleagues from the 1990s on gave PSM research a more methodological form. Despite the booming attention, it remains vague what precisely PSM is beyond a research model or tool; in particular, whether motivation helps us understand behavior. Too quickly authors seem inclined to hint at someone being motivated to do something as being someone valuing this, or the other way around, that an espoused ascription to some value implies someone as being motivated to pursue this value. Yet, it remains unclear to what extend we are ‘running around in circles’. In other words, PSM and public values are often used as more or less synonymous, but not interchangeable. Our aim is to unravel this conceptual mess at the interstices of PSM research and public values studies. We will use to this purpose as Miss Marple metaphor: Any enthusiastic reader of detective novels, such as Agatha Christie’s inquisitive spinster Miss Marple, is well aware that in order to prove who committed the crime motive alone won’t do; at least we also need to establish the opportunity and the will to act. Similarly, understanding motivation is but a part of a longer story.

Next to PSM, another booming field of study concerns public values (Van der Wal, Nabatchi & De Graaf, 2013). In this literature public values are posed as the key to understand what public administration is about. The discourses on PSM and public values rarely meet, yet the links between them seems obvious, for: “Are people motivated to carry out specific values, or are values what motivate people?” (Rutgers & Steen, 2010). Of the few studies touching on this topic, Andersen e.a. (2012) suggest that this is
primarily an empirical question. They conclude: “The empirical illustration concerning public managers shows how PSM and public values are associated empirically in a manner suggesting that the approaches should pay attention to each other but which does not allow total integration” (p.14). They suggest that the two can be conceptualized independently. We will to the contrary argue that it is a conceptual issue, implying that ‘total integration’ is conceptually impossible, just as much as they cannot be empirically separated. However, rather than aiming to provide a theoretical discussion that results in a new theoretical model outlining causal relationships and hypotheses, our goal is even more basic, that is, to unravel the relations between the two concepts, as well as between these concepts and behavior. Looking for PSM and public values is only part of the issue at stake if we really want to establish ‘who committed public value?’

2. Values and motivation

It seems a simple symmetric relation: Someone is motivated to realize a value, and a value denotes the presence of a motivation. Yet, values and motivations do not simply coincide, for we can value something, but not be motivated (enough) to act upon it. As Rainey, Koehler and Jung (2008: 10) point out “to have a value is not the same as exerting effort to fulfill it”. Similarly, we appear to be motivated to do something we do not value, for instance, due to group processes, or because we are psychologically wired to finish even a job we dislike. Understanding the intricate connections between PSM and public values demands a closer look at the meaning of both concepts, for different conceptualizations may have diverging consequences for the interpretation and (normative) assessment of empirical phenomena.

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1 As they frame it in their abstract: “That suggest that neither total separation nor integration [of public values and PSM] is a fruitful strategy” (Andersen e.a., 2012: 1).
2.1. Value as ‘reason and cause’?

Authors doing research on public values take identifying and classifying them as a core concern (e.g. Hood, 1991; Van Wart, 1998, Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman, 2007; Van der Wal 2008). There is also a strong literature that focusses on providing public value as the public manager’s core business. This research agenda originates in Moore (1995) and has been developed and adapted over time (cf. Stoker, 2006; Alford & Hyghes, 2008; Benington, 2009; Talbot, 2009; Moore 2013). The meaning of value is notoriously tricky and elusive. Although enumerations of possible public values are fairly common, a definition of public values is rare. One of the few (cf. Rutgers, 2015) is provided by Bozeman: public values are values that specify “the rights, benefits, and prerogatives to which citizens should (and should not) be entitled; the obligations of citizens to society, the state and one another; and the principles on which governments and policies should be based” (Bozeman, 2007:13).

Rescher argues that values primarily are invoked in the rational legitimation of action in human discourse. Hence his definition: “V is one of N’s values, if, and only if, N is prepared to invoke V favorable – and to acknowledge the legitimacy of its invocation by another – in the rationalization of action.”2 (Rescher, 1982: 9). Rescher’s approach seems especially useful in the context of empirical research on values as motivating behavior. This is reflected in, for instance, Oyserman’s vision that “(p)references, judgments, and action are commonly explained in terms of values” (2001: 16151). Rescher also distinguishes values from needs, desires and preferences. The latter, for instance, can be pretty momentarily, whilst values are more stable and less open to change. “Preferences are just that – preferences – and perfectly legitimate preferences need not be reasoned. But values are (so we have argued) invariable instrumentalities for reasoning about alternatives” (Rescher, 1982: 109). Impulses, preferences, or tastes are generally regarded not or less rational, or as troublesome for providing a legitimation for action.

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2 Is there a problem with this first definition; should the ‘if and only if’ be questioned? Can I not value something I do not wish others to know about, or perhaps be unaware of my ‘real’ values? Indirectly Rescher seems to opt for this, for he deals with the rationalization (legitimation) of actions.
This brings us to the question why values are regarded important to begin with? Part of the answer is, following Rescher, that they function as rational legitimation and explanation (‘reason and cause’): “To have a value is to be able to give reasons for motivating goal-oriented behavior in terms of benefits and costs, bringing to bear explicitly a conception of what is in a man’s interest and what goes against his interest: to operate within reason-giving contexts with reference to a ‘vision of the good life’” (Rescher, 1982: 10). If values would only be rationalization post hoc, they would by definition not have any kind of causal impact on a person’s behavior. Values function in argumentation, not just as ‘afterthought’, but as much as calls for action. This is reflected in the many descriptions of values as guiding human behavior, such as:

- “Nothing is more important to human beings than their values, beliefs, and underlying assumptions. (...) They are the cultural glue of civilizations and the organizations within them, and the fundamental building blocks of culture” (van Wart, 1998: 163).
- “Most writers consider values important, not because they are nice, but because they are expected to a) form our perceptions of reality, b) give identity to individuals as well as organizations and c) guide behaviour” (Beck Jørgensen, Vrangbæk & Sørensen, 2009).
- “Values are patterns of regulation accepted as desirable by persons in a given culture of family environment and serve as guiding principles in their lives” (Kuczynski, 2001: 16148).

It seems warranted to conclude that values are generally regarded as fundamental for understanding social reality. At the individual level, values provide direction for a person’s evaluations, decisions, action, and give or represent meaning; they constitute a person’s identity (his/her beliefs, virtues, moral compass, purpose). This still doesn’t tell us how values work, i.e., how they guide, regulate, direct, steer, or, in other words, motivate. According to Rescher (1982: 22), explanations in terms of values do not fit a dichotomy of being causal or fitting an interpretative approach, i.e., being reasons: “The value invoked in an explanatory role plays a part in a long story” (Rescher, 1982: 26). But, this is precisely what explanations or understanding in terms of reasons is about.
(Rutgers, 2003). Values refer to some general patterns of action, or tendencies to act, i.e., a consistency and continuity. The latter coincides with Aristotle’s notion of virtue: “moral virtue comes about as a result of habit” (1980: 28). In this sense values cannot be stipulated as simple effective causes. It is unlikely we can explain an action by pointing at someone holding a related value, for this requires massive ceteris paribus clauses with regard to other possible motives, context, etc. In Miss Marple’s terms, we lack will and opportunity; whilst will and opportunity underdetermine possible values. Values do become internalized standards for judgment and guides for action, but there is no direct (causal) relation between values and action: values someone holds dear, may not result in behavior (Cherrington, 1989: 298). In this sense it is interesting that Rescher also refers to values as ‘reasons’ or ‘motives.’ This brings us to the other concept: motivation.

2.2. Motivation

In the Oxford dictionary a straightforward description of motivation is provided: “the reason or reasons one has for acting or behaving in a particular way”. This seems extremely similar to some of the previous characteristics attributed to values. The same applies to Perry and Porter’s definition of motivation as “that which energizes, directs, and sustains behavior” (1982: 89). It suggests that we could define a motive along identical lines to Rescher’s description of values, i.e.: N is motivated by M if N is prepared to invoke M in the rationalization of action. This would, however, make values and motives identical by definition and thus isn’t very helpful. It is obvious from the previous section that values are attributed motivational ‘power’ and not treated as just rationalizations afterwards, yet, it is also clear that some values will result in action, and others won’t. This may be the result of insufficient ‘motivational force’ (whatever that is), and/or intervening or opposing values, but also different motives may make it less attractive or simply impossible to act in accordance with even the most cherished value.

Most ideas about motivation find their origin in psychology. 25 years ago Schoo and Vervoort-Indorf (1981: 561) already found that there are at least 40 different theories on motivation around in psychology. This is because motivation is very important to
Motivation refers to “the arousal of effort – the level of trying – but also to the direction of effort - what one tries” (Rainey, Koehler, and Jung, 2008: 9), a definition which directly refers to the semantic origin of the word, the Latin ‘movere’ or ‘to move’ (Rainey, 2003: 225). This is extremely vague as to what can be the ‘moving cause’. Rainey points out the complexity of the topic. Even a simple definition of motivation, e.g. “work motivation refers to a person’s desire to work hard and work well”, raises complications such as the question whether motivation is an attitude, a behavior, or both.

The earlier discussion on values as causes or reasons clearly also applies to motives. Doubting someone’s reasons, i.e. the provided rationalization for an action, we look for the ‘true’ motives for someone’s behavior. Such a motive may actually be unconscious to the person him/herself (Honderich 1995: 598). Motives as such do not provide any evidence that they have been acted upon. So when the inquisitive Miss Marple looks for a clue to identifying the murderer, it is clear that more is needed than just establishing a possible motive: the opportunity to have carried out the act has to be established as well.

Yet, in this example, the criminal act having been executed evidences that someone was willing to act upon his or her motivation. As with values, motives require a ‘longer story’, i.e., the complex of reasons as there is no direct link between behavior and motives: “While motive explanations are not causal, an appeal to causes may explain why, such-and-such counts as a reason for the agent; why for instance, reasons for acting which would show a person to be vain carry so much weight with that person” (Honderich 1995: 598). Rather than simply being causal, motives require interpretation to account for their effect or lack of effect, for, as Vickers remarked: “The motivations of one man are not necessarily those of another” (1967: 126). Also, why someone behaves altruistic may
very well not lie in the reasons or motives he/she gives, but reside in his/her upbringing. Let us now look more specifically at theories of PSM.

2.3. Public Service Motivation

According to Wright (2008: 81), early studies of PSM “simply conceptualize PSM as altruistic work-related values or reward preferences”. PSM was actually defined in the foundational work by Perry and Wise (1990: 368) as “an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations.” Perry later describes motives as “psychological deficiencies or needs that an individual feels some compulsion to eliminate” (Perry, 1996: 6). This turns motivations into something to avoid. But most definitions have a positive approach, regarding motivation as an urge or stimulus to produce something positively valued. Wright (2008: 81) finds “more recent work (…) has offered a more comprehensive conceptualization of PSM with a stronger foundation in motivation theory”. Thus, Perry and Hondeghem (2008: vii) see PSM as “an individual’s orientation to delivering services to people with a purpose to do good for others and society.” A person’s goal to produce something valued comes into the picture. Definitions that address PSM as a motivational force include Rainey and Steinbauer’s (1999: 20) definition: “a general, altruistic motivation to serve the interest of a community of people, a state, a nation or humankind”, or Brewer and Selden’s (1998: 417) definition as “the motivational force that induces individuals to perform meaningful … public, community, and social service”.

Much of current PSM research uses quantitative analyses to identify antecedents (e.g. Perry, 1997, 2000; Moynihan and Pandey, 2007; Pandey and Stazyk, 2008; Vandenabeele, 2011; Schott and Pronk, 2014; Giague, Anderfuhen-Biget and Varone, 2015), or to claim causal relationships with positive effects such as self-selection into public sector employment, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, interpersonal citizenship behavior, knowledge sharing, and employee and organizational performance (e.g. Crewson, 1997; Naff and Crum, 1999; Lewis and Alonso, 2001; Lewis and Frank,
2002; Bright, 2008; Brewer, 2008; Pandey, Wright and Moynihan, 2008; Vandenabeele, 2009; Chen and Hsieh, 2015). Yet, despite the attention the PSM concept has raised, little is still known about its nature or what precisely it means to be ‘public service motivated’.

Wright points at a number of studies that measure PSM by inferring it indirectly from employee behaviors (Brewer, 2003; Brewer and Selden, 1998; Houston, 2006 in Wright, 2008: 82). Other studies refer to Perry’s (1996) multidimensional measurement scale (or shortened versions). Perry (1996) identified four dimensions of PSM: The rational motive relates to the dimension of attraction to participate in public policy making. The norm-based motive relates to commitment to the public interest (a public orientation and concern for the public wealth, also including a sense of civic duty and social justice). Finally, affective motives relate to two dimensions: self-sacrifice (the willingness to substitute service to others for tangible personal rewards), and compassion (patriotism of benevolence, combining love of regime values and love of others). Each dimension is stipulated to provide a unique contribution to a person’s motivation. More and more, these dimensions are studied independently as they seem to have different antecedents and consequences (e.g., Andersen & Serritlew, 2012; Giauque, Ritz, Varone andAnderfuhrnen-Biget, 2012; Taylor, 2007). The measurement instrument thus has at once the asset and weakness of recognizing different motives for public service. As Wright (2008) states, this provides a sophisticated, theory grounded conceptualization of PSM. At the same time, it is still unclear what then precisely is PSM, and how it overlays the different, often inconsistent dimensions. Moreover, it raises the question if we can address PSM as one construct with an overreaching meaning. This uncertainty as to the concept of PSM is illustrated in ongoing efforts to investigate the meaning of PSM and improve its measurement instrument (e.g., Vandenabeele 2008; Sangmook 2011; Sangmook et.al. 2012), although in contrast to substantive efforts to improve the quantitative measurement instrument of PSM, “only a few articles exist which focus on the validity of the construct from a non-statistical viewpoint, carefully exploring the concept’s definition” (Ritz and Neumann, 2012: 2).
Recent PSM research fits the Miss Marple metaphor: motive as such is not adequate. The ‘opportunity to act’ is taken into account by referring to contextual factors in order to help explain inconsistent findings on the relationship between PSM and other variables. Research for example implies that person-organization-fit or person-job-fit might be important, because it is important whether an individual finds that he or she in the organization and in the daily work can do good for others and society (Bright, 2007; Leisink & Steijn, 2009; Wright & Pandey, 2008; Van Loon, Vandenabeele and Leisink, 2015). This is referred to also by Steen and Rutgers (2011), who argue that when individuals find no opportunity in the organization to put their PSM in practice, this may result in deviant behavior.

2.4. Public service motivation and public values: mess or mesh

Discussions how PSM relates to public values, or for that matter motives and values, are rare. For instance, Rainey, Koehler and Jung (2008: 10) point out that analyzing PSM is thinking in terms of effort and action, observing behaviors aimed at ‘fulfilling public values.’ Just as often other terms are used, such as ‘serving the public interest’. What it means to be serving the public interest, however, is very elusive as there is little agreement on what the public interest exactly is (cf. Bozeman, 2007). The public interest provides no general guideline for action, yet we can expect individuals to have their own interpretation of the public interest (Schott, Steen and Van Kleef, 2012). Interestingly, Perry and Wise (1990) explicitly refer to “a desire to serve the public interest (…) (as) only one value integral in the construct of public service motivation” (p.xx). Looking more closely at Perry’s (1996) measurement scale, we find a mixture of items, with some referring directly to behavior (e.g. ‘I unselfishly contribute to my community’), while others relate to attitudes (e.g. ‘It is hard for me to get intensely interested in what is going on in my community’), and still others relate to values or beliefs (e.g. ‘I believe in putting duty before self’).

Based on the work of Vandenabeele (2008), who builds on Perry’s earlier studies, it seems hard to distinguish, both theoretically and empirically, between motives and
values. Vandenabeele (2008: 32) defines PSM as “the belief, values and attitudes that go beyond self-interest and organizational interest, that concern the interest of a larger political entity and that motivate individuals to act accordingly whenever appropriate”. Here, motivation and values are directly equated, but values are clearly just one of the possible ‘causes’ to motivate. Linking back to Rescher’s approach to values, the public values are then perhaps the more rational and enduring arguments people may have. Next, however, Vandeabeele argues that a definition of PSM needs to cover “not only (...) public service motivation in a narrow sense, but also other types of value-laden behavioral determinants such as ethics and roles” (2008: 32). This suggests that also beliefs and desires are in the end ‘value-laden’ factors that may motivate. Vandenabeele also discusses public service values as dimensions of PSM. He explicitly searches for values in trying to determine the nature of PSM in an European environment: “the aim (...) is to investigate what the possible dimensions of public service motivation are by looking at the institutional values of public service associated with the institutions of government and public service delivery” (Vandenabeele, 2008: 53). He further states that “(i)n our search for administrative or public service values, we must rely on the specificity of the state and the role and expectations of public servants. The value pattern in which they are embedded might act in a motivational manner and thus provide us with information about the content of public service motivation” (Vandenabeele, 2008: 57). Both definitions and measurement scale of PSM thus provide confusion as to the question if PSM includes values, or rather is based on values, and what are the differences between values, public values, public service values and motivation(s)? It is evident, however, that the various definitions of PSM imply that values, i.e., public values, are assumed to be motivators for behavior.

Recently, the success of PSM research has been a driver for questioning how unique this concept is, and how its constructs and sub-scales relate to those of other concepts. Witesman, Walters and Christensen (2013), for example, question to what extent public service ethos, PSM, and public service values are unique constructs, or rather different approaches for measuring the same underlying phenomena. They point out that, in contrast to the PSM construct, in public values studies items typically do not form
subscales, nor generate a macro concept of adherence to public values. Also, PSM research focuses on individuals’ views of themselves in relation to society, while public values research studies views and expectations regarding the public sector explicitly. Second, their empirical analysis shows that somewhat different constructs seem to be measured, with the public values instrument used having more power in predicting attitudes and behaviors than the PSM construct. Both thus appear to denote complementary phenomena rather than substitutes. This fits the view by Andersen e.a. (2012) as mentioned in the introduction. We need, however, to go beyond survey research for comprehending the interplay between (motivations,) values and behavior (Witesman et.al., 2013).

3. Unraveling motivation and values

Despite extensive research defining and analyzing PSM, it remains disputed to what extend the characteristics or variables included in the models add up to a coherent explanatory concept, i.e., it remains unclear what phenomenon PSM denotes in empirical reality. Grasping the link between value and motivation may shed some light on this fundamental issue. Based on the previous observations on the nature of values, motivation and the concept of PSM, it can be concluded that it is difficult to even analytically distinguish between motives and values, let alone regard them as distinct empirical phenomena. Perhaps the main lesson, for the moment, is that values are regarded a kind of possible motive, next to others (such as needs, urges, preferences, and the like). Thus Rainy, Koehler and Jung are right to point out that “a public service motive may target public values and hence be indistinguishable from public values in certain senses” (2008: 10). Values are (possibly) motivating, but how values do motivate or influence people’s behavior is yet unknown to a large extent (Fiske and Taylor 1991: 164).
3.1. Linking public service motivation and public values

In the act of accepting a public function, we can closely link PSM and public values;
“…acceptance of public employment implies active acceptance of the civic principles
that society generally endorses” (Van Wart, 1998: 8/9). Accepting a job as a civil servant
can be regarded as making a promise of being motivated to act in accordance with the
values inherent in public office. By accepting a public office a person publicly commits
him/herself to being motivated to act as is expected in this office or function and to being
committed to act in accordance with the values associated with or intrinsic to the public
office in question. Research has shown that commitment is certainly not always a
conscious choice. If commitment can arise easily and even unnoticed, we can expect that
it also arises in the case of accepting a job as a civil servant. Thus, someone is perhaps
only motivated to take up a function because he or she simply needs the money, or
because it is the only suitable job nearby. Taking the job, however, will most likely also
create commitment to the job over time: if you are a civil servant, you will feel
committed to act like one, and probably consider this your own, authentic, motivation to
act as such and do as civil servants do (whatever that is). PSM may thus be a reason to
accept a job in the civil service: the thesis of self-selection into the public sector; one of
the core proposition in PSM (Perry, Hondeghem and Wise, 2010). Yet it may also be a
consequence of accepting a job in the civil service, especially as organizations likely
“cultivate, increase, and encourage the expression of PSM among employees” (Wright
and Grant, 2010: 692): the thesis or organizational socialization of PSM. In other words,
the (psychological) concept of commitment can be regarded as underlying PSM and the
subscription to public values.

It is therefore relevant to look at studies discussing the interrelatedness of PSM and
organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is attributed with three
characteristics in literature: “(1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization’s
values and goals, (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the
organization, and (3) a strong desire to maintain membership of the organization”
(Cherrington 1989: 301). Pandey and Stazyk (2008: 110) see the relationship between
PSM and commitment as an outgrowth of Perry and Wise’s (1990) categorization with it’s normative, affective, and rational dimensions. Indeed, the same dimensions are put forward as underlying the concept of organizational commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Steijn (2008) suggests that PSM will have a positive effect on commitment if employees can ‘use’ their PSM in the organization they work for. However, negative effects may also occur. Moynihan and Pandey (2007), for example, find that organizational tenure has a negative association with PSM. Frustrated service ethic is suggested as an explanation. “(E)ven though individuals may join a public organization with high idealism, the lack of opportunities to firsthand experience valued outcomes can lead to damping down of PSM (Pandey and Stazyk, 2008: 107). This also refers to Buchanan’s (1974; 1975) theory on frustration, as he finds that public servant’s may be attracted to the public sector by an urge to contribute to society, but ”(t)hey are too infrequently sensitized to the facts of the political milieu and are disillusioned to find so much activity which makes few direct contributions to the mission with which they identify” (Buchanan 1974: 346). The reality of one’s daily work – e.g., negative attitudes of service users, behavior of colleagues, or red tape – may lead initially public service motivated employees to become frustrated and disillusioned (Schott, 2015). Interestingly, Ward (2014), in a longitudinal study, even finds indications for an initial drop in PSM on entry of the civil service. Yet, Pandey and Stazyk (2008: 111) find it arguable that organizational commitment “can be conceived of as both an antecedent and consequence of public service motivation”. PSM does thus not simply coincide with organizational commitment. Before, we pointed at the extra-organizational or organization transcending nature of PSM (XXX), as it can exist prior to entering a public function, and is therefore not linked to a specific organization or even to the public sector.

The previous implies that PSM indicates a willingness to strive for realization of public values, i.e., there is a commitment to public values. However, whether someone acts upon a value, cannot be explained in terms of a commitment (or motivation for that matter) only. Even a small, implicit commitment can, nevertheless, have big effects. For instance, our inbuilt urge for consistency and to finish whatever we are doing (e.g. Albarracin and Wyer, 2000; Tedeschi, Schlenker and Bonoma, 1971; Schlenker, 1980),
may result in a commitment to public values as these are implicit in accepting a function as a civil servant. However, there are ‘mitigating circumstances’: the choice to accept a public function must be regarded voluntary and as such the commitment to public values as authentic (e.g. Lokhorst, 2009). This is more likely the case if this commitment already existed before entering public service. So, only taking a job out of necessity or because one is forced to proclaim adherence to the profession’s values may have no effect at all. In fact, ‘forcing’ allegiance may very well have negative impact on commitment and result in no cognitive dissonance in case of obstructing public values. But then again, the publicness of proclaiming one’s PSM, for instance in the case of an obligatory oath of office, may be internalized and become an actor’s ‘true’ attitude, even if that wasn’t initially the case: commitment to a specific self-representation will result in someone acting this out since presentation shapes people’s self-appraisals and behavior.

Before turning to the possible differences between motivation and commitment, we can wonder whether the references to motives and values result in ‘running around in circles’? In as far as the two are used as cognitive equivalent in many instances, the one does not help explain the other, as they are linked by definition: having a value implies being motivated for, a specific behavior. That is, a value is a motive, or reason for doing something. Yet, there are also differences as values are but one kind of motivation and, whereas motivation can be momentarily, values are a kind of motivation with relative stability. The previous suggests that there is no empirical distinction between holding a public value and being public service motivated, even though the latter may include many more variables. Motivation is, however, not necessarily limited to values. The other way around, values may not necessarily result in a ‘motivational force’, i.e., to result in behavior in accordance with those values. Not only may there be other factors hindering or overpowering the motivation, but it is also possible to simply act differently. The paradox of akrasia (‘acting against one’s better judgement’) is an illustration of this. So, both having a motivation or holding a value may not result in action. In the case of PSM

3 Although, as noted, Ward (2014) notices an initial drop in PSM. This is not taking into account that PSM might also be crowded out at the work place, for example by financial incentives or employees’ frustration with the organizational culture (Moynihan, 2008; Georgellis, Iossa and Tabvuma, 2011; Steen and Rutgers, 2011).
the motive is value oriented by definition: it is a public value that motivates certain behavior, or is at least supposed to do so.

By looking at psychological theories explaining and predicting behavior based on concepts such as promises and commitment, we are able to better understand the relation between motives and values. For example, publicly adhering to public values will increase the commitment to these values. Motives can be of many different origins and are usually put forward as a kind of cause. Why someone is motivated, quickly results in an infinite regress. Although the concept of commitment is prone to the same problems, it seems to be used as a more descriptive concept. Simply put, a commitment ties an individual to a value, and, “Commitment to an action serves to crystallize and strengthen the corresponding attitude, making it more resistant to change and more likely to guide behavior (…)” (Schlenker, Dlugolecki and Doherty, 1994: 21). This in turn fits the definition of values as being resistant to change, contrary to impulses, tastes, or ‘fads and fashion’. The relation between motives and values results in a circle, whereby the one causes the other, or provides the other’s reason. This is less so in the case of commitment and values: values as such do not create commitment, but someone can be committed to a value, i.e. have a normative commitment.

3.2. The social aspect of public service motivation

In PSM literature, public values, in particular public service values, are by definition constitutive motives. The two are only analytically distinct: a public value is assumed to be what causes, i.e. motivates, to act in a specific way. Having a PSM without having public values does not makes sense, even though there are additional variables in a PSM model. Thus, having a value, i.e. being committed to it, does not necessarily imply a motivation or opportunity to act upon it in all times and places. This is the Miss Marple issue: motivation also requires the will to act upon it, i.e., the commitment to realize a value as well as the opportunity to act. A simple example is that someone highly committed to justice, may in a specific time and place consider other values more important (or even more basic: be too tired, buzzy, distracted, or so).
Whereas in the public values discourse ‘public’ primarily refers to the fact that the values in question are somehow collective, i.e. social, the PSM discourse takes an almost opposite stance as it is focused on the individual. In terms of our Miss Marple metaphor, the latter reads the story as being about catching a murderer – someone with corrupt values –, the former as a story about the social interactions between people (sharing and disputing values). Bozeman’s definition of public values, for instance, explicitly points at the importance of ‘normative consensus’ as the constitutive social context, but PSM seems to regard the individual as its sole origin. In 2010, Perry, Hondeghem and Wise looked back at the PSM research developments and linked PSM with altruism, self-sacrifice, motivation, performance, satisfaction, and the like, all as individual characteristics. The social or group context remains out of sight. Although they regard the question “whether its [PSM] effects are collective rather than individual” (2010: 685) an important issue for future research, this is understood in terms of ‘institutional design’ and ‘incentive structure’. The focus remains firmly on: “The relationship between PSM and individual and organizational performance” (p. 688). PSM as a social construct or as a group phenomenon seems at best contextual. In a subsequent article, Wright and Grant (2010) identify ‘critical gaps in our current understanding’ of PSM, and call for awareness of the origins of PSM research; however, they do not reflect on the individualistic starting points and social-psychological approach of most PSM research. Surprisingly, they do point at the need to isolate the effects of ‘socialization mechanism’ (p. 693) to truly get at PSM. A similar argument can be made for the primarily quantitative approach to PSM, whereas public values research seems to be more mixed, if not giving priority to qualitative arguments.

The roots of PSM research are old, and it is perhaps in these old roots that some correction for the lack of attention for the more social aspect of PSM in terms of the old concept of ‘morale in the civil service’ as used by Walker (1961), can be discovered. Walker regards morale a combination of four factors: Productivity and efficiency, Job-satisfaction, Pride in the Working Group, and Cohesiveness. How these link is unclear, but they somehow affect individual or collective efficiency and “enjoyment of their jobs” (p.63). In other words, morale is as much concerned with the collective as with the
individuals within such a collective. Morale seems in origin particularly used in reference to the military, and following from that, with the support of citizens for the war effort (Ruch 1941; Durant, 1941). Durant, for instance defines morale as: “the relationship of a group to a given end” (p. 406). It also figured in the literature on industrial employees. Thus, Whisle and Remmers develop measurement scales and regard it: “The study of individual or group morale by showing cases of undervaluation and of overvaluation …”(1937: 165). Later authors, such as Baehr and Renck (1958), built upon Majo’s famous work: “Levels of motivation and morale are a result of the total work situation and of its many overlapping dynamic interrelations which involve both the individual and the smaller group in a large social field” (p.160).

In the field of public administration, Walker´s concept of morale in the civil service did not catch on. Nowadays, morale seems only to be used in a more casual, essayistic way to voice concerns about; “the low morale of public servants” (Lee, 1985: 377; cf. Brent, Steel & Warner, 1990; Murray, 2005: 6; Seddon, 2008: 14). Somehow ‘employee morale’ is a concern (and responsibility) for managers in order to keep performance up. However, morale can perhaps be used to conceptualize the broader context of PSM and its connection with public values. Looking at dictionary definitions, morale, as a group phenomenon, concerns confidence, enthusiasm, and discipline with regard to purpose of a group at a particular time; in the case of the public sector morale, the purpose has then to be analyzed in reference to public values.

There are fruitful avenues for future research as slightly different questions have to be posed, such as ‘What public values are people committed to?’; ‘How strong is such a commitment?’; ‘How important are public values compared to other possible motives?’, as well as, ‘How is PSM determined by the morale in a group?’ or even more drastic, ‘To what extend is morale as a group characteristic more influential than an individual’s PSM?’ The latter would imply perhaps going further than Vandenabeele’s (2008) search for a European PSM model. When an act has been executed, this evidences that there was opportunity to act and that someone was committed to act. Being as inquisitive as Miss Marple, we want to delve deeper and not solely establish a possible motive. Thus, the
links between motivation and public values may very well require more qualitative research in to the specific meaning of values for an individual or within a specific group.

4. Conclusion
To conclude, PSM research can benefit from public values studies (both normatively and empirically). This will enhance the (inter-discourse) validity of the findings. It seems urgently needed to link the motivation that is supposed to result from subscribing to specific public values with the acting out of this motivation. This implies both finding ways to establish what actual acts are indicative of someone fulfilling his or her PSM and, just as important, what circumstances are favorable or hindering such fulfillment, and, last but not least, what are the positive and negative effects of having a (high) PSM in the light of, amongst others, job satisfaction, legitimacy, and professional morality. Motives and values denote analytically distinct phenomena, i.e., not necessarily empirically independent, but as different aspects of, or perspectives on, empirical phenomena. What is more, public values study brings in the realization that PSM is perhaps not just a matter of individuals, but as much a social or group phenomenon: both values and motivations are part of a ‘longer story’.

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References


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Witesman, Walters and Christensen (2013), …..xxx

