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Pulling the Levers: Transformational Leadership, Public Service Motivation, and Mission Valence

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This article contributes to our understanding of public service motivation and leadership by investigating ways in which organizational leaders can reinforce and even augment the potential effects of public service motivation on employees' attraction to the organization's mission (mission valence). The results contribute to two research questions. First, the findings provide new evidence on the sources of public service motivation. The authors find that transformational leadership is an organizational factor associated with higher public service motivation. Second, the article examines the relationship between transformational leadership and mission valence. The authors find that transformational leadership has an important indirect effect on mission valence through its influence on clarifying organizational goals and fostering public service motivation.

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The fundamental question of how to motivate purposeful action and performance in public organizations remains with us. There

is no shortage of theories, but there is a lack of clear evidence to inform choices among the myriad alternatives. To what extent should organizations emphasize intrinsic or extrinsic motivators? To what extent should managers focus attention on formal management systems versus informal systems? What role can leadership play? In short, organizations and individual managers need to better understand which levers they can call on, and to what effect (Moynihan and Pandey 2007a).

This article offers empirical evidence on these questions by investigating the mechanisms by which transformational leaders can activate levers that enhance mission valence. Given the long-standing recognition of the power of worthy and attractive goals by organization and management scholars (e.g., Barnard 1938), it is important to gain a better understanding of what makes organizational goals attractive and compelling to individual employees. We characterize this as mission valence, a concept advanced by Rainey and

Steinbauer (1999), who draw on expectancy theory to define it as employee "affective orientations toward particular outcomes" associated with an organization's mission (Vroom 1964, 15). Thus, mission valence can be viewed as an employee's perceptions of the attractiveness or salience of an organization's purpose or social contribution. Recent scholarship promotes the argument that mission valence enhances the satisfaction that an individual experiences (or anticipates to receive) from advancing the organizational mission, and, in turn, it can be expected to influence the ability of the organization to recruit, retain, and motivate its employees (Wright 2007).

Despite the potential importance of the relationship between mission valence and public service motivation (PSM), it remains understudied. In particular, we know little about the role that organizational leadership can play in fostering public service motivation and mission valence

(Park and Rainey 2008). A recent assessment of the state of research in public service motivation underlined the need to better explore the role of leadership:

[L]eaders can influence public service motivation through several mechanisms, including engaging employees' existing values, infusing jobs with meaning, and highlighting and rewarding public service values. These processes are not well understood ... The specific challenges worth investigating include how leaders raise the salience of collective identities and values in followers' self-concepts, linking the organizational mission to organization members' and clients' identities and values, and linking members' job behaviors to their identities and values. (Perry and Hondeghem 2008, 308–9)

Indeed, Paarlberg and Lavigna (2010) argue that one of the main challenges for research on public service

motivation is to examine how managers might shape it toward better organizational outcomes, and they identify transformational leadership as a topic that deserves empirical attention. This article takes up this challenge, developing and testing a model that proposes that transformational leaders use PSM and goal clarity as levers to foster mission valence.

Transformational Leadership

Over the last 30 years, transformational leadership has become one of the most prominent theories of organizational behavior. In contrast to leadership based on individual gain and the exchange of rewards for effort, transformational leaders direct and inspire employee effort by raising their awareness of the importance of organizational values and outcomes. In doing so, such leaders activate the higher-order needs of their employees and encourage them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the organization and its clientele. Research not only has validated the existence of transformational leadership but also consistently has linked the practice of these transformational leadership behaviors with employee performance and satisfaction (Bass and Riggio 2006; Dumdum, Lowe, and Avolio 2002; Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam 1996; Trottier, Van Wart, and Wang 2008).

Given its emphasis on the importance of an organization's mission and outcomes, transformational leadership may be particularly useful in public and nonprofit organizations, as such organizations have strong service- and community-oriented missions. In fact, consistent with transformational leadership's emphasis on the motivating potential of organization mission, a key tenet of the literature on public employee motivation (Paarlberg and Perry 2007; Perry and Porter 1982; Perry and Wise 1990; Rainey and Steinbauer 1999; Wright 2007) is that "the more engaging, attractive and worthwhile the mission is to people, the more the agency will be able to attract support from those people, to attract some of them to join the agency, and to motivate them to perform well in the agency" (Rainey and Steinbauer 1999, 16).

Although prior public management research often has focused on the challenges posed by the goals of public organizations (Chun and Rainey 2005; Hargrove and Glidewell 1990; Pandey and Rainey 2006), those very same goals can present opportunities for inspiring and motivating employees. While PSM often is used to describe individuals who are predisposed to respond to the motives found in public service, transformational leadership suggests ways in which the organization and its leaders actively can increase the perceived attractiveness or salience of the organization's purpose or social contribution. In other words, transformational leaders are effective in public organizations because they act in ways that can enhance PSM (Park and Rainey 2008; Vandenabeele 2008b) and what Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) refer to as employee mission valence. If so, then it is important to gain a better understanding of how leaders can produce this effect.

Leaders who transform their followers' attitudes and commitment to the organization's mission typically exhibit certain characteristics or behavior (Bass and Riggio 2006; Paarlberg and Lavigna 2010; Trottier, Van Wart, and Wang 2008). For example, transformational leaders inspirationally motivate employees by clearly articulating an appealing vision of the organization's mission and future. Creating a

vision, however, is not enough. Transformational leaders also must encourage and facilitate their followers to work toward that vision. Thus, a second but closely related characteristic of transformational leaders is that they serve as a source of idealized influence, functioning as a role model (modeling behaviors consistent with the stated vision) and building employee confidence and pride in the organization. A third characteristic of transformational leaders is that they help followers achieve the mission by intellectually stimulating them to challenge old assumptions about organizational problems and practices. Thus, the very descriptions of these transformational behaviors or characteristics suggest that a large part of the effectiveness of transformational leaders is attributable to their ability to increase employee mission valence through the articulation of *clear* and *attractive* visions of the organization's mission. In other words, transformational leaders alter employee perceptions of goal importance and clarity. Each of these mechanisms will be discussed separately.

Influencing Employee Perceptions of Goal Importance

One factor that may be especially relevant to mission valence is PSM. The theory of PSM suggests that public employees are more likely than private sector employees to view public organization missions as important because of the overlap between these goals and their own values (Perry and Hondeghem 2008; Perry and Wise 1990). This encourages employees to incorporate the organization's goals into their own sense of identity and to view them as personally meaningful (Weiss and Piderit 1999). Consistent with that view, research has found that PSM can improve both employee (Brewer 2008; Vandenabeele 2009) and organizational performance (Brewer and Selden 2000; Kim 2005; Ritz 2009). A number of studies have suggested ways in which managers can capitalize on this effect by communicating the importance of performance goals and outcomes (Paarlberg and Perry 2007; Vandenabeele 2008b; Wright 2007; Wright and Pandey 2008).

While one might expect that there would be clear evidence that individuals with higher levels of PSM should be stimulated and moved to action by the salience of public sector missions, the existing evidence is mixed. Some research shows that public employees can be attracted to the missions of public organizations because those missions are consistent with their prosocial values and desire to help others (Feeney 2008; Perry and Wise 1990; Rainey and Steinbauer 1999; Wright and Pandey 2008). In spite of the challenges posed by goal ambiguity and conflict, there are instances in which individuals are inspired by the missions of public organizations and work hard to accomplish them (Paarlberg and Perry 2007; Wright 2007). But other research emphasizes the difficulty that public organizations have in connecting individual values to mission. Public managers have been found to display weaker goal and action competencies (Boyatzis 1982) or even a "frustrated service ethic" (Buchanan 1975; Vinzant 1998), findings that are consistent with more recent evidence that red tape and tenure reduce PSM (Moynihan and Pandey 2007b). As Scott and Pandey note, "work motivation can be frustrated when employees are unable to see a clear connection between their outputs and larger organizational goals" (2005, 174). In other words, public organization goals are not always effective at motivating action.

To help explain these mixed findings regarding PSM, a number of recent studies suggest that PSM's affect on job satisfaction, commitment, turnover, and performance are mediated by the degree

of person–organization fit. This research suggests that PSM only increases employee performance or satisfaction in public sector organizations to the extent that it increases the likelihood that the employee perceives that his or her values are consistent with the organization's values or that the organizational goals are worthwhile. In doing so, each of these studies has found that PSM increases employee perceptions of person–organization fit in general (Bright 2007, 2008; Taylor 2008; Wright and Pandey 2008) or even mission valence in particular (Pandey, Wright, and Moynihan 2008; Steijn 2008).

Taken together, the research on PSM suggests that even though the inspiration provided by public sector missions cannot be taken for granted, PSM still can function as a lever that can be used to shape positive organizational outcomes. While initial studies suggested that PSM was something that was shaped by sociohistorical factors such as education, family, and religion (Perry 1997), more recent work has begun to suggest ways in which organizational leaders can reinforce (Moynihan and Pandey 2007b; Paarlberg and Perry 2007; Park and Rainey 2008; Vandenberg 2008b) and even augment (Wright 2007; Wright and Pandey 2008, 2011) the potential effects of PSM by emphasizing the relationship between the values and performance of the employee with the values and performance goals of the organization. In fact, Paarlberg, Perry, and Hondelghem echo the mechanisms emphasized by transformational leadership scholars in arguing that leaders can foster PSM when they “communicate values that raise followers’ consciousness about idealized goals and then get followers to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of larger goals ... They [also] raise their followers’ consciousness about idealized goals by articulating high standards of moral and ethical conduct, and acting as prosocial role models” (2008, 281–82).

Thus, lessons from the transformational leadership literature may be particularly helpful in exploring the link between PSM and employee attitudes and behavior, as this literature relies on many of the same assumptions as PSM research. While PSM assumes that many public employees may be predisposed to being motivated by a public service mission, transformational leadership assumes that employees can be motivated by appealing “to their identities and end values, infus[ing] their tasks and roles with an ideological meaning and purpose, and emphasize collectivistic norms such as social responsibility, service and altruism” (Shamir and Howell 1999, 268). Consistent with this expectation, one recent study found that transformational leadership increased employee public service–oriented behaviors (Park and Rainey 2008). In addition, the demonstrated importance of transformational leadership in private sector organizations suggests that the influence of this variable is not predicated on the existence of PSM or even public service missions. Such leaders can emphasize the employee’s sense of duty and responsibility to their coworkers and supervisors (Moon 2001) or instill a sense of pride or ownership in the organization’s performance outcomes or success (Bass and Riggio 2006) through both their words and deeds (Paarlberg and Lavigna 2010). Thus, this study will test whether transformational leadership behaviors can enhance public employee mission valence both directly by

activating their intrinsic motivation in general (i.e., conscientiousness, pride, and meaning) and indirectly by increasing their levels of PSM.¹ We hypothesize that

Hypothesis 1a: Transformational leadership behaviors will have a direct, positive effect on employee mission valence.

Hypothesis 1b: Transformational leadership behaviors will have an indirect, positive effect on employee mission valence through their influence on public service motivation.

Influencing Employee Perceptions of Goal Clarity

Organizational goals establish a vision of a desired future state, which, in turn, provides both a rationale for the organization’s existence and standards by which performance can be measured. In other words, they direct, justify, and drive coordinated (or cooperative) behavior. To do this successfully, organizational goals need to be reasonably explicit in their communication of the desired outcomes used to guide employee attitudes and behavior.² Clearer goals, for example, help employees see connections between their values and the values of the organization that, in turn, can increase the degree to which employees will incorporate the organization’s goals into their sense of identity and find meaning and self-affirmation from the organization’s work (Weiss and Piderit 1999).

In addition, the clarity of organizational goals can increase employee perceptions of mission valence because they “articulate what is distinctive about the organization in ways that clarify the agency’s contribution to a larger policy domain” (Weiss and Piderit 1999, 196). In fact, consistent with expectations (Rainey and Steinbauer 1999), Wright and Pandey (2011) recently found that employee mission valence increases when the organization’s mission is reasonably clear, understandable and distinctive. Thus, it is not surprising that the transformational leadership theory emphasizes the importance of clearly articulating an organization’s goal as part of the process of inspiring and motivating employees. In other words, an organization’s mission can inspire only those who are aware of its existence and understand its importance. Consistent with this expectation, a recent study by Park and Rainey (2008) found that transformational leadership increased employee perceptions of organizational goal clarity.³ Thus, we hypothesize,

Hypothesis 2: Transformational leadership behaviors will have an indirect, positive effect on employee mission valence through its influence on goal clarity.

In addition to the variables related to our hypotheses, we added the presence or use of extrinsic rewards as an important managerial control variable. While transformational leadership originally was expected to be distinct from, and more effective than, reward- or transaction-based leadership, empirical findings consistently have suggested that successful leaders augment their use of transformational behaviors with effective transactional strategies (Bass and Riggio 2006). Other research also has suggested that organizations can make performance goals more important to the employee by providing appropriate rewards

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for goal attainment (Klein 1991; Mowen, Middlemist, and Luther 1981; Wright 1989). Consistent with the augmentation findings in research on transformational and transactional leadership (Bass and Riggio 2006), several recent studies have found that extrinsic rewards have an important independent positive effect on person–organization value congruence (Wright and Pandey 2008) and the importance that public employees find in their jobs (Wright 2007). Therefore, in order to better isolate the effects of transformational leadership behavior and PSM on employee mission valence, we test our hypotheses while controlling for the effect of extrinsic rewards on mission valence.

Methods

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected in Phase 4 of the National Administrative Studies Project (NASP-IV). NASP-IV is a multimethod study, a key part of which is a survey administered to a nationwide sample of senior managers in U.S. local government jurisdictions with populations of more than 50,000. The senior managers surveyed included both general managers (the city manager and assistant/deputy city managers) and functional managers (the managers of key departments such as finance/budgeting, public works, human resources, economic development, parks and recreation, planning, and community development), who were identified with the assistance of the International City/County Management Association. Each respondent in the study sample received an initial letter through the U.S. mail that introduced the study and provided details on how to participate in the study. Each potential respondent was directed to complete the survey on the study's Web site using an assigned participation code. After the initial letter via U.S. mail, multiple methods were used in follow-up efforts to contact the respondents—e-mail, fax, and phone calls. When the study concluded, 1,538 of the 3,316 valid respondents had completed the survey, for a response rate of 46.4 percent.

Given that our study asked department heads and assistant/deputy city managers to assess the degree to which the chief administrative officer provided transformational leadership, we excluded responses by chief administrative officer (usually the city managers) from our analysis. Thus, for the analysis reported in this article, we only use the observations from 1,322 respondents who were not city managers. One clear caveat to our work is that the perspectives of senior managers may be distinct from those of lower-level employees, and therefore caution must be applied in generalizing to other groups. While there may be some concerns that senior managers are more likely than other employees to show a favorable bias toward the organization or its leadership in general, there is little evidence of such a bias (Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam 1996; Wall et al. 2004), and it is not unusual for studies to survey the high-level direct subordinates of chief executive officers when assessing both the existence and outcomes of transformational leadership behavior of the organization's chief executive officer (Colbert et al. 2008; De Hoogh et al. 2005; Zhu, Chew, and Spangler 2005). Even if the experiences and characteristics of the senior managers differ from those of other employees, they still experience some of the same supervisor–subordinate dynamics as other employees in the organization.

The mean age of respondents was 50, with an interquartile range of 9. As expected, a sizable majority were male (68.1 percent), white

(85.4 percent), highly educated (more than 60 percent had graduate degrees), and well compensated (64 percent had salaries over \$100,000). Almost 17 percent were general managers (deputy or assistant), and the rest managed specific city departments and/or functions. This distribution of functional specialization of respondents closely matched the distribution of functional specializations in the sample.

Measures

As this article investigates internal psychological processes that are salient to employee attitudes and behaviors, the appropriate level of theory, measurement, and analysis is the individual (James and Jones 1974). Building on the lessons of the Hawthorne studies (Roethlisberger 1956), this study assumes that employees react to their individual interpretation of their environment, which “rests primarily on the perceptions and experience of the individuals in the situation, but has external correlates in the more objective conditions characterizing the situation” (Shamir and Howell 1999, 264).⁴ In other words, organizational environments are enacted realities, and individual perceptions are a critical determinant of individual behavior in organizations, mediating the relationship between objective characteristics of the work environment and individual responses (James and Jones 1974; Rousseau 1988). Thus, this study also will rely on perceptual measures, as such measures are more appropriate when conducting research on employee action or behavior (Carr et al. 2003; Parker et al. 2003; Yang and Pandey 2009).

Wherever possible, the study variables were measured using multiple-item measures that have been tested and validated in earlier studies (see the appendix). Transformational leadership, for example, was measured using a small set of items selected specifically for this study. Items were selected from four socialized charismatic leadership subscales (vision, role modeling, inspirational communication, and intellectual stimulation) developed by House (1998) that depict the three transformational dimensions (inspirational motivation, idealized influence, and intellectual stimulation) previously described.⁵ One item was taken from each of three subscales (intellectual stimulation, role modeling, and inspirational communication), whereas two items were selected from the vision scale because of the underlying importance that transformational leadership places on organizational goals and vision. Although this five-item measure represents items from four different subscales (House 1998) that reflect the three dimensions of transformational leadership, a factor analysis of these items extracted only one factor that explained nearly 76 percent of their variance. This is consistent with previous findings suggesting that the transformational dimensions may be best characterized as a single factor (Avolio, Bass, and Jung 1999).

PSM was measured using five items adapted from Perry (1996) that have been previously used (Alonso and Lewis 2001; Brewer and Selden 2000; Kim 2005; Pandey, Wright, and Moynihan 2008; Wright and Pandey 2008) and recently validated (Wright, Christensen and Pandey forthcoming) as a global measure of PSM. These items capture the three dimensions—commitment to public interest, compassion, and self-sacrifice—identified by Perry (1996) that represent the affective or normative motives most closely associated with the altruistic appeal of public sector values. The fourth dimension, attraction to policy making, was omitted because it represents

Table 1 Bivariate Correlation Table

Scale		1	2	3	4	5
1	Mission valence	(0.69)				
2	Transformational leadership	0.45	(0.91)			
3	Public service motivation	0.31	0.18	(0.83)		
4	Organizational goal clarity	0.51	0.65	0.25	(0.83)	
5	Extrinsic rewards	0.26	0.47	0.15	0.45	(0.67)

Cronbach's alpha in parentheses.

All correlations statistically significant at $p < .05$.

a rational or self-interested motive that is less value or mission specific and has been found to be only weakly correlated with the other five PSM items (Alonso and Lewis 2001; Camilleri 2006; Wright and Pandey 2008).⁶

Mission valence was measured through a two-item indicator adapted from a previous measure of mission valence (Wright 2007). While this measure does not ask respondents to rate the mission directly, our focus is not on the organization's official mission statement (which is often a vague and political document), but how they think about the mission in terms of what the organization actually does (its priorities as enacted) or achieves (providing valuable public services). This approach is consistent with our emphasis on measuring employee perceptions and interpretations as well as previous uses of the valence concept which focus on employee "affective orientations toward particular outcomes" (Vroom 1964, 15).⁷ Employee perceptions of the clarity of the organization's goals were measured using a three-item scale (Pandey and Wright 2006) adapted from Rainey (1983). The availability of extrinsic rewards was measured using three items (adapted from Lee et al. 1991; Spector 1997).

Table 1 provides the bivariate correlations and Cronbach's alpha for each of the study's measures. The bivariate relationships provide evidence of the study measures' discriminant validity. In addition to a low average bivariate correlation (0.37), the largest bivariate correlation—between transformational leadership and organizational goal clarity—was 0.65, suggested that no measure shared much more than four-tenths of its variance with any other measure. Variance inflation factor tests also suggested that multicollinearity was not an issue (no score exceeded 1.3).

Results

To test the mediation hypothesis, a series of covariance structure analyses of the data were conducted using LISREL version 8.71.⁸ This approach is recommended in analyzing mediation effects because the measurement model mitigates measurement error, which can produce biased estimates, and the structural model does not estimate the required equations independently (Baron and Kenny 1986). This type of analysis consists of two parts, which not only subsume but improve on more common techniques such as confirmatory factor analysis, path analysis, and regression. In the first stage, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed to construct the latent variables from their respective questionnaire items and assess the validity and reliability of the study measures. In support of the discriminant validity of the measures used, a confirmatory factor analysis testing the hypothesized measurement model provided a good fit to the data ($\chi^2(125) = 415.23$, GFI = 0.99, CFI = 0.98, standardized RMR = 0.06, RMSEA = 0.04, CFI = 0.98), suggesting that the items converged on their respective latent variables and

that each measure represented a distinct latent variable. In the latter model, all of the scale items were found to have statistically significant factor loadings ($p < .05$) for their respective latent construct (standardized lambda values ranged from 0.59 to 0.95).

In the second stage, the structural equation model subsumes conventional regression and path analysis models to test the hypothesized relationships among the latent variables by estimating the overall fit of the model as well as the individual parameter estimates. The overall model fit of the hypothesized structural model was tested using fit indices recommended by Jaccard and Wan (1996). The comparative fit index (CFI) was 0.98 and the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) was 0.99, both indices achieving the 0.90 value used to suggest good model fit. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was .05 lower than the threshold (0.08) generally considered necessary for a satisfactory model fit. Also consistent with a good model fit, the p -value for test of close fit was 0.75 and the standardized RMR was 0.07. Only the maximum likelihood chi-square ($\chi^2(128) = 485.00$, $p < .05$) was not consistent with the overall model fit. The lack of fit found by the chi-square test, however, was not particularly troubling, as this particular index is sensitive to sample size, with larger samples inflating the chi square and decreasing the likelihood of achieving a good model fit (James, Mulaik, and Brett 1982). Despite the statistically significant chi square, the results suggest that the theoretical model accurately captured the pattern of relationships found in the data.

Figure 1 presents the parameter estimates for the structural model as standardized regression weights. The t -statistics for path coefficients for four of the five hypothesized relationships were statistically significant ($p < .05$) and in the predicted direction, providing additional evidence to support the accuracy of the theoretical model. Only the hypothesized direct relationship between transformational leadership and mission valence (hypothesis 1) failed to achieve statistical significance. Even so, transformational leadership was found to have important indirect effects on mission valence, but these effects were fully mediated by PSM (hypothesis 1b) and organizational goal clarity (hypothesis 2). Transformational leadership increased employee PSM as well employee perceptions of goal clarity, with the latter effect being much stronger (transformational leadership explained 62 percent of the variance in goal clarity but only 9 percent of the variance in PSM). Goal clarity and PSM, in turn, had direct effects on mission valence. The relationship between extrinsic rewards and mission valence (here used primarily as a control) was not statistically significant.

When taken together, PSM and goal clarity explained almost one-third (33 percent) of the variance in employee perceptions of mission valence even after controlling for the possible effects of extrinsic rewards. The standardized regression coefficients suggest that the effect of goal clarity on employee mission valence ($\beta = 0.54$) was slightly stronger than the direct effect of PSM ($\beta = 0.33$). When accounting for the two indirect effects that transformational leadership has on mission valence through goal clarity and PSM, LISREL estimates that its overall effect was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.57$, $p < .05$).

Discussion

Recent studies have highlighted the important roles that transformational leadership (Trotter, Van Wart, and Wang 2008; Van

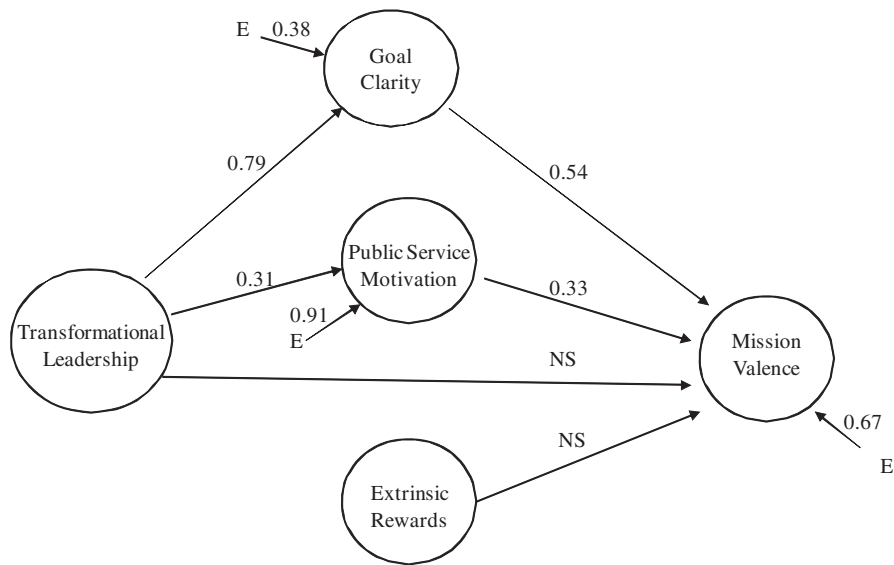


Figure 1 Model Results

Wart 2003; Wright and Pandey 2010), mission valence (Rainey and Steinbauer 1999), and PSM (Brewer 2008) can play in determining the performance of public sector organizations. All three literatures underscore the motivating power of organizational missions. While PSM research tends to emphasize employees who are predisposed to share the values reflected in the missions of public organizations, transformational leadership calls attention to actions that organizational leaders can take to direct and inspire employee effort by raising awareness of the importance of organizational values and outcomes. Public management scholars have only just begun to tie these literatures together, investigating the effect of transformational leadership on PSM (Park and Rainey 2008; Vandenabeele 2008b) and PSM's effect on mission valence (Pandey, Wright, and Moynihan 2008; Wright and Pandey 2011). This article builds on and advances this research by investigating the interplay among the three variables. Specifically, the model illustrates the importance of leadership and portrays the causal processes by which leaders pull the levers of public management. We find that transformational leadership can increase both employee PSM and goal clarity directly and, through these factors, can increase mission valence.

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lever and contributes to the growing study of the positive benefits of PSM. At the same time, however, we must guard against the risk that empirical studies of PSM replicate one of the failures of the study of organizational culture, which is to assume that PSM is a form of "Silly Putty" that managers can mold willfully for organizational purposes (Khademian 2002). An overly instrumental view is likely to underestimate the difficulty of fostering PSM and to overestimate its organizational utility (Steen and Rutgers 2009). It runs the risk of fostering cynicism, if employees believe that their intrinsic values are being exploited rather than represented in authentic ways by their leaders (Paarlberg and Lavigna 2010). More in-depth exploration of the mechanisms that connect PSM with mission valence is needed to realize the limitations and possibilities of what organizational leaders in the public sector can hope to achieve.

Similarly, we should not underestimate the difficulty of pursuing transformational leadership. The crush of transactional duties and the challenges of executing transformational competencies mean that it is easier to call for more transformational leadership than it is to do it. Future research could usefully address the specific mechanisms that foster this style of leadership.

That the findings offer empirical evidence of leadership's effect on PSM only buttresses claims that PSM is shaped by more than societal institutions and that organizational factors play a role (Moynihan and Pandey 2007b). While many organizational factors are relatively constrained, leaders who offer a vision, set a positive example, encourage innovation, and foster a sense of organizational pride can encourage PSM.

The relationship between leadership and PSM is, by itself, of interest, but we also show that the resulting benefits transfer beyond the individual to the organization in the form of higher mission valence. This result confirms the role of PSM as a public management

It is important to note that the results also suggest that PSM plays a supplementary role to the goal clarity lever. Transformational leadership has a stronger influence on goal clarity than PSM, and goal clarity has a stronger influence on mission valence than PSM. This may be attributable to the nature of the type of organization or leadership studied. The relationship between PSM and transformational leadership or mission valence may be weaker in public sector organizations than private sector organizations because the former emphasize social service goals and attract employees with higher PSM. Transformational leadership also is centered on vision articulation, which has a stronger logical connection between goal clarity than PSM. Other models of leadership, such as the value-based

model discussed by Paarlberg, Perry, and Hondeghem (2008) may connect more directly to PSM. In short, there is much empirical work to be done to understand the variety of ways different forms of leadership shape PSM.

One interesting finding is that transformational leadership does not have a direct relationship with mission valence but operates through other factors. This effect is no less important for being indirect, as such an effect may result in transformational leadership being both understudied and underestimated in public sector organizations. Given that a large part of its impact is indirect and operates by shaping the values and perceptions of followers, models that measure only its direct effects on employee behavior may fail to capture the importance of transformational leadership. This may be especially true in public sector organizations, as it is assumed that environmental constraints leave managers with less control over the structural characteristics of the job. Under such conditions, the effectiveness of leaders may depend even more on the ability to communicate, persuade, and inspire (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright forthcoming). The role of these “softer” levers is one of the great unstudied topics of public management leadership.

Finally, our results did not find evidence that extrinsic motivation shapes mission valence. While this was not the primary theoretical focus of our study, it offers some additional evidence that financial incentives are not the only—or even the most effective—means to motivate individuals. Such evidence is important because it contradicts current trends in public sector reform, which emphasize a market model of motivation derived from principal–agent theory (Perry, Engbers, and Jun 2009). One important caveat to this finding is that our sample of respondents is unlikely to experience full exposure to the market model, partly because of resource constraints and formal pay restrictions, and generally they will be offered weak extrinsic rewards (or even rewards less contingent on performance) relative to those working in contract situations (Porter and Lawler 1968; Rainey 1983). But it also should be noted that our sample consisted of senior managers enjoying relatively high levels of pay, and so the results might not hold for lower-level managers. The results should not be misinterpreted to suggest that pay does not matter. Even if they have no effect on mission valence, extrinsic rewards still can play an important role in motivating public employees. In fact, a growing number of studies suggest that public employees, even those with high PSM, still may value monetary rewards (Alonso and Lewis 2001; Christensen and Wright 2011; Rainey 1982; Vandenberg 2008a; Wright 2007; Wright and Pandey 2008). Nonetheless, our findings suggest that reform efforts should seek to pay at least as much attention to encouraging PSM as to extrinsic motivation.

Conclusion

Our findings highlight the causal processes by which leaders can pull the levers of public management and increase public employee motivation, performance, and commitment. The findings of this study offer empirical evidence that leadership can increase employee mission valence through its ability to foster employee PSM and perceptions of goal clarity among key management personnel. While this is a common and important group of employees to study with regard to the effects of leadership (Bass and Riggio 2006; Colbert

et al. 2008), additional research needs to replicate these relationships in different employee groups and samples.

The findings have a number of important implications, suggesting, for example, why public sector organizations exhibit higher levels of transformational leadership than might be expected (Wright and Pandey 2010). Given both the public service orientation of public organization missions and the attractiveness of such goals to many public employees, public sector transformational leaders may be in a better position to activate the higher-order needs of their employees and encourage them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the organization and its clientele.

As a result, the model also helps identify specific leverage points that public organizations and managers can use to increase productivity in the public sector. In particular, our findings suggest that public employees find their organization’s mission to be important when their leaders articulate clear and attractive visions of the organization’s mission. While this advice may seem obvious, that may actually hinder its use. The importance and meaning of the organization’s goal may seem so obvious that it can be taken for granted as leaders assume that it requires little explanation. But the inspirational power of public missions is not a given; it needs to be cultivated. Transformational leadership emphasizes the need for leaders to be proactive in devising mechanisms that relentlessly communicate the organization’s mission in ways that not only clearly articulate what the organization hopes to accomplish, but also how the organization hopes to accomplish it and why such accomplishments benefit the community it services. Given that transformational leadership recognizes that successful leaders use both words and deeds to direct and inspire their employees, creating and articulating a clear and attractive vision of the organization’s mission also requires that transformational leaders model behaviors that reinforce that vision and help employees build confidence and pride in the organization goals and activities (Bass and Riggio 2006).

[T]he inspirational power of public missions is not a given; it needs to be cultivated.

Notes

1. This is consistent with a growing recognition that PSM is distinct from intrinsic motivation, as “intrinsic motivation emphasizes pleasure and enjoyment as drivers of effort, but prosocial motivation emphasizes meaning and purpose as drivers of effort” (Perry, Hondeghem, and Wise 2010, 682).
2. Note, however, that there are some potential disadvantages to defining the goals too narrowly (Maynard-Moody and McClintock 1987), as well as some potential benefits to goal ambiguity (Noordegraaf and Abma 2003).
3. As transformational leadership has emphasized the importance of goal clarity, much of contemporary public sector reform has operated on a parallel track, creating performance information systems that are expected to make the purposes of public organizations clearer (Moynihan 2008). Performance management systems require agencies to formally identify and disseminate vision, mission, goals, and measures. The main implication of hypothesis 2 is that transformational leaders attempting to foster goal clarity generally work within the context of formal performance management systems, and there is some preliminary evidence that the actions of leaders affects the effectiveness of these systems (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright forthcoming).
4. In recognition of the centrality of perceptions when studying organizational behavior, James and James explicitly note that “[t]he following two principles have guided many applied psychologists’ efforts to measure work environment

perceptions: (a) Individuals respond to environment in terms of how they perceive them and (b) the most important component of perception is the meaning or meanings imputed to the environment by the individual" (1989, 739). Consistent with this approach, numerous reviews of organizational research have supported the importance of using individual perceptions when explaining employee behavior (Bommer, Rubin, and Baldwin 2003; Carr et al. 2003; Parker et al. 2003).

5. Although transformational and charismatic leadership often are discussed as separate theories in the literature, conceptual and empirical evidence suggests that a considerable degree of overlap exists between these theories and their measures (Avolio, Bass, and Jung 1999; Yukl 1999).
6. The original conceptualization of the attraction to policy making dimension included a focus on an individual's identification with policies or special interests associated with the mission of public sector organizations. While this aspect of attraction to policy making is potentially relevant to transformational leadership, the current measure of this dimension (Perry 1996) fails to capture this aspect of the dimension and only emphasizes the respondents' dislike of politics and politicians (Kim 2009).
7. Additional support for the use of these two items as a measure of mission valence can be found in several recent studies. Confirmatory factor analyses conducted as part of these studies have found that the two items used here not only converge with additional items that directly ask about the mission (e.g., "for me, the mission of this organization is exciting) into a single measure of mission valence, but also that this measure was distinct from other similar constructs (Pandey, Wright, and Moynihan 2008; Wright and Pandey 2011).
8. Because of the ordinal nature of the data, the analysis was conducted using weighted least squares estimation.

Appendix

Transformational Leadership*

- The Chief Administrative Officer/City Manager clearly articulates his/her vision of the future
- The Chief Administrative Officer/City Manager leads by setting a good example.
- The Chief Administrative Officer/City Manager challenges me to think about old problems in new ways.
- The Chief Administrative Officer/City Manager says things that make employees proud to be part of the organization.
- The Chief Administrative Officer/City Manager has a clear sense of where our organization should be in five years.

Public Service Motivation**

- Meaningful public service is very important to me.
- I am often reminded by daily events about how dependent we are on one another.
- Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements.
- I am prepared to make 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.

Mission Valence*

- This organization provides valuable public services.
- I believe that the priorities of this organization are quite important.

Organizational Goal Clarity*

- This organization's mission is clear to almost everyone who works here.
- It is easy to explain the goals of this organization to outsiders.
- This organization has clearly defined goals.

Extrinsic Rewards*

- If I accomplish my work objectives, it increases my chances for a pay raise.
- Raises are few and far between. (R)
- Fulfilling all my job responsibilities does little to improve my chances for a promotion. (R)

(R) Reverse worded.

* Responses on a five-point agree/disagree scale, coded 1 (strongly disagree) through 5 (strongly agree).

** Responses on a six-point agree/disagree scale, coded 1 (strongly disagree) through 6 (strongly agree).

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