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The American Review of Public Administration 2009 39: 675 originally published online 10 December 2008
DOI: 10.1177/0275074008327512

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://arp.sagepub.com/content/39/6/675
Public Service Motivation in Undergraduate Giving and Volunteering Decisions

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Most public service motivation (PSM) research compares government and business employees. This article fits into an emerging body of research that links PSM to volunteer activity. PSM is a needs-based approach to motivation. People may sate this need in ways other than direct government service. In this article, the authors investigate the relationship between PSM and charitable decisions. They surveyed undergraduate students at North Carolina State University using Perry’s PSM instrument and antecedent questions. To further investigate students’ motivations toward public service, they asked an additional series of questions focused on volunteering and donating choices. The authors find that students with higher levels of PSM are more likely to choose to engage in charitable activity. Individual characteristics such as family income, political identity, sex, religiosity, family socialization, and high school volunteering experiences are also significantly related to the choices students make about engaging in charitable activities.

*Keywords:* public service motivation; volunteering; donating; charity

In 2006, the U.S. Department of Labor estimated that 61.2 million people averaged 52 hours of service per year at charitable organizations. On a typical day, 6.7% of Americans older than 15 years averaged 2 hours of volunteer time (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007). In addition, more than $295 billion was donated by U.S. citizens. Included in that record figure is the money donated by more than 65% of households with less than $100,000 annual income (Giving USA Foundation, 2007). Remarkably, though tasked with job responsibilities and a myriad of other pressures, full-time employees recorded the second highest volunteer activity level among all American adults (only part-time workers donated more hours; Giving USA Foundation, 2007).

Based on this evidence, it is clear that giving is a highly regarded and socially valued activity. People are regularly encouraged to give time, money, and other resources as a way to satisfy community or organizational needs. However, individuals respond differently to
requests for time or money. Some might attribute their charitable behavior to gaining satisfaction through doing “good” deeds. Researchers note that donations derived from satisfying the need to do good deeds are most likely the result of a combination of egocentric and altruistic forces that compel donations (Andreoni, 1989, 1990; Champ, Bishop, Brown, & McCollum, 1997; Glazer & Konrad, 1996; Harbaugh, 1998).

Understanding what underlies the warm feelings that one experiences from giving and volunteering can be useful for nonprofit organizations designing fund-raising and volunteering programs. Public service motivation (PSM) is a theoretical construct that scholars from multiple disciplines have applied to understand motivation in public settings. We use the construct here to understand motivations for making decisions about donating and volunteering. The common themes emerging from PSM research center around actions that are “intended to do good for others and shape the well-being of society” (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008, p. 3).

Increasing our understanding of charitable motivators also assists both academics and practitioners with creating better management strategies that fully utilize both human and financial resources. Similar to Paarlberg and Perry (2007), who argue that PSM can be the basis for management decisions in public organizations, we believe that PSM can also be used to increase nonprofit organizational effectiveness. As government comes to increasingly rely on nonprofits to deliver public services (e.g., Light, 2000; Osborne, 1998; Rainey & Bozeman, 2000), nonprofits must increase their organizational capacity to meet the growing demand for their services. Nonprofits can use deeper understandings of PSM to better recruit, motivate, and retain the donors and volunteers who are a critical part of their operations.

We propose that PSM is a way to explain why individuals have diverse responses to giving and volunteering appeals. According to PSM theory, individuals undertake charitable works to sate a need to be involved in public service. As we demonstrate in this article, PSM is an important influence on the choices an individual makes in regard to giving and volunteering. The higher their level of PSM, the more people choose to volunteer or donate rather than do neither in a given week.

To answer our research question, “What is the relationship between PSM and giving and volunteering decisions?” we first review the literature on motivations for giving and volunteering and research that has applied PSM to nonprofit organizations and voluntary action. Next, we describe our research methods and data. Then, we describe the results from our analysis. Finally, we discuss the implications of our research for scholars and nonprofit practitioners.

**Motivations for Giving and Volunteering**

Management of all resources, whether paid, volunteer, or donative, is a major challenge for nonprofit administrators. Given the professional and personal demands on an individual’s time, nonprofit administrators who understand the motivations of people who provide key organizational resources will be more able to recruit and retain donors and a volunteer workforce. Our research provides scholars and practitioners with additional information about motivations toward public service, including charitable activities.

The term *volunteer* is sometimes used ambiguously, and it captures a wide range of activities (Cnaan & Amorfell, 1994; Tschirhart, 1998) that include both paid and unpaid
work (Cnaan & Amorfell, 1994). Some researchers suggest that individuals are motivated to volunteer for altruistic reasons (Clary & Snyder, 1991; Tschirhart, 1998), whereas others focus on psychological factors (Pearce, 1983) or age (Cohen-Mansfield, 1989; Kelly, 1990; D. H. Smith, 1994). Wilson (2000) argues that trying to explain all volunteering activities with the same theory is futile. However, it is clear that volunteers are a considerable, crucial, and sometimes economically undervalued human resource for nonprofit organizations (Armstrong, 1999; Govekar & Govekar, 2002; Wilson & Musick, 1999).

With more than 1.4 million IRS-registered nonprofit organizations (Urban Institute, 2007), an increasingly diverse range of service opportunities is available for volunteers to choose from. Choices are determined by individual preferences combined with information about the organization and the work to be done (Wolff, Weisbrod, & Bird, 1993). Recent studies suggest that people volunteer because of their values and the perceived net benefits from participation (Wilson, 2000). However, as Brown (1999) argues, because intrinsic motivators are difficult to measure, most studies underestimate the personal gains that volunteers get from satiating their needs.

Clary et al. (1998) developed a categorization of volunteering motivations that include both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. They argue that six personal and social functions are served by volunteering. This includes (a) the expression of values, (b) developing an understanding of the world and environment and skills necessary for external environments, (c) enhancing psychological growth, (d) developing career goals and skills, (e) engaging in social activities, and (f) protecting or mitigating the personal need to reduce guilt as well as to address social problems (Clary et al., 1998). Other researchers posit that gender is a factor in volunteering decisions (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Ibrahim & Brannen, 1997; Trudeau & Devlin, 1996; Zweigenhaft, Armstrong, Qunitis, & Riddick, 1996). Others suggest that religious involvement is a critical determinant (Brooks, 2006; Ozorak, 2003; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1999). We seek to add PSM, which represents a psychological need for constructive civic engagement, to this list of possible motivators for donating and volunteering.

**PSM and Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action**

Like public organizations, nonprofits are frequently called on to supply goods and services needed by citizens. Increasingly, as public services are contracted out, nonprofits serve as agents of the state (S. R. Smith & Lipsky, 1993). Ultimately, organizations are driven by the people that work for and support them. As such, understanding what motivates individuals to join and participate meaningfully in nonprofit organizational activities is critically important to public administration scholars and practitioners. PSM is one promising motivational theory that can be used for this purpose.

Perry and Wise (1990) defined PSM as “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations” (p. 368). This need-based theory of motivation assumes that individuals with higher levels of PSM work to satisfy predispositions toward public service (e.g., Perry, Brudney, Coursey, & Littlepage, 2008; Perry & Wise, 1990). In defining PSM, Perry and Wise identified three types of incentives that describe the differences in how individuals are motivated toward public service. Accordingly, rational (i.e., involvement in public service is the best way to
pursue a particular policy objective), affective (i.e., an emotional attachment to a particular interest group or cause drives participation), and normative (i.e., interest arises out of a sense of duty or desire to “give back”) motives characterize PSM. These three motivations drive individuals to make decisions about how to sate the need to engage in public serving behavior. How individuals satisfy these needs can vary depending on the organizational or institutional context (Perry & Wise, 1990).

To measure PSM, Perry (1996) developed a set of questions to capture attitudes associated with public service. Using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), his measurement model identified four dimensions of PSM corresponding to rational, affective, and normative motivational bases: (a) attraction to policy making (rational), (b) commitment to the public interest (normative), (c) compassion (affective), and (d) self-sacrifice (affective). Subsequent to the development of that measurement model, Perry (1997) found that formative experiences (e.g., modeling behavior of parents, profession, and religion) inculcate values affecting one’s PSM.

The Perry and Wise (1990) definition of PSM was expanded in subsequent work. Brewer and Selden (1998) incorporate more behaviors into the definition with the introduction of a conceptual definition that describes the intersection of public, community, and social services. Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) develop an even more comprehensive approach noting that PSM is associated with the concept of altruism. They argue that PSM is a “general, altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation, or humankind” (p. 20). Our research follows these studies as we extend the applicability of PSM beyond public organizations and public sector employees.

PSM researchers focusing on government employees have found that public sector employees are motivated differently than their private sector counterparts (Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2000; Perry, 1997; Perry & Wise, 1990; Rainey, 1982). Although early studies did not include nonprofits, the scope of PSM has been expanded for the explicit purpose of incorporating nonprofit sector workers (Perry, 2000) and volunteers (Coursey, Perry, Brudney, & Littlepage, 2008). This emerging literature also focuses on similarities in service ethic between public and nonprofit managers (Wittmer, 1991). Notably, Tschirhart (1998) finds that volunteers become committed to specific organizations as an expression of PSM.

The links between PSM and stipended and unpaid volunteers are being studied as well (Tschirhart, 1998; Wittmer, 1991). Younger individuals receiving stipends (e.g., through programs like Americorps) seem to be motivated to volunteer by opportunities for career development and economic reward, whereas older volunteers (aged 50 or more) appear to have more altruistic motives fueled by a desire to “make a difference” (Tschirhart, 1998). Houston (2005) explicitly connects PSM to volunteering and donating behavior finding that workers in the nonprofit and public sectors were more likely than private sector employees to volunteer time and donate blood. In fact, Houston found that nonprofit workers were more likely to volunteer than their public sector counterparts. However, by drawing on General Social Survey data, he did not utilize Perry’s (1996) instrument to study this relationship directly. The author worked from the assumption that public and nonprofit sector workers in the sample had higher PSM scores than did private sector employees. Subsequently, Perry et al. (2008), examined PSM in individuals that are not employed as professional public administrators. Using validated PSM measures, Perry and his coauthors further strengthened the link between volunteering and PSM by finding evidence that
formal and informal volunteering is positively related to higher levels of PSM. Our research contributes to these ongoing efforts to study links between charitable activities and the PSMs that trigger them.

PSM theory can help organizational managers develop strategies to improve employee, volunteer, and donor performance as a means to improve organizational performance (Paarlberg, Perry, & Hondeghem, 2007). Developing an understanding of what motivates individuals is especially important given the difficulties of first recruiting and then retaining paid and volunteer workers (Wilson & Musick, 1999). Nonprofit organizations can focus on creating experiences and points of reference to sate these needs, thus motivating volunteers and donors. We contribute to further defining the scope of PSM by treating volunteering or donating as a consequence of PSM rather than as its antecedent. In addition, we add to the literature informing the development of specific management strategies that maximize the value added by volunteers in nonprofit organizations.

In response to Wright’s (2007) call to build a more consistent, coherent empirical base to PSM research, we use Perry’s measures to attempt to establish charitable choices as a consequence of PSM. Our research uses college students and asks them about their preferences for volunteering, donating, or doing neither over the next week (this last option, doing neither, is also referred to as the status quo going forward). We expect that the higher an individual’s level of PSM, the more likely he or she is to either donate or volunteer rather than do neither. Before reporting our findings, we first discuss the data and methods we use in this article.

**Data and Method**

This study’s purpose is to improve understanding of individual charitable choices in giving and volunteering. To shed light on these choices, we use a sample of convenience undergraduates taking an introductory political science course at North Carolina State University in the spring of 2007. A total of 329 (70% response rate) students in the course completed the survey, resulting in 316 useable responses. Although not a random sample, the participants approximate the demographic characteristics of the university’s undergraduates (see Table 1) because the students were fulfilling general education requirements. This research pool has also been used in political science research (Boettcher, 2004).

### Table 1

**Comparative Demographic Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristic</th>
<th>Undergraduates Nationally (%)</th>
<th>Undergraduates at Sampled University (%)</th>
<th>Undergraduates in This Sample (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although our sample of convenience has a greater proportion of males and most likely a smaller proportion of African Americans than a random sample drawn from all American colleges and universities, it nevertheless provides valuable information and insight into using the PSM construct. A sample of undergraduate students, who are about to enter the workforce, gives us an opportunity to expand our understanding of the motivations of this generation at a time when baby boomers are retiring from organizations across the United States. Extending our knowledge of how Generation Y is attracted to work, volunteering, and giving offers nonprofits the opportunity to develop intentional strategies for education, community engagement, and organizational management (Burns et al., 2005).

Students were surveyed with Perry’s PSM instrument and its antecedent questions. In addition, we asked a series of questions focused on volunteering and donating choices (see Appendix A). Our final analysis improves understanding of the factors affecting volunteering and donating decisions. Before proceeding, we discuss our dependent variable, the choice respondents make among volunteering, donating, and doing neither. We then report the results of a CFA to verify that Perry’s (1996) construct is valid in our sample (see Appendix B for the CFA analysis). Finally, we discuss the other independent variables used in our model to predict the choices individuals make between giving and volunteering.

We use a conditional logit model (CLM) to fit a mixed model (Long & Freese, 2003, p. 243) to explain the choices respondents make between giving and volunteering. This random utility model assumes that a rational individual selects a particular choice option only if that option maximizes their utility. In this mixed model, we combine elements of a multinomial logit model (MNLM) and a CLM. A MNLM uses the attributes of the individual choice maker to predict the outcome of the choice (Long & Freese, 2003, p. 189). A CLM (McFadden, 1973) uses the characteristics of the alternatives to predict the outcome that is chosen. In using a CLM to fit a mixed model, we are able to examine (a) how the characteristics of the alternatives impact the respondent’s decision and (b) how the characteristics of the alternatives interact with the characteristics of the individuals to predict the chosen outcome (Long & Freese, 2003, p. 243).3

**Dependent Variable: Choice Between Donating and Volunteering**

We used a discrete choice experiment (Louviere, Hensher, & Swait, 2000) to capture preferences for giving and volunteering. Respondents were presented profiles of hypothetical human service and arts–culture nonprofits. Background data included mission statements, revenues, number of employees, and the number of volunteers (see Appendix A for the scenarios used in this experiment). Participants were also provided a series of questions asking them to donate varying amounts of money and/or time volunteering over the next week. Requested donations ranged from $10 to $25, whereas volunteering commitments ranged from 2 to 5 hours. In all cases, they were given the option to neither volunteer nor donate in the coming week. Participants chose the donate option between 21% and 33% of the time, the volunteer option between 26% and 46% of the time, and neither option between 23% and 51% of the time. Comparing our result of the volunteering option being 26% to 46% of the time to the results of a national survey of college students (Dote, Cramer, Dietz, & Grimm, 2006), which found that approximately 30% of college students volunteered in 2005, gives us some confidence that the scenarios in our discrete choice experiment represent a realistic choice for respondents.
To substantiate the appropriateness of using Perry’s (1996) PSM construct in our analysis, we performed a CFA (see Appendix B). Each indicator variable was restricted to loading on only the latent PSM construct indicated by Perry’s research. The model did not allow for error correlations between the indicator and the latent variables. There is not a perfect fit between our data and Perry’s model ($\chi^2 = 561.51, df = 246$). However, there is a reasonable fit between our data and the Perry model (root mean square error of approximation = .065; Byrne, 1998).

Consistent with Perry’s approach to measuring PSM, we averaged respondents’ answers to 5-point Likert-type scale questions for each dimension. Higher averages indicate higher levels of PSM. The descriptive statistics for the PSM measures are reported in Table 2.

Though our data reasonably fit Perry’s (1996) overall model, the Cronbach’s alphas, which measures internal consistency of the PSM scales (Frankfort-Nachimas & Nachimas, 1999; Nunnally, 1978), are lower than expected. The Compassion ($\alpha = .70$) and Self-sacrifice ($\alpha = .78$) scales meet generally accepted guidelines for indication of reliability ($\alpha \geq .70$; Frankfort-Nachimas & Nachimas, 1999; Nunnally, 1978). The Civic Duty dimension ($\alpha = .69$) is close to this threshold. However, the Attraction to Public Policy Making scale ($\alpha = .59$) is below this threshold. The reliability of the overall scale ($\alpha = .85$), using all 24 items, is much stronger. Given the reasonable fit between our data and Perry’s model, we include all four PSM dimensions in our analysis, even though the reliability of the Attraction to Public Policy Making dimension is less than ideal.

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSM Measure</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-sacrifice</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic duty</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction to public policy</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall PSM</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Independent Variables: Control Variables

To account for potentially confounding impacts on an individual’s choice for volunteering, donating, or doing neither, we include a number of control variables. In particular, we control for a respondent’s wage rate, sex, and political ideology. Wages are controlled for because donations might have a positive relationship with income (Lindahl & Conley, 2002, p. 95). Thus, individuals with higher wages should be more likely to donate rather than select the status quo. Sex is controlled for to determine if women prefer to volunteer or donate more than do men (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Ibrahim & Brannen, 1997; Trudeau & Devlin, 1996; Zweigenhaft et al., 1996). We control for political ideology (Brooks, 2006) to see if the more conservative an individual is, the more likely he or she may be to volunteer or donate, rather than relying on government, to address social problems. Although...
Brooks (2006) argues that ideological differences are partly accounted for by religiosity, he also noted how views about the welfare state affect charitable contributions. He argues that those on the political left have “views on income inequality and forced income redistribution that cloud their ability to behave in charitable ways” (p. 70). The descriptive statistics for continuous control variables are reported in Table 3. Categorical independent variable descriptive statistics are reported in Table 4.

Three of Perry’s (1996) antecedent measures were also used to capture the impact of family socialization and religious activity on a person’s giving and donating choices. Parents affect their children’s volunteer commitment significantly by modeling and teaching altruistic behavior (Clary & Miller, 1986). Perry et al. (2008) studied the impact of family influence and attitude on the decisions youth make about volunteering when they grow up. Like previous scholars, Perry et al. were able to show that higher levels of family socialization lead to increased volunteering and higher levels of associated PSM. To depict the family socialization aspect, we asked, “When I was growing up, my parents told me I should be willing to ‘lend a helping hand’” and “When I was younger, my parents very often urged me to get involved with volunteer projects for children.” We expect that respondents whose experiences reflect those statements will have an increased likelihood of volunteering or donating over doing neither.

The volunteering literature notes that identifying with an organization is more important to organizational commitment than simple membership—a notion especially cogent to explanations of commitment to religious organizations (Schervish, 1993, 1997). As previously noted, Brooks (2006) suggests that religiosity undergirds differences in how conservatives and liberals approach charitable behaviors.4 We expect PSM and religiosity to be related consistent with Brooks’ argument because Perry et al. (2008) also found it to be one of the strongest predictors of PSM. To capture the impact of religious activity, we asked the respondent to report how frequently he or she attended religious services. We expect this higher association might “crowd out” giving and volunteering to our hypothetical nonprofits because of existing commitments to religious institutions.

Some of the variables in our study are unique to our sample because it is drawn from undergraduate students. These variables include the respondent’s class year, major, membership in a fraternity or sorority, familiarity with campus service organizations, student family income, whether he or she volunteered in high school, and if this volunteering was

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<tr>
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mandatory. We control for class standing as a proxy for age. To create a more parsimonious model, we dichotomized the class year variable to being a freshman or sophomore versus a junior or senior. We expected that junior and seniors will have fewer resources, whether time or money or both, available to donate or volunteer than freshmen and sophomores. We also include a dichotomized variable related to whether a student’s major is in the College of Humanities and Social Science (CHASS) to control for potential impact of academic socialization on volunteering and donating choices. Whether a student is in a fraternity or sorority is included to control for the service activities such membership entails. The familiarity with the Center for Student Leadership, Ethics, and Public Service (CSLEPS) is included to control for exposure to campus volunteering opportunities. Family income controls for the other resources that students can use to “supplement” their volunteering and donating activities. We dichotomize this variable at the $100,000 level and expect students from the higher income category to donate or volunteer more than the students from the lower category. Finally, we include a student’s experience with volunteering in high school to examine the impact of this past behavior and socialization on current choices. Youth service has a strong and significant impact on the likelihood that young adults will continue charitable behaviors after high school by giving at higher levels and volunteering more frequently (Independent Sector, 2002; Perry et al., 2008). The descriptive statistics for these categorical variables are contained in Table 4.

Now that we have described the variables used in our analysis of individual level giving and volunteering choices, we turn to interpreting the results of our analysis.

### Results

Using a CLM, we analyzed data from our sample using Perry’s measure of PSM. Because we have not monetized the respondent’s volunteer time, and because many respondents do not work and must make nonmonetary trade-offs to volunteer (time away from studying, of course), the differences in magnitude of the coefficients in the model do not
have any substantive meaning. Instead, we make a qualitative interpretation of the results from the CLM in terms of changes in relative utility. Preferences for choosing donating or volunteering over the status quo are indicated by the direction and statistical significance of the coefficients. These coefficient characteristics reflect a change in utility from maintaining the status quo.

The results reported in Table 5 are grouped as follows:

1. The intercept (the choice involves donating, the choice involves volunteering) and slope (amount of dollars to be donated, amount of time to be volunteered) of an individual’s preference for donating relative to neither donating nor volunteering (i.e., the status quo) and volunteering relative to the status quo. Holding all else constant, each intercept coefficient represents the likelihood of choosing that activity over the status quo. The slope coefficients represent the change in the likelihood of choosing that activity, relative to choosing the status quo, for each unit of change (e.g., $1 for donating, 1 hour for volunteering) in that activity, holding all else constant.

2. Intercept changes in an individual’s preference for donating and volunteering based on changes in PSM.

3. Intercept changes in an individual’s preference for donating and volunteering relative to the status quo for control variables applicable to the general public.

4. Intercept changes in an individual’s preference for donating and volunteering relative to the status quo for control variables related to college undergraduates.

The coefficients of the last three groupings of variables can be interpreted as follows. The coefficient for each individual characteristic–donate choice interaction represents the likelihood to choose to donate over the status quo for a one-unit change in the characteristic. The coefficient for each individual characteristic–volunteer choice interaction represents the change in the likelihood to choose to volunteer over the status quo for a one-unit change in the characteristic.

Overall, college student’s time and money are precious commodities. Relative to the status quo, the prospect of choosing to volunteer or donate over the coming week decreases a respondent’s utility. In addition, the greater the amount of money they are asked to donate or the more amount of time they are asked to volunteer, the more they will experience decreases in utility. Although the prospect of choosing to donate or volunteer, given finite resources, lowers respondents’ utility below that of maintaining the status quo, they do not necessarily experience negative utility from the choice.

As expected, PSM has a positive effect on volunteering and donating. The greater people’s PSM, the greater their likelihood of choosing volunteering or donating over the status quo. However, not all dimensions of PSM influence this choice, and not all are positively related. In particular, the Compassion and Civic Duty dimensions are positively related to both volunteering and donating. The affective Self-sacrifice is not significantly related to volunteering or donating decisions. The rational Attraction to Public Policy Making dimension is negatively related to a respondent’s choice to volunteer. In general, the greater a person’s affective and normative motivations to serve the public interest, the more likely he or she will volunteer or donate. At first glance, these results seem to indicate that nonprofits wanting to attract donors or volunteers would do better to appeal to people’s affective and normative motivations rather than their rational drivers. Such an interpretation of these
<table>
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<td></td>
<td>Amount of dollars to be donated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PSM—public policy–donate choice interaction</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PSM—compassion–volunteer choice interaction</td>
<td>0.26</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PSM—self-sacrifice–volunteer choice interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PSM—civic duty–volunteer choice interaction</td>
<td>0.89**</td>
<td>5.54</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PSM—public policy–volunteer choice interaction</td>
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<td>Social service organization–volunteer choice interaction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Male–donate choice interaction</td>
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<td>Male–volunteer choice interaction</td>
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<td>Family income &gt; $100k–donate choice interaction</td>
<td>0.44**</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Family income &gt; $100k–volunteer choice interaction</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
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<td>Attend relig. service &gt; 2-3 per month–donate choice interaction</td>
<td>0.11</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Attend relig. service &gt; 2-3 per month–volunteer choice interaction</td>
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<td>Willingness to help–donate choice interaction</td>
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<td>Willingness to help–volunteer choice interaction</td>
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<td>Urged to volunteer–donate choice interaction</td>
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<td>Urged to volunteer–volunteer choice interaction</td>
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<td>Political identity–donate choice interaction</td>
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(continued)
Table 5 (continued)

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<td>Junior or senior–donate choice interaction</td>
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<td>Fraternity or sorority–volunteer choice interaction</td>
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<td>Volunteered in high school–donate choice interaction</td>
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<td>1.06**</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteered in high school–volunteer choice interaction</td>
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<td>1.25**</td>
<td>5.13</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mandatory high school volunteer–donate choice interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>−0.34*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandatory high school volunteer–volunteer choice interaction</td>
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<td>−0.48**</td>
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<td>CSLEPS–donate choice interaction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CSLEPS–volunteer choice interaction</td>
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<td>CHASS major–donate choice interaction</td>
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<td>Observations</td>
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</table>

Note: CSLEPS = Center for Student Leadership, Ethics, and Public Service; CHASS = College of Humanities and Social Science. In this model, each choice is the unit of analysis. Although 316 respondents completed portions of the survey, only 287 respondents completed the survey with no missing information. They each had 18 possible choice options to select. This means the total possible number of observations is 5,166. Because 21 of the choice options were left blank, the final number of observations is 5,145. The clogit command in Stata (the application we use to analyze our data), the command we use to analyze our data, is computationally equivalent to a fixed-effects logit. This command takes into account each respondent’s group of answers when making the calculation.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

findings should be made with caution. Our scenarios do not present respondents with what they can expect to accomplish with their donation of time or money. This lack of means–ends matching in asking respondents how to allocate their time and money might discourage people with high levels of rational PSM from undertaking charitable activities. For example, we wonder if the rational PSM motivator would be triggered if our scenarios contained a description of how a donation would be used or if it included the exact volunteering activity. Rather than higher levels of Attraction to Public Policy Making indicating less charitable choices, this finding may further support the importance of how asking people to volunteer or donate may influence their decision.

Our control for whether the nonprofit in the scenario was a social service agency or an arts and culture agency indicates that, at least among this sample of college students, it may
be easier for social service nonprofits to attract volunteers and donors than it is for arts and culture nonprofits.

Individual characteristics are also related to decision making about donating and volunteering. Men are less likely to choose volunteering over the status quo than women. Sex is not related to whether someone makes a donation relative to the status quo. Although a student’s wage rate does not affect the likelihood of choosing to donate or volunteer over the status quo (about 40% engage in paid work during the semester), individuals with family incomes greater than $100,000 are more likely to donate or volunteer. This latter finding may be related to families with incomes greater than $100,000 having more slack resources. This makes the trade-offs between donating or volunteering and the status quo less costly for these students. This level of income may also allow families to socialize their children to engage in such activities. Next, we look at this socialization aspect more directly.

The responses to the questions “When I was growing up, my parents told me I should be willing to ‘lend a helping hand’” (passive socialization) and “When I was younger, my parents very often urged me to get involved with volunteer projects for children” (active socialization) are positively coded; higher scores indicate more strongly agreeing with the statement. People whose parents told them they should be willing to lend a helping hand are more likely to choose to donate over the status quo. Respondents whose parents very often urged them to volunteer are less likely to choose to donate over the status quo. At first, this seems to be contradictory. Although both statements focus on family socialization as engagement in service to others, we believe that there is a qualitative difference in the tone of the statements. Being very often urged to volunteer for a particular type of activity is a more active form of encouragement or socialization than being told to be willing to lend a helping hand; search out your opportunities rather than be open to possibilities that unexpectedly arise. We return to this idea of active versus passive socialization in community engagement when we look at whether respondents volunteered in high school.

Now we turn to the final individual characteristics examined in this study: political identity and religiosity. Contrary to previous research (Brooks & Lewis, 2001), which does not find a link between political ideology and giving and volunteering, we find that a person’s political ideology is related to this choice. Holding all else constant, which includes religiosity, the more conservative someone’s ideology, the more likely he or she is to choose to donate or volunteer over the status quo. Religiosity affects only selection between volunteering and the status quo.

Our findings relative to religiosity and volunteering do not support previous work in the area (e.g., Wilson & Janowski, 1995; Youniss et al., 1999). As discussed above, in our sample more religious individuals, defined as attending services at least weekly, are less likely to volunteer over the status quo than those who attend religious services infrequently. We speculate that this finding is related to resource constraints. Given existing service obligations connected to their house of worship, respondents do not have the capacity to undertake volunteering at additional organizations. This possibility is consistent with Verba, Schlozman, and Brady’s (1995, p. 46) statement concerning the “natural limitation” on volunteering given the fixed number of hours in a day. Somewhat surprising, religiosity is not related to the choice between donating and the status quo.7
The final group of results in Table 5 addresses the relationship between individual characteristics specific to college undergraduates and decisions to donate or volunteer. To control for exposure to campus-based cues or socialization about giving and volunteering, respondents were asked if they were aware of the CSLEPS, a campus-based organization that sponsors alternative spring breaks and other volunteering related activities. Respondents who were aware of CSLEPS were more likely to select volunteering over the status quo. This indicates that students more inclined to volunteer are also more likely to remember this source of opportunities to engage in public service.

Though fraternities and sororities usually oblige members to undertake service activities, participation in these organizations is not related to the choice individuals make between donating, volunteering, and the status quo. However, there is a relationship with whether a student is majoring in a CHASS department and class standing. Respondents with majors in the humanities and social sciences are more likely to choose to volunteer over the status quo than non–humanities and social science majors. Juniors and seniors are less likely to choose these activities relative to the status quo than are freshmen and sophomores. A few factors may affect this difference. First, juniors and seniors might have less slack resources available for volunteering and donating. The financial impact of college tuition and fees or the time needed to search for a job after graduation may sop up resources available during the final two years of college. Second, juniors and seniors may have already determined which organizations and causes they want to support on campus and in the community, therefore making them less open to giving additional money and time to new organizations.

Finally, we examine the impact of a respondent’s experience with volunteering in high school and his or her volunteering and donating choices. American high school students are engaged in more community service projects than ever before (Reich, 2005). In fact, a recent survey of college freshmen found that 80% volunteered during high school (Reich, 2005), compared to 88% in our sample (see Table 4). Community service projects are increasingly part of secondary school curricula. Educators promote these programs as ways to engage students in independent, critical thinking that results in their growth into “well-adjusted, contributing adults” (Stone, 2007). Our study both supports and contradicts these findings.

Volunteering behavior in high school appears to carry over into college. Respondents who volunteered in high school were more likely to choose donating or volunteering than opt for the status quo. However, if these activities were a requirement for high school graduation, the utility received from donating and volunteering relative to the status quo is lower than if participation was not compulsory. Adding these effects together, mandatory volunteering does not negate the increase in likelihood associated with the volunteering experience.

As previously noted, more active forms of parental influence over giving and volunteering socialization reduced the likelihood that students would choose to donate or volunteer. Taken together with the finding that mandatory high school volunteering reduces the likelihood an individual choosing to volunteer or donate, a pattern emerges in our data that suggests external motivations to donate and volunteer crowd out an individual’s internal motivation to choose such behaviors. Providing opportunities for young people to volunteer rather than mandating or strongly urging their participation may be a better means of socialization into these behaviors.
**Discussion**

PSM has an impact on the choices individuals make among donating, volunteering, and maintaining the status quo. Our use of PSM to explain why people choose to volunteer or donate argues that individuals engage in these behaviors to sate needs. However, PSM is one of many individual characteristics that affect this choice.

Some of these other characteristics that affect an individual’s choice to volunteer or donate versus neither indicate constraints on time and money influence a person’s choices. Family incomes greater than $100,000 increase the likelihood of donating or volunteering choices over the status quo. Families with this higher income level might make resources available to their children so that they can engage in charitable behavior. With respect to religion and academic class status, religiosity or being an upperclassman reduced the likelihood of choosing to volunteer over the status quo. Students in these groups might have already allocated their volunteer time and are unable to undertake the additional volunteer hours.

Socialization into community service also affects donating and volunteering decisions of undergraduate students. However, if formative participation was compulsory, the less likely they were to choose to donate or volunteer versus maintaining the status quo. When parents provided more passive forms of encouragement, such as teaching children to lend a hand, there was an increased likelihood of choosing donating over the status quo. Relatively active or heavier handed forms of socialization decreased the likelihood of donating behavior over the status quo.

This difference between active and passive socialization is even more apparent when we examine donating and volunteering choices of college undergraduates when they were in high school. On one hand, volunteering and donating appear to be habits. Volunteering in high school increased the likelihood of choosing to donate or volunteer over the status quo (see Raskoff & Sundeen, 1998, 2001). On the other hand, consistent with other findings (e.g., Helms, n.d.; Warburton & Smith, 2003), compulsory volunteering may lead to weaker civic or citizenship identities. If students were forced to volunteer in high school, they are less likely to choose to volunteer or donate over the status quo. Taken together, these two findings about the impact of socialization indicate that carrots might be more useful than sticks if we want to increase the level of volunteering or donating, at least among college undergraduates. Moynihan and Pandey (2007) argue that sociohistoric factors influence PSM in combination with organizational influences. Given that observation and the correlation between compulsory service in high school and the decreased likelihood of choosing charitable engagement in our sample, organizations should seriously consider their approach to creating environments that foster public service.

With individuals having different motivations for being involved in public service, nonprofit organizations need to develop more than one approach to attracting volunteers and donors. Understanding which dimensions of PSM (affective [Compassion] and normative [Civic Duty]) are related to charitable decisions may give us some insight on how to shape these incentives by going beyond the “warm glow” people get from helping others. For example, a foster care agency’s fund-raising campaign that features a picture of a cute child with a heart-wrenching history of abuse and neglect may motivate people with high levels of affective PSM to donate but may not be effective in generating donations from people with high levels of normative PSM. A campaign that highlights our civic duty to help those who have suffered misfortune may be more effective for this latter group.
Conclusion

PSM matters in the decisions that individuals make to volunteer or donate versus maintaining the status quo. These findings may be useful considerations for development directors and volunteer managers. We are unsure to what extent we can generalize our findings beyond college undergraduates at North Carolina State University. Still, developing deeper understandings about the people that will begin to populate the American workforce in coming years is a valuable and necessary effort that gives human resource practitioners as well as scholars insight into the types of motivational tools that will be necessary to encourage workers and volunteers. Concentrating future explorations on mandatory high school and college volunteering programs will also decrease problems of generalizability of samples such as ours.

We plan to extend this research in the future by interacting the slopes, not just the intercepts, of the donation and volunteering choice characteristics. Developing new scenarios that test the rational versus normative versus affective appeals on individual donating and volunteering decisions may provide more insight into the impact of the different dimensions of PSM on giving and volunteering and aid nonprofit practitioners in their efforts to recruit and retain volunteers and donors. Finally, we may also survey graduate students to test whether the negative effect of compulsory service in high school or in family environments wears off over time. If compulsory service has a negative effect, it is important to better understand what impact the move toward service learning in college has on volunteering and donating choices.

PSM illuminates decisions nonprofits need to consider when creating volunteering and donating programs. Appeals based on normative or affective motivators are possibly more likely to produce desired results than those driven by purely rational drivers. In studying prosocial behaviors outside of the public workplace, we are able to contribute to substantiating the link between the body of PSM literature found in public administration with concepts and issues of concern of the nonprofit sector. Extant PSM studies, including this one, can act as guides for nonprofit organizations that wish to create effective giving and volunteering campaigns.

Appendix A

Below is the portion of the survey regarding trade-offs among donating, volunteering, and the status quo. In an attempt to make sure that the particular missions of social service or arts and culture organizations in the scenario are not driving the choices respondent made, respondents were randomly assigned into two groups. Half of the respondents saw the descriptions for the social service organization (The Therapeutic Zone) and the arts and culture organization (The Arts Place) used in questions presented below. The other half were presented with the mission for the Food Bank for the social service organization and the County Museum for the arts and culture organization. Although we changed the mission for the social service and arts and culture organization, the description of the organizations did not change.

There are no statistically significant differences in answers to the trade-off questions between the social service scenarios or between the arts and culture scenarios. Therefore, we pool these two groups together in our analysis. The percentages for each answer below reflect average the pooled data.

(continued)
Appendix A (continued)

The missions for the Food Bank and the County Museum scenarios are as follows:

Mission: The Food Bank is a nonprofit organization that provides food to people at risk of hunger. The Food Bank distributes food through partner agencies such as soup kitchens, food pantries, shelters, and after school programs for children. The mission of the Food Bank is to supply resources so that no one goes hungry in their service area.

Mission: The County Museum’s main services include exhibits, educational programs, and collections care. They provide educational programs, tours, and lectures, as well as knowledge about the history of our county. All services are free to residents and visitors. Their mission is to preserve the past for the future.

Part II: Feelings Toward Volunteering and Donating

Philanthropic Trade-Offs

Many organizations solicit volunteer contributions of time and/or money. Individuals who contribute to these organizations may volunteer their time, some choose to contribute money, and others contribute time and money. We want to understand individual motivations for contributing money or volunteering. Below, we will ask you to make choices about volunteering or contributing money to different organizations. Although these organizations are not real, we would like you to answer the questions as if the described situation were real. At the top of each set of choices, we provide you with a brief description of these organizations. This description includes the nonprofit’s mission, amount of revenue, the sources of revenue, number of employees, and number of volunteers. Please keep in mind that, in surveys of this kind, individuals often do not fully consider all their financial obligations and time commitments. Please consider these factors when making your choices below. There is no right or wrong answer to the questions.

The Therapeutic Zone

Mission: The Therapeutic Zone is a nonprofit facility for homeless people with alcohol and drug addictions. Their mission is to offer recovery and rehabilitation services to homeless alcoholic and chemically dependent individuals by providing basic shelter and a program that encourages participants to be responsible to each other.

Organization Description

Total Revenue: $10 million annually

Revenue Mix: 80% from government, 20% from donations, 0% from sales

Number Employees: 35 full-time employees

Number of Volunteers: 100

For each question, please choose the answer that best represents your preference for how to use your time or money this week.

17. Given my limited time and money,

“I prefer to donate $10 to The Therapeutic Zone this week”

“I prefer to volunteer 2 hours to The Therapeutic Zone this week”

“I prefer not to donate or volunteer this week”

(continued)
Appendix A (continued)

18. Given my limited time and money,
   “I prefer to donate $25 to The Therapeutic Zone this week”
   “I prefer to volunteer 5 hours to The Therapeutic Zone this week”
   “I prefer not to donate or volunteer this week”
19. Given my limited time and money,
   “I prefer to donate $20 to The Therapeutic Zone this week”
   “I prefer to volunteer 3 hours to The Therapeutic Zone this week”
   “I prefer not to donate or volunteer this week”

The Arts Place

Mission: The mission of The Arts Place is to nourish the arts, creativity, and community through education, performance, and exhibition. Their programs include Art School, which offers classes in all art forms for adults and children and a theater program. The Arts Place also has children’s programs.

Organization Description

Total Revenue: $185,000

Revenue Mix: 25% from government, 40% from donations, 35% from sales

Number Employees: 8 full time, 4 part time

Number of Volunteers: 80

For each question, please choose the answer that best represents your preference for how to use your time or money this week.

22. Given my limited time and money,
   “I prefer to donate $10 to The Arts Place this week”
   “I prefer to volunteer 2 hours to The Arts Place this week”
   “I prefer not to donate or volunteer this week”
23. Given my limited time and money,
   “I prefer to donate $25 to The Arts Place this week”
   “I prefer to volunteer 5 hours to The Arts Place this week”
   “I prefer not to donate or volunteer this week”
24. Given my limited time and money,
   “I prefer to donate $20 to The Arts Place this week”
   “I prefer to volunteer 3 hours to The Arts Place this week”
   “I prefer not to donate or volunteer this week”

Appendix B

The 24 questions respondents answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale are reported in the first column of Table B1. The dimension of public service motivation (PSM) they indicate is listed in the second column. We use MPlus 3.11 (Muthén & Muthén, 2004) to carry out the factor analysis. In the third column, we report the standardized factor loading, which indicates the direct effect of the factor on the indicator variable (Bollen, 1989). This measure indicates the expected standard deviation change in the indicator resulting from a one standard deviation change in the latent variable (Bollen, 1989). Finally, in the fourth column I report the squared multiple correlation ($R^2$). Because each indicator variable depends on only one
### Table B1

**Public Service Motivation Factor Analysis**

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<th>Question</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
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<td>I seldom think about the welfare of people I don’t know personally. (reversed)</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>.598</td>
<td>.297</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have little compassion for people in need who are unwilling to take the first step to help themselves. (reversed)</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>.435</td>
<td>.323</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most social programs are too vital to do without.</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>.485</td>
<td>.071</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is difficult for me to contain my feelings when I see people in distress.</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>.519</td>
<td>.417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am often reminded by daily events about how dependent we are on one another.</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>.621</td>
<td>.339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am rarely moved by the plight of the underprivileged. (reversed)</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>.599</td>
<td>.382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To me, patriotism includes seeing to the welfare of others.</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>.579</td>
<td>.272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are few public programs I wholeheartedly support. (reversed)</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>.296</td>
<td>.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much of what I do is for a cause bigger than myself.</td>
<td>Self-sacrifice</td>
<td>.671</td>
<td>.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am one of those rare people who would risk personal loss to help someone else.</td>
<td>Self-sacrifice</td>
<td>.635</td>
<td>.292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements.</td>
<td>Self-sacrifice</td>
<td>.672</td>
<td>.449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe in putting duty before self.</td>
<td>Self-sacrifice</td>
<td>.438</td>
<td>.389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing well financially is definitely more important to me than doing good deeds. (reversed)</td>
<td>Self-sacrifice</td>
<td>.662</td>
<td>.592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving citizens would give me a good feeling even if no one paid me to for it.</td>
<td>Self-sacrifice</td>
<td>.395</td>
<td>.519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am prepared to make enormous sacrifices for the good of society.</td>
<td>Self-sacrifice</td>
<td>.679</td>
<td>.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I unselfishly contribute to my community.</td>
<td>Civic duty</td>
<td>.646</td>
<td>.250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful public service is very important to me.</td>
<td>Civic duty</td>
<td>.739</td>
<td>.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consider public service my civic duty.</td>
<td>Civic duty</td>
<td>.735</td>
<td>.234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is hard to get me genuinely interested in what is going on in my community. (reversed)</td>
<td>Civic duty</td>
<td>.556</td>
<td>.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would prefer seeing public officials do what is best for the community, even if it harmed my interests.</td>
<td>Civic duty</td>
<td>.303</td>
<td>.417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics is a dirty word. (reversed)</td>
<td>Attraction to public policy</td>
<td>.733</td>
<td>.360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The give and take of public policymaking doesn’t appeal to me. (reversed)</td>
<td>Attraction to public policy</td>
<td>.389</td>
<td>.145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t care much for politicians. (reversed)</td>
<td>Attraction to public policy</td>
<td>.854</td>
<td>.613</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $N = 303$. 

(continued)
latent variable, this value can be interpreted as indicating the amount of variation of the indicator variable that is explained by the latent factor (Bollen, 1989).

Overall, although the data are a reasonable fit to the model, (root mean square error of approximation = .065, comparative fit index = .83, Tucker–Lewis index = .81), some of the latent factors (PSM dimensions) explain relatively small amounts of variation in the indicator variables. As argued in the main text, given the reasonable fit between our data and Perry’s model, we include all four PSM dimensions in our analysis, even though some of the relationships between indicator variables and dimensions are less than ideal.

Notes
1. Of course, social resources and human capital affect the costs and benefits of volunteering. Thus, some groups such as the highly educated or those with extensive social networks are more likely to volunteer.
2. Perry’s (1996, 1997) early work relies on samples of convenience as well. This is a common practice in public service motivation (PSM) research. Perry, Brudney, Coursey, and Littlepage (2008), Vandevenabeele (2008), and Coursey and Pandey (2007) have used data from other representative sources, such as the 2003 Current Population Survey supplement (Perry et al., 2008), to see how volunteers from their samples of convenience compare to volunteers generally. The results have shown that there are no significant differences in the validity or reliability of PSM scales in larger, more representative samples and the samples of convenience of Perry’s initial PSM studies.
3. This modeling technique does not allow us to examine the direct impact of an individual’s characteristics on the choice he or she makes.
4. Brooks (2006, pp. 42-52) notes that conservatives are disproportionately religious relative to liberals. However, religious liberals engage in charitable contributions in a manner similar to that of conservative religious persons.
5. Income is captured as a categorical variable in the survey. We chose $100,000 as the break point between the categories because it represents the median income in our sample. Additional analyses we have performed indicate that income levels less than $100,000 affect decisions similarly and that the income categories $100,000 and greater also behave similarly.
6. Although not significant at the $p = .05$ level, the $z$ score (1.91) on compassion and volunteer choice interaction is close to the 1.96 level, which indicates the generally accepted level of statistical significance.
7. We also captured a respondent’s denominational affiliation and dichotomized this into evangelical and nonevangelical theological traditions based on Steensland et al. (2000). This variable was neither statistically nor substantively significant, so we dropped it from the model reported here.
8. Because very few respondents actually participated in a Center for Student Leadership, Ethics, and Public Service (CSLEPS) event or workshop, we cannot test if participation in CSLEPS increases the likelihood of choosing volunteering over the status quo.
9. We also wonder about a third, less charitable, interpretation of this result: that of the “slacker” upper-class student. Juniors and seniors taking this entry-level general education requirement later in their undergraduate career may be systematically different than other juniors and seniors. These students may just have less overall motivation than freshmen and sophomores in this course.
10. We suggest this might be evidence of “rebellious youth”; the more you force teenagers to do something, the less they will want to do it. In future research, we plan on surveying graduate students to see if this effect wears off over time.
11. Of course, this assumes that nonprofits have such programs. Based on data from Indiana, this is not very likely. Only 18% reported having volunteer recruitment policies, and 21% reported having a volunteer training program (Grønbjerg & Clerkin, 2004).

References


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