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Factors Affecting the Context for Motivation in Public Organizations

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A comparative framework is used to assess the present understanding of the motivational context in public organizations. Comparative public-private research on individual, job, work environment, and external variables affecting motivation is reviewed. In light of this research, the efficacy of four motivational techniques—monetary incentives, goal setting, job design, and participation—is discussed. An agenda is offered for future research, focusing on topics such as the measurability of performance, goal clarity, and job security.

The need to get “more for less” has been a major issue within public sector organizations during the 1970s and, if recent developments provide any clues, it promises to remain near the top of managers’ agendas throughout the coming decade. Many public managers probably identify the most recent efforts to get more for less with fads that, by now, are represented by familiar “buzz” words—zero-based budgeting (ZBB), cutback management, sunset, total performance measurement, and total pay comparability. The current concern about governmental efficiency, however, also has helped to focus renewed attention on some of the basic and enduring responsibilities of public managers, among them the motivation of employees.

At the outset, it is important for the reader to be aware that although the general terms “public employees” and “public organizations” are used, the public sector encompasses many different types of organizations and roles. Some of the generalizations in the present review, therefore, may not extend to all public organizations or public sector jobs. Based on the types of organizations studied in the research from which the present evidence is drawn, the generalizations are appropriate for civil servants and civil service jobs in medium to large governmental agencies, but they may apply to public employees in other contexts also. The research agenda proposed here should help to delimit better the proper scope of any generalizations.

The Context for Motivation

As a hypothetical construct, motivation usually stands for that which “energizes, directs, and sustains behavior.” In shorthand terms, it is the degree and type of effort that an individual exhibits in a behavioral situation. However, care needs to be taken not to equate motivation simply with sheer amount of effort. It also has to do with the direction and quality of that effort.

Any comprehensive look at the motivational bases of behavior in organizational settings must of necessity focus on the several sets of variables that influence motivation. A classification system, (Porter & Miles, 1974) found useful identifies four major categories of variables: (1) individual characteristics, (2) job characteristics, (3) work environment characteristics, and (4) external environment characteristics. If motivation is to be affected, one or more of these variables must be changed or affected. Let us look briefly at each category of variables and the special facets of motivational tasks in public organizations.

1This is a revised version of a paper presented at the Public Management Research Conference, 1979, Brookings Institution, Washington D. C.
**Individual Characteristics**

Although it is obvious that certain characteristics (such as attitudes) can be changed after one joins an organization, the focus here is on individual characteristics brought to the work situation. Presently there is a very limited understanding of special considerations that involve the “raw materials” in public sector motivational processes. Of course, one reason for this deficiency is simply the belief that, if government is different from other management contexts, it is distinguished by the nature of work or the environment within which the work occurs, not by the individuals whom it attracts or employs. Given this prevailing belief, only a few studies provide an indication of the motivational characteristics of public employees. Guyot (1961) compared middle managers in the federal government and in business on their needs for achievement, affiliation, and power. He concluded, quite surprisingly, that both popular and academic images of civil servants were distorted. Government middle managers had higher needs for achievement and lower needs for affiliation than did their business counterparts, but their needs for power were roughly the same.

Few researchers have attempted to replicate Guyot's results. However, two relatively recent studies by Rawls and his associates (Rawls & Nelson, 1975; Rawls, Ulrich, & Nelson, 1975), using samples of students about to enter management careers, again uncovered differences in individual characteristics. They found that students about to enter the nonprofit sector (primarily government) were significantly more dominant and flexible, had a higher capacity for status, and valued economic wealth to a lesser degree than did entrants to the profit sector. No significant differences existed between the groups on need for power and need for security. Thus, the collective findings of the three studies cited above exhibit a fairly high degree of consistency, considering the limitations on the comparisons that may be made among them, regarding the needs of public employees and how these needs differ from individuals in other sectors.

An independent issue related to individual characteristics involves the types of individual needs that are satisfied by the activities that occur in government organizations. Several studies (Paine, Carroll, & Leete, 1966; Rhinehart, Barrell, DeWolfe, Griffin, & Spaner, 1969; Rainey, 1979a, 1979b) indicate that public managers experience significantly lower levels of satisfaction than do their counterparts in business. Among the areas in which the differences are significant is satisfaction with promotion. This finding can be contrasted with the strong need for achievement found among entrants to government organizations. However, these studies utilized deficiency scores to measure satisfaction; thus levels of satisfaction then could simply reflect more stringent norms or expectations among government managers.

**Job Characteristics**

The second major set of variables that can be changed or modified to affect motivation involve what the person does at work—that is, the nature of the job or the collection of tasks that comprise the job. Although the unique features of government structures are generally believed, as indicated earlier, to have little impact on individual characteristics affecting public sector motivational processes, organizational structures and goals unique to government clearly influence the design of jobs in the public sector. Yet, just as the understanding of individual characteristics is deficient, motivation-relevant characteristics of public sector jobs also are not well documented in the research literature. Among the job characteristics that have been identified to be important, however, are the measurability of individual performance, degree of goal clarity, and degree of job challenge.

A frequent point of departure for many scholars attempting to identify unique aspects of public employment is the nature, both from aggregate and disaggregate perspectives, of public sector jobs. For example, Rainey, Backoff, and Levine (1976), Newman and Wallendor (1978), and Fotlter (1981) have concluded that demands on higher level public managers to maintain constituencies, deal with competing external interests, and seek funding in a political environment probably differentiate their roles from managers in other economic sectors. This view is reinforced by the results of a study (Porter & Vammanen, 1970) that compared time management and task accomplishment for public and private managers. Similarly, from an aggregate perspective, government is perceived primarily as a service provider rather than a goods producer. And, in fact, government is enormously more labor in-
tensive than are other sectors of the American economy because it is oriented toward the provision of personal services. The implications of this phenomenon are significant for the dimension of jobs that Thompson (1967) terms the "types of assessments" levied against individuals, that is, the extent to which individuals are likely to be evaluated by maximizing or satisficing criteria. Because government organizations are predominantly service providers, with additional burdens of accountability and public responsiveness, the problems of creating performance criteria and implementing evaluation schemes are complex and difficult. The difficulties place a special burden on public managers in designating what performance shall be evaluated.

A related aspect of performance appraisal in many public organizations is what Buchanan (1975a) terms goal crispness. Buchanan argues that governmental organizations pursue diffuse and conflicting goals, quite unlike the tangible and relatively more specific goals of business organizations. Thus, public managers are usually confronted by a two-pronged dilemma with respect to the motivational properties of public sector jobs: (1) jobs for which performance criteria cannot be readily defined or measured and (2) conflicting criteria for superior performance.

Quite surprisingly, the consequences of these characteristics of governmental jobs do not appear to spill over into other job dimensions and, therefore, they do not further complicate motivational processes. For example, Rainey (1979a) hypothesized that the greater vagueness and intangibility of governmental goals would lead to public middle managers expressing higher mean scores on role conflict and role ambiguity. He found, however, no significant differences between government and business managers. Thus, performance in public sector jobs generally may be more difficult to assess, and the task goals of public jobs might inherently conflict, but these phenomena apparently do not produce corresponding role-related conflicts. Managers develop means for coping with problematic job characteristics such as assessing jobs in terms of standard operating procedures (Cyert & March, 1963) that simplify and avoid the difficulties of performance measurement in public service organizations.

A recent report by the National Center for Pro-

ductivity and Quality of Working Life (1978) suggests that two other job dimensions, job content and job challenge, satisfy the needs of employees relatively well. Most public employees responding to a series of attitude surveys rated the content of their jobs as good (managers—84 percent; non-managers—64 percent), and few disagreed with a statement that their jobs made good use of their skills and abilities (managers—14 percent; non-managers—23 percent). Buchanan (1974a) reports results on first-year job challenge comparing business and public managers that seemingly contradict the latter result. Industrial managers in his sample scored higher, reporting significantly greater first-year job challenge. Buchanan focused, however, on first-year job challenge, and it is quite plausible that differences might exist between the National Commission results and his more restrictive and retrospective concept. He offers several reasons for the lower level of first-year job challenge among government managers. One reason is that bureaucratic roles, particularly at training levels, might be difficult to infuse with excitement. This could be exacerbated by the gap that exists between the routineness of the first job and the idealism that might have drawn the manager to the public service. Buchanan notes that first-year job challenge might also be negatively affected by government's efforts to assure representation and to train unemployed individuals. These policies might unwittingly contribute to overstaffing and the dilution of training positions.

Work Environment Characteristics

Variables dealing with work environment characteristics that can be changed or modified to impact motivation can be placed into two subcategories: immediate work environment characteristics and organizational actions. Clearly, the two most critical factors in an employee's immediate work environment are: the peer group and the supervisor. Organizational actions, insofar as they affect motivation, can be classified into (a) provision of system rewards, (b) provision of individual rewards, and (c) creation of an organizational climate.

More insights have been developed about important motivational aspects of the work situation in public organizations than about the preceding two categorizations of variables, individual and job
characteristics. A number of these insights relate to organizational climate and emanate from Buchanan's work (1974a, 1974b, 1975a, 1975b) on organizational commitment. Among the work situation characteristics affecting motivation is the phenomenon of goal crispness, discussed earlier in conjunction with job characteristics. The diffuseness of, and contradictions among, public organizational goals may be viewed as work environment characteristics as well as job characteristics. In either instance, they complicate the task of developing attachments to government organizations and generating spontaneous goal directed activities.

Goal crispness is only one of several work environment characteristics relevant to motivation in the public sector. Buchanan (1974a, 1975b) identifies at least three other work environment characteristics that influence a manager's leverage in motivating employees: personal significance reinforcement, stability of expectations, and reference group experiences.

Personal significance reinforcement, a related aspect of goal crispness, involves the extent to which individuals perceive that they make contributions to organizational success. As Buchanan argues, it is especially difficult for many public agencies to instill employees with a sense of personal significance. One reason is that it is often difficult for public employees to observe any link between their contributions and the success of their organizations. The absence of this linkage is the result of a variety of factors, among them the sheer size of many governments, the pluralistic composition of policy implementation networks, and the lack of clear-cut performance indicators or norms. Developing the attitude among employees that they are valued members of an organization is a difficult job even in the best circumstances. However, the task becomes increasingly demanding when attitudes of personal significance must be developed within a large scale organization in which there might be little acceptance or recognition of general standards of performance. The problems of stimulating a sense of personal significance among employees are compounded by the constitutional separation of the executive and legislative branches of government, which occasionally produces legislative-administrative conflicts that destroy attitudes of personal significance.

Goal crispness and personal significance rein-
forcement perhaps are the most important, but not the only, work situation characteristics affecting motivation.

A third factor, stability of expectations, is directly related to the frequency with which the dominant coalitions (Thompson, 1967) of governments change. This variable involves whether employees perceive that their organizations have a stable commitment to the mission or programs that they pursue. Of course, even "planned" changes in political leadership seriously jeopardize the development of this stability. If the directions of programs or missions change frequently enough, employees are likely to question the need to put forth maximum effort on what they come to perceive as transitory programs. The end result of such instability is that an organization "will find it more difficult to command the same intensity of loyalty that other organizations enjoy" (Buchanan, 1974a, p. 43).

Another significant work environment characteristic that influences motivation is the diversity of values and characteristics of work groups. Work or similar task related groups exercise a certain amount of control over their members' attitudes. Heterogeneous or representative groups, more typical of government than of the private sector, will, in Buchanan's terms, "rarely develop intensely favorable attitudes toward their agencies or foster climates in which commitment to the agency is a group norm" (Buchanan, 1975b). This phenomenon, by reducing cohesion and consensus within the work group, diminishes the likelihood or, at the very least, increases the difficulty of eliciting spontaneous goal directed behaviors from employees.

Another interpersonal dimension of the work situation, an aspect of the immediate work environment, with significant implications for motivation is the quality of supervision. The National Center for Productivity (1978), drawing on a nonrandom sample of previous attitudinal studies, reported employee perceptions of lower supervisory quality in the public than in the private sector. One exception to this generalization was that, among managers, public sector supervisors were rated more highly than private supervisors on human relations skills. Public supervisors, in contrast to their private counterparts, suffered primarily in terms of their subordinates' evaluation of their technical competence. The quality-of-supervision differences reported by the National Center for Productivity
might have a variety of causes. The evaluations of technical competence could reflect greater predominance of manager-professional conflicts in government organizations. They also might reflect less investment in training or less success in recruiting supervisory personnel. In any event, the quality of supervision is a critical element in motivational processes.

As a whole, these special work environment considerations in public organizations appear likely to constrain motivational levels significantly even when individual and job characteristics are conducive to employee motivation. Factors such as goal crispness and the quality of supervision are too integral to eliciting superior employee performance to argue otherwise. Although the accumulated research evidence permits some generalizations about the underlying processes, it does not offer any prescriptions for better managing these work environment characteristics.

**External Environment Characteristics**

The fourth major category of variable that can affect employee motivation is the external environment (or environments). In particular, it is changes or the anticipation of changes in the external environment that can have powerful impacts on individuals' behavior in work organizations. This category of variables, however, in contrast with the first three, is not one which any given organization can directly control. Nevertheless, that does not leave the organization helpless. It can monitor the external environment and, based on such monitoring, it can proceed to make changes internally within the organization that can influence employee motivation.

External environments can be usefully subdivided (arbitrarily, to be sure) into several major categories: socionormative, political, demographic, economic, and technological. Focus will be on the first two categories, because it is believed that they contain the variables that have the greatest differential effects on employee motivation in public sector organizations.

**Socionormative Changes.** Public sector organizations cannot help but be impacted by what Clark Kerr has termed the "fourth period of great evolutionary change" in the labor force in the United States with respect to "its composition, its character, and the rules for its conduct" (1979, p. ix). The quest for personal self-fulfillment is regarded by Kerr, along with other social observers such as Daniel Yankelovich and Amitai Etzioni, as especially significant for the work environment—any work environment, including that of the public sector. As Kerr puts it, "We have a crisis of aesthetics, not ethics—tastes have changed, and the indulgence of psychic satisfactions has increased" (1979, p. xi).

These broad socionormative changes can directly affect motivation, by altering the orientations of those who enter public organizations, but they also might influence motivation indirectly, by modifying the attitudes and values of those whom public organizations serve. To the extent that the general public holds unfavorable attitudes about public employment and public bureaucracies, motivation-relevant employee perceptions, such as self-worth and personal significance, can be expected to be affected. Furthermore, compounding any motivational difficulties that might be associated with society's attitudes about public employment—attitudes that tend to fluctuate widely over time (White, 1932; Janowitz & Wright, 1956)—is the complexity of public attitudes about government. As Katz and his colleagues (Katz, Guteck, Kahn, & Barton, 1975) have observed, for example, there appear to be marked inconsistencies between the public's ideological and pragmatic attitudes. One manifestation of this inconsistency (so evident in the public's response to Proposition 13) is that, at an ideological level, private enterprise is perceived as more effective than government agencies, but, at a pragmatic level, government interventions into areas like pollution control and auto safety regulation are strongly supported by the public. The continued existence of these types of inconsistencies in the socionormative environment will challenge those who attempt to sharpen the goals of public organizations and may diminish managers' ability to motivate individuals who seek guidance from stable and consistent, rather than ambiguous, public expectations.

**Political Changes.** The implications of these changes for motivation perhaps are the most difficult to characterize because they influence motivation less directly than do socionormative or demographic changes, and, in recent years, they collectively have followed no easily discernible patterns. Some of the more long-standing political trends no doubt affect employee motivation only in very
general ways. Counted among these trends might be
the recent (the post-Eisenhower period) instability
in the American Presidency, steadily declining
public trust in major political institutions, and,
perhaps partially as an outgrowth of the latter
trend, increasingly frequent legislative intervention
into day-to-day administrative details. Except for
legislative interventionism, which actually or poten-
tially might have an impact on the task structure of
government jobs, the political changes above in-
fluence motivation primarily by altering the climate—the “psychological feel”—within an or-
agement.

Other, more discrete political changes of recent
years unquestionably will affect motivation in
measurable, but yet to be explored ways. Legislative
mandates for citizen participation, spanning the
eras of the Great Society and New Federalism, have
contributed to the dispersion of power and authori-
y in administrative systems. This most recent mani-
festation and reassertion of the tenets of represen-
tative democracy (Kaufman, 1969) most certainly
has affected key variables bearing on motivation.
Similar consequences could be expected to flow
from other current political developments: the
“new” populism (including Ralph Nader, Common
Cause, and Jimmy Carter), the ebb of the electorate
toward greater conservatism (often equated with
less government), and an era of relative scarcity
within the political economy.

Efficacy of Motivational Techniques

Most organizations employ one or more methods
to elicit role compliance and goal directed behaviors
from their employees. These motivational techni-
quies usually are intended to maximize benefits to
the organization, but their relative utility varies
considerably. The list of motivational techniques
presently used by employers is extensive: monetary
incentives, goal setting, flexitime, job enlargement,
job enrichment, behavior modification, participa-
tion, award and recognition plans, discipline, and
counseling. However, as a recent review (Locke,
Feren, McCaleb, Shaw, & Denny, 1980) illustrates,
most research has focused on four basic (but not
mutually exclusive) motivational methods: mone-
tary incentives, goal setting, job design, and par-
icipation. In fact, most motivational methods are
derived from these basic techniques.

Monetary Incentives

Locke et al. (1980) concluded from their review
of field studies of monetary incentives that signifi-
cant performance improvements resulted from the
use of these techniques. The median performance
increase found in the field studies they reviewed was
30 percent. This median increase, however, may
overestimate the value of money as an incentive,
because monetary incentives typically are accom-
panied by some form of methods analysis, goal set-
ting, or other technique that contributes to moti-
vating performance. Until quite recently, monetary
incentives, with the exception of output-oriented
merit increases, have not been adopted widely in the
public sector. A 1973 survey (National Commission
on Productivity and Work Quality, 1975) of 509
local governments reported that 42 percent of the
respondents used merit increases, only 6 percent
employed performance bonuses, and 1 percent used
shared savings or piecework systems. On the basis
of a very limited amount of information, govern-
ment’s success with monetary incentives prior to the
Federal Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (CSRA)
has, at best, been mixed. For example, the National
Commission on Productivity stated:

Some reported output-oriented merit increases were,
in fact longevity increases or focused more on per-
sonal characteristics rather than output. Indeed, even
truly output-oriented merit increases often became
routine and are taken for granted by employees after
they have been in operation for a while (1975, p. 44).

It should be noted, however, that CSRA is intended
to remedy these types of shortcomings associated
with the use of monetary incentives in the federal
government. Whether or not the reforms achieve
this goal is a matter for future inquiry.

At a conceptual level, the designs of monetary in-
centives must clearly deal with some of the motiva-
tional considerations discussed earlier. Perhaps the
most important consideration is the values of em-
ployees. As noted previously, there is some indica-
tion that individuals entering the public sector value
economic wealth to a lesser degree than do entrants
to the profit sector. If this is indeed true, the
motivational potential of monetary incentives
might be limited in contrast to experiences else-
where. It is quite possible, however, that greater
emphasis on monetary incentives will begin to at-
tract individuals who value economic wealth more
highly. This development might lessen the attrac-
tion of the public service to more idealistic types.
These concerns may be moot considering that even with the addition of monetary incentives public managers probably will receive much lower monetary rewards than will managers in other economic sectors (Fogel & Lewin, 1974; Smith, 1976).

The successful use of monetary incentives in government also is threatened by the extent to which performance differences can be measured with precision and an equitable formula can be developed that ties rewards to performance. Definition and measurement of performance criteria obviously will affect the acceptability and results of such incentive systems. The extent to which competing goals of an agency are mirrored in performance criteria also will complicate incentive systems.

Goal Setting

Goal setting essentially involves establishing observable standards for employee performance and offering feedback to the employee about the extent to which the standards have been achieved. Techniques for goal setting, like monetary incentives, come in a variety of formats, including performance targets, management by objectives, and work standards. Goal setting techniques have been used widely in government, and the early conceptual and practical development of some techniques, like MBO, owe a great deal to governmental experience (Sherwood & Page, 1976).

From their review of 17 field studies of goal setting, Locke et al. (1980) attribute a 16 percent median improvement in performance (with a range of 2 percent to 57.5 percent) as a result of goal setting. They also emphasized that feedback about progress vis-à-vis goals is essential for goal setting to regulate performance effectively. One reported use of goal setting in the Bureau of Census (Hornbruch, 1977), which gave regular feedback about performance against work standards, achieved a 52 percent improvement in output.

The design of goal setting techniques for public organizations must take into account a myriad of considerations that might moderate their success. The most important of these obviously is the vague and conflicting nature of governmental goals. An important issue is whether goal setting techniques will encourage more concrete goal explication, or whether there are countervailing influences that assure that government goals will remain inherently vague and conflicting. Although examples support-
Job Design

Job design involves the structuring of various aspects of the job content (Hackman, 1977). For example, job design might involve increasing job responsibilities, the variety of tasks, or employee autonomy. Although job design has been popular since the early 1960s, the 1973 Urban Institute survey for the National Commission on Productivity (1975) reported that only 73 of 509 local government organizations had used some form of job rotation, redesign, or teamwork technique.

Evaluating the effectiveness of job design is more difficult than evaluating the effectiveness of other motivational techniques because it usually is implemented in conjunction with feedback and other structural changes (Locke et al., 1980). As Locke et al. suggest, if the performance contributions of the goal setting component of job design programs are controlled, job design might have no further effects on performance. Thus, the contributions of job design to public sector performance are somewhat problematic. Many cases of successful job design are described in the National Commission report (1975), but no rigorous evaluation of applications of the technique is available. Furthermore, the primary thrust of job design has been toward changing job content, but, as already indicated, this is not a widespread source of dissatisfaction among public employees. This indicates that there might be only a selective need for job design, possibly confined to those situations in which a direct cause-effect relationship exists between satisfaction with job content and service quality or output, or in cases in which an employee is being underutilized.

Another threat to the success of job design involves the ability of managers to alter variables significantly—variables such as self-direction or responsibility—when these aspects of the job are controlled by legislators or program constituents. At the very least, this problem might restrict the applicability of job design to jobs embedded both vertically and horizontally within an organization. One selective use for which job design might clearly pay dividends is in training positions. The problem of first-year job challenge is clearly amenable to solution by the use of job design.

Participation

Participation involves some type of shared or joint decision making between superiors and subordinate at the work group, program, or organizational level. A few instances of its use in state and local governments are described in the National Commission report (National Commission on Productivity and Work Quality, 1975). Of course, collective bargaining, already widespread in the public sector, is one variant of participation.

Because of the limited understanding of the effects of participation, it is extremely difficult to judge its probable efficacy as a motivational tool in government. At a superficial level, questions might be raised about participation’s consequences for “who governs,” but this does not appear to be a significant impediment to the instrumental use of participation. Intuitively, one might expect that participation would contribute positively to motivational considerations like perceptions of personal significance and quality of supervision. Its utility for moderating the effects of other variables, such as work group diversity, is less clear.

Conclusions

This paper has reviewed a diverse set of topics focused around motivational processes in public organizations. Now is proposed an agenda for research, composed primarily of questions that have been raised implicitly in this paper. The issues enumerated below are illustrative of those that might be addressed.

1. The individual-organization match. Considerable research attention has been addressed to how organizations choose individuals, but much less attention has been paid to the reverse: how individuals choose organizations and how organizations attract individuals. Insufficient research attention also has been given to a related aspect of the individual-organization match: How the attitudes, beliefs, and interests that an individual brings to organizational settings impact motivation. An understanding of these questions seems particularly important in light of research evidence that indicates that public organizations attract somewhat different types of individuals than do private organizations. The practical payoff from such a line of inquiry might be to increase the extent to which individuals entering government are satisfied with their organization and the extent to which the organization is able to secure effective behaviors from its members.

2. Measurability of individual performance. One
of the most immediately pressing needs for research attention involves the measurability of individual performance in typical public sector jobs. For example, it might be necessary to make some conceptual advances before a public manager’s “ability to deal with competing external interests” can be adequately measured. Because the performance of many public employees probably will be measured despite the lack of availability of generally accepted criteria, research on performance appraisal methods most appropriate for such circumstances also is needed.

3. Goal clarity. A better understanding of the sources of goal clarity (or lack of it) is needed so that remedies can be designed or a certain degree of murkiness in the goals of public organizations may have to be generally accepted. It is necessary to develop a better understanding of the ways in which the political environment reduces goal crispness and displaces goal directed activity. Research on how people adapt to situations in which goals are inherently unclear might contribute to developing methods for encouraging effective behaviors in such situations.

4. Job security. Differences between job security practices are a source of continuing, and often unfavorable, comparison between the public and private sectors. As noted earlier, the findings of several studies suggest that the security needs of public employees do not differ from those of private employees. However, knowledge about the motivational effects of the use of job security as a system wide reward in public organizations is minimal. Research might focus on developing a better understanding of the motivational “costs” and “benefits” of current public job security practices and designing alternative means for protecting political neutrality.

5. Moderators of motivation techniques. Another research issue might be the identification of key moderators of the effectiveness of the various motivational techniques. For example, Locke et al. (1980) indicated in their review that although participation had demonstrated only about a 1 percent median performance increase in a group of 16 field studies, half of the field experiments exhibited positive results, one as high as 47 percent. The critical research question is: Did the eight field sites in which participation was successful share characteristics that were absent in those sites where participation failed? This search for the factors that moderated the effectiveness of participation could be generalized to all the motivational techniques and should be a central concern of evaluative studies in public organizations.

Generally, the literature on motivation tends to concentrate too heavily on employees within industrial and business organizations. The comparative perspective used in the present study has been valuable for showing the limitations of knowledge about the context for motivation in public organizations. With approximately 20 percent of the American work force employed in the public sector, it clearly is important to develop better insights about what accounts for motivational variance in public organizations. Exploration of the questions proposed here should contribute measurably to a better understanding of the variables that play an especially important part in public sector motivational processes.

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