What Drives Morally Committed Citizens? A Study of the Antecedents of Public Service Motivation

This study examines the relationship between public service motivation and antecedents believed to be important determinants of moral commitment. Research conducted during the past decade indicates that public service motivation is a valid construct that is useful for predicting outcomes that are important to public organizations and to society. The sample for the empirical study consists of winners of the Daily Point of Light Award and the President’s Community Volunteer Award. Antecedents studied are volunteer experience, religious activity, and parental socialization. Quantitative and qualitative analyses are used to identify key determinants of public sector motivation. Religious activity is positively related to formal and informal volunteering. Interviews strongly support the quantitative findings, especially the importance of religion, but also highlight the role of life-changing events.


This study examines PSM from the perspective of a second major stream of research: the outcome of antecedents. It departs from prior research with respect to the sample studied and some of the antecedents. The sample is drawn from a survey of national volunteer award winners, a group of exemplars recognized for their contributions to the public good of their communities. The study therefore provides an opportunity for confirming the validity of the public service motivation construct with a sample of morally committed individuals who do important service for others.

The Model
As used in the present study, public service motivation refers to “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions or organizations” (Perry and Wise 1990, 368). It can be understood as a need-based theory of motivation (Perry and Wise 1990; Rainey 2003, 229–35) in which the values and commitments that high-PSM individuals bring to their work—their predispositions—generate drives to satisfy these predispositions. Knoke and Wright-Isak’s predisposition-incentive model provides a useful elaboration of the motivational logic underlying PSM. In a recent article, Perry, Mesch, and Paarlberg (2006) also connect traditional motivation interventions, such as job design and goal setting, to the PSM construct.

Although anecdotal evidence is available about the public service ethic and its antecedents, the first analysis using a formal scale of PSM (Perry 1996) is relatively recent (Perry 1997). This study investigates political and religious socialization, professionalism, political ideology, and individual demographic characteristics. The research concludes that PSM develops “from exposure to a variety of experiences, some associated with childhood, some associated with religion, and some associated with professional life” (Perry 1997, 190).

In his initial research, Perry (1997) suggests another set of antecedents worthy of study: organizational...
influences on PSM. Moynihan and Pandey (2007) have recently investigated organizational influences on PSM, concluding that sociohistorical context is an important influence on PSM. They find that public service motivation is strongly and positively related to level of education and membership in professional organizations. Organizational factors are also significant antecedents. In this study, red tape and length of organizational membership are negatively related to PSM, whereas hierarchical authority and reform efforts are positively related to PSM.

In addition to the few studies referenced here that directly investigate antecedents of PSM, other research (Crewson 1995, 1997; Houston 2000) has evaluated correlates of PSM. Houston, for example, finds that public employees place a higher value on intrinsic work rewards, are less likely to place a greater value on extrinsic rewards such as higher income and shorter work hours, but are more likely to value job security. Both Houston and Crewson conclude that individuals employed in public organizations have different motives than their private sector counterparts, but their correlational research does not address the sources of these motives.

Although research about the antecedents of PSM is more limited than research about its outcomes, findings to date are generally consistent with the normative network of relationships that we would expect for the PSM construct (Schwab 1980). Results about antecedents are also generally consistent across samples, but the number of studies has not reached a sufficient threshold for a meaningful conclusion.

The present study extends research about the antecedents of PSM by examining a sample of morally committed individuals who do important service for others but, who, mostly, are not professional public administrators. Studying a sample of moral exemplars who are not formally tied to traditional public administration settings is important in at least two respects. First, because PSM is an individual attribute, it should have utility for studying the service motivations of people in a variety of settings, not just public organizations. Second, given the increasing reliance of public officials on private tools for policy action (Salamon 2002), a better understanding of PSM among citizens could be beneficial for conceptualizing how public responsibilities are devolved across our society.

Figure 1 presents the theoretical model guiding our inquiry into public service motivation. It draws on and synthesizes both the prior research about PSM antecedents cited earlier and a large literature on volunteering.

The structural model posits that three “status” or demographic variables—income, education level, and gender—influence PSM indirectly through volunteering experiences. Following the dominant status model of volunteering (Smith 1994), we propose that higher education and income will be positively associated with volunteering. As Smith points out, “Higher socioeconomic status predicts increased volunteer participation” (1994, 249). Wilson adds, “Level of education is the most consistent predictor of volunteer” (2000, 219); higher income also predicts volunteering (Smith 1994, 248). Other studies corroborate these findings (e.g., Wilson and Musick 1997), although they are not always careful to examine these effects simultaneously in well-developed models. We further anticipate a relationship between gender and volunteering. Aggregate statistical results in North America show that women volunteer at higher rates, but gender-based differences in volunteering have been declining over the past two decades, likely as a result of the greater involvement of women in the workforce and changing gender roles for both women and men (Weitzman et al. 2002). In his comprehensive literature review, Smith concludes, “In national surveys during the review period, gender has a complex relationship to participation” (1994, 248).

The structural model proposes that three other variables—religious activity, family socialization, and youth volunteering—affect PSM both directly and indirectly through volunteering. Although our data do
not allow us to evaluate the direction of the relationship empirically, we believe that volunteering more often than not leads to PSM rather than the reverse: Research suggests that volunteering may emanate from a variety of sources and motivations, including religion and clergy, home and family, school and peers, and work and socialization, as well as the desire to meet other people, explore careers, start or replace social networks, and that it can even be mandated. Thus, although high levels of PSM are not necessary to engage volunteers, individuals who have participated versus those who have not are more likely in postvolunteering surveys to express values consonant with PSM, such as broader exposure and awareness, as well as caring and regard for other people (e.g., Toppe, Kirsch, and Michel 2002).

Religion is among the most important cultural factors that give structure and meaning to human values, behaviors, and experiences (Fuller 1998; Lukoff, Lu, and Turner 1995). Altruistic behavior is a human ideal across most, if not all, religions (Post et al. 2002). In addition, biblical tradition is believed to be a major inspiration for helping behavior (Wuthnow 1991). Mason (1996) argues that the beauty of public organizations lies in the fact that they foster expressive activities, such as love, caring, empathy, and devotion. Similarly, Lohmann (1992) conceives of the nonprofit world as a “commons” in which volunteers can seek and find like-minded individuals and organizations who embrace their values and concerns, such as fairness, sharing, mutuality, or understanding, or salvation or love of others. Ultimately, voluntarism results from the overflowing need many people have to express themselves, which compels them to act (Mason 1996, 18).

The relationship of religious activity to both volunteering and PSM is complicated, conditional on such factors as religious denomination, whether the activity is directed toward the congregation or outside, and the measurement of the different concepts (Perry 1997; Wilson and Janoski 1995; Yeung 2004). Yeung (2004) reports that some studies demonstrate only a weak correlation (Wuthnow 1991) or no correlation (e.g., Benson et al. 1980; Friedrichs 1960; Hunter and Linn 1980–81) between religiosity and volunteering. Yet many studies have found a positive relationship between religiosity and volunteering (Bernt 1989; Chambre 1987; Greerly 1997; Hodgkinson, Weitzman, and Kirsch 1990; Lam 2002; Serow 1991; Uslaner 1997). Moreover, a survey of Daily Point of Light Award recipients from 1988 to 1992 found high participation in religious activities (Brudney 2000; Brudney and Willis 1995). Accordingly, in the present study of people who have received the same honors for their volunteer service, we expect to see positive relationships between religious activity and volunteering and PSM.

The other two variables in the structural model that are hypothesized to affect PSM both directly and indirectly relate to experiences of award recipients as youth: family socialization and youth volunteering. The first variable taps respondents’ family influences and attitudes as they were growing up. The influences include parents who actively participated in volunteer organizations, urging from parents to volunteer, and transmission of moral and ethical values concerning helping others, especially those in distress. We expect that higher levels of family socialization to volunteering as a youth will lead to increased volunteering and PSM.

Second, we anticipate that volunteering as a youth will result in more volunteering and higher PSM as individuals mature. A major study by the Independent Sector (2002) illustrates the strong impact of youth service on the habits of adults. Engaging Youth in Lifelong Service finds that adults who participated in volunteering in their youth give more money and volunteer more time than adults who began their philanthropy later in life. The report shows that two-thirds of adult volunteers began volunteering their time when they were young. Adults who began volunteering as youth are twice as likely to volunteer as those who did not volunteer when they were younger. In every income and age group, those who volunteered as a youth give and volunteer more than those who did not. The report also supports the family socialization hypothesis by showing that those who volunteered as a youth and whose parents volunteered became the most generous adults in giving time.

Methodology
This research utilizes several different modes of data collection, including a sample of national award-winning volunteers, mixed methods, surveys, and interviews.

Sample
The sample for the empirical study consisted of winners of the Daily Point of Light Award and the President’s Community Volunteer Award, which is awarded on behalf of the president of the United States. The Daily Point of Light Award honors individuals and volunteer groups that have made a commitment through service to help meet critical needs in their communities. Each weekday one volunteer or volunteer effort in the country is named a Daily Point

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of Light. These nonpartisan awards are given to those who find innovative ways to meet community needs, efforts that often lead to long-term solutions and impact social problems in their local communities. Now called the President's Community Volunteering Award, the President's Service Award is the nation's highest honor for volunteerism. It recognizes outstanding individuals, families, groups, organizations, businesses, and labor unions engaged in community services that address unmet human service, educational, environmental, and public safety needs. The president traditionally presents these awards at a White House ceremony to signify and symbolize their importance.

Survey
A survey instrument was developed in several stages using a short version of Perry's (1996) public service motivation scale and multiple sources for measures for religiosity, voluntarism, motivations for volunteering, and family influences. Because the primary purpose of the survey was to examine the role of faith in volunteering, we convened an advisory board of clergy to review and comment on the draft survey instrument. Before finalizing the survey, we incorporated the advisory group's input and received approval for administration from the Institutional Review Board.

The first mailing of the surveys took place on January 22, 2004. A follow-up mailing took place on February 26, 2004. Our overall response rate was 38 percent (525 surveys returned from a total of 1,386).

To ensure that the respondents were representative of all winners of these awards, we examined two indicators that were available to us: the percentage of respondents by state compared to all winners, and the percentage of respondents by year of award compared to all winners. The respondents were widely distributed and not overly represented by any one state. As might be expected, there was a higher percentage of respondents from recent award years, but not dramatically higher.

In addition, we wanted to see how these volunteers compared to volunteers in general, so we compared our sample to the 2003 Current Population Survey supplement on volunteering conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The award winners and a smaller group of interviewees were compared to this group of all volunteers nationally to determine whether they differed in significant ways. As table 1 illustrates, in many ways (gender, income, and ethnicity) the award winners were similar to the national sample. Where differences occurred, the award winners were more highly educated, more likely to be retired, more likely to be black, and over age 60. The age and employment status differences make sense because a group of award recipients would generally be expected to have more experience with the activity and likely to

Table 1 Comparison of Demographic Characteristics of Award Winners to All Volunteers and Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interviewees (n = 26)</th>
<th>Survey respondents (n = 525)</th>
<th>Current Population Survey volunteers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>59%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>Some high school or degree or GED</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<td>Some college but less than bachelor's</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<td>58%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<td>Full-time student, unemployed, other</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<td>Less than $20,000</td>
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<td>11%</td>
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<td>$20,000-$39,999</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<td>0–24</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>25–59</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>66%</td>
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<tr>
<td>60 or older</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteering hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>139.2</td>
<td>134.6</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>260.4</td>
<td>251.3</td>
<td>137.2</td>
</tr>
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have more free time to volunteer and fewer family commitments, so we could expect them to be older and at a different stage in life compared with the typical volunteer. Another difference that is not surprising is the amount of time devoted to volunteering—award winners reported on average 251 hours per year, almost twice as much as the reported average for the more typical volunteer of 137 hours per year.

**Interviews**

A small, heterogeneous sample (n = 26) of award recipients encompassing substantial variation on demographic characteristics was selected for in-depth interviews to determine their goals, values, how they developed their volunteer commitment, and the role their faith played in that volunteer commitment. The interviews were modeled on research conducted on moral commitment (Colby and Damon 1992). We used the qualitative information to provide depth and clarity to augment the structured, self-administered surveys.

After all survey responses were entered into the database, we conducted preliminary analyses to select respondents for in-depth interviews. We categorized respondents into four groups by cross-classifying them along two dimensions: religious activity and religious worldview. The responses were first separated into two categories—those with a high level of religious activity (as measured by several questions) and those with a low level of religious activity. Each of these two groups was then subdivided into two groups (making four groups in all)—those with an individual worldview (including those who said these statements most closely reflected their opinions: "the best way to address social problems is to change individuals," and "individuals are poor because of individual inadequacies") and those with a communal worldview (including those who said these statements most closely reflected their opinions: "the best way to address social problems is to change social institutions," and "individuals are poor because of social, economic, and political factors").

We developed an interview protocol and conducted the interviews by telephone. We took notes and, with the permission of the respondents, tape-recorded the interviews. Most interviews lasted 30 minutes to one hour.

The average age of the interviewees was 54, with the range from 14 to 78 years of age. The interviewees included 16 men and 10 women. As table 1 illustrates, the group interviewed did not differ substantially from all award winners on their motivations, the number of volunteer activities, or the number of hours volunteered. In the present research, almost 80 percent of the moral exemplars attributed their core value commitments to their religious faith, even though the nominating criteria for the awards did not include any specifically religious factor.

**Measures**

With the exception of youth volunteering and the three control constructs (gender, level of education, and income), all exogenous constructs were measured by multiple indicators based on indices or scales from previous research. Appendix A details these items and associated reliabilities.

We estimated the model in figure 1 separately for formal and informal volunteering because the two represent quite different concepts and activities. As Wilson concludes in his annual review article on volunteering, "the generic term ‘volunteering’ embraces a vast array of quite disparate activities. It is probably not fruitful to try to explain all activities with the same theory nor to treat all activities as if they were the same with respect to consequences" (2000, 233). Formal volunteering consists of donations of time to organizations, often through regular, ongoing assignments, although more sporadic or "episodic" volunteering is also possible (Maccan 2000). Informal volunteering tends to be more spontaneous and less planned: The volunteer behavior is not mediated through an organization but is offered directly to other people, for example, by providing them with transportation, help with daily living activities (shopping, cleaning), labor (moving, yard work), or day care (Weitzman et al. 2002). Though formal volunteering is well captured in the literature and practice of volunteer administration, informal volunteering is often overlooked, even though the amount likely rivals the extent of formal volunteering to organizations (Toppe, Kirsch, and Michel, 2002).

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Family socialization is an index of experiences within the family as respondents were growing up. The experiences involve exposure to parents volunteer activities, helping behaviors within the family, parental orientations toward strangers in distress, and discussion of moral values. Religious activity was measured by how often the respondent attended religious services, prayed or read religious texts, practiced religious rituals at home, took part in any activities of a place of worship (other than attending services), or participated in any of the activities or groups of a religion or
faith-service organization (such as Knights of Columbus or Hadassah).

Public service motivation uses 11 items from Perry's scale (1996) as the dependent variable. The eleven items were drawn from three of the four scale subdimensions: commitment to public interest and civic duty, compassion, and self-sacrifice. Items related to the attraction to policy making dimension were not included because of the makeup of the sample, which included mostly private citizens operating outside government. Also, in the few PSM confirmatory studies to date, this dimension has not fared as well as others, with generally poor accounted variance and path coefficients (e.g., Coursey and Pandey 2007; Perry 1996), partly it is argued, because the items may tap dissatisfaction with politicians more than the idea of interest in public policy making.

Analysis

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was deployed to test the theorized model, which appears in figure 1. Although it is possible to test concurrently the measurement and structural relationships (i.e., test the reliability and validity of the indicators for the various constructs while simultaneously testing the hypothesized construct relations), this combined approach is not advisable. Such a model is overly complex, can suffer identification and degrees of freedom problems, and, most importantly, seriously risks estimation errors in the primary structural paths from simultaneously estimating the measurement model. A preferred approach is to separate the measurement model and then, after finding sufficient grounds for the reliability and validity of the measures using confirmatory factor analysis, to use derived factors in a structural equation.

Missing data are also an issue in SEM, as they can cause estimation errors as well. SEM, in using the covariance matrix, requires listwise deletion, so a single, missing value on an indicator for a case is particularly damaging to effective sample size. A few variables have missing data rates around 8 percent–10 percent. A variety of quite sophisticated techniques exist to adjust for missing data bias in SEM, with full information maximum likelihood likely being the best alternative. However, given the ordinal nature of many of the indicators and the nominal nature of gender and youth volunteering, full information maximum likelihood was not usable. Instead, the expectation-maximization algorithm was used, generating estimated values through a series of Markov chains around the covariance matrix of the entire set of indicators used in the analysis (for mathematical details, see Toit and Toit 2001, 387–88).

For our analysis, we chose to run a separate measurement model for public service motivation but not the other latent constructs (e.g., family socialization, religious activity), as they are derived from previous studies with significant supporting psychometric evidence (Clary and Miller 1986; Welch and Leegte 1988; Wilson and Janoski 1995). Volunteer hours, whether formal or informal, are not deemed latent constructs but instead formative indices representing the actual construct. Public service motivation, however, has received only one published confirmatory study (Coursey and Pandey 2007) since the original results provided by Perry (1996).

Results

The results of our analyses are presented in three parts. First, we discuss the results of the confirmatory factor analysis. We then turn to the structural models for antecedents of PSM. Both analyses are based on the survey data. We conclude with a presentation of relevant results from the in-depth interviews.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Public Service Motivation

A reflective, second-order confirmatory factor analysis using diagonally weighted least squares (because of the ordinal nature of the PSM measures) was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the PSM items. The detailed results and technical issues of this analysis are provided in another study for brevity (see Coursey et al., forthcoming). Overall model fit measures, such as GFI (0.98), AGFI (0.98), RMSEA (.06), NFI (.97), IFI (0.98), and CFI (0.98) are good, indicating acceptable model fit. The model chi-square, however, is significant (133.84; $p = .000; df = 51; N = 456$), which is not indicative of a model fit, but the chi-square is known to be very sensitive to model complexity and degrees of freedom in rejecting the null. Hence, it is generally viewed as an extreme test for model fit compared to the other measures. All measures are highly significant to their theorized subdimensions (civic duty, compassion, and self-sacrifice), and modification index analysis indicated no significant evidence of cross-loadings on other dimensions.

Communalities for the individual indicators range from 0.06 to 0.71 for the compassion subdimension (0.20 and 0.06 on the two reversed items, $a$ and $b$, respectively), 0.41 to 0.63 for the civic duty subdimension, and 0.35 to 0.51 for the self-sacrifice subdimension. These communalities are generally very similar or better for each item compared to other PSM studies (e.g., Perry 1996; Coursey and Pandey 2007). Completely standardized lambda path coefficients range from 0.59 to 0.71 for self-sacrifice, 0.64 to 0.79 for civic duty, and 0.25 to 0.84 for compassion (all but one item, $b$, above 0.44). In sum, there is good evidence of validity and reliability of the PSM measures.

LISREL was used to generate factor scores for each subdimension from the model and then summed to produce the PSM measure for the structural analysis.
Though the path weights from the confirmatory factor analysis could be used for each subdimension, such weights are more subject to sample variability. Theoretically, there is no reason to presume that any of the three subdimensions are more important in representing the underlying PSM construct.

**Structural Model**

Maximum likelihood estimation was deployed for the full structural model. Error variance for PSM, family socialization, and religious activity indices and scales were fixed based on the product of their variance and composite reliability (to account for measurement error).

Two separate models were assessed: one using formal volunteer hours (figure 2) and a second utilizing informal volunteer hours (figure 3). Overall model fit statistics, provided in the figures, are supportive, but it is important to note that overall fit measures, especially those based on chi-square, should be strong when a model has low degrees of freedom and power, that is, close to saturated. In both models, a significant \( p < .05 \) positive direct relationship is supported between both family socialization and religious activity and public service motivation. The evidence does not support a direct relationship with youth volunteering. For the formal volunteering model, religious activity and youth volunteering have significant positive relationships, but for the informal volunteering model, only religious activity is significant. In both models, the three control variables imply that male, more educated, and higher-income subjects volunteer fewer hours. However, only income is significant in the informal model and gender in the formal model (though for this model, the other two control variables meet or approximate the \( p < .10 \) criterion).

It is interesting, though not wholly unexpected, that the coefficients in the model incorporating informal volunteering (figure 3) are not as large or as significant statistically as those in the model incorporating formal volunteering (figure 2). Measures of informal volunteering, such as hours as used here, are more prone to measurement difficulties because individuals may not recall or recognize these voluntary efforts. As a result, model estimates with informal volunteer hours are likely less reliable than estimates with formal volunteer hours.

Modification indices were used to evaluate possible model changes (deletion, addition of paths) toward improved model fit. Given the very low chi-square values, these measures would not be likely to indicate model changes. Only two indices are above 9.0, and most are below 0.20, thus suggesting little room for model improvement. Additionally, fitted residuals for all paths are below 0.03 indicating no issues with outliers, skewed residuals, or other estimation difficulties.

**Interviews**

Several themes emerged from the 26 in-depth interviews we conducted that help us to understand the results of our statistical analysis and put them in context. One finding of special note is the complexity of motivations and the multiplicity of sources or triggers underlying the extraordinary voluntary activities that culminated in the respondents' winning prestigious awards. As we will illustrate, however complete our analytical model may be, it is difficult to assess through statistical means alone the variety of motivations and their timing—some of the award winners were first-time volunteers, whereas others had long experience—that emerged from our interviews. The

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**Figure 2**  Structural Model Standardized Path Results Using Formal Volunteering Hours

\* \( p < .05 \); \** \( p < .01 \); \*** \( p < .001 \). \( n = 525 \); RMSEA = 0.00; GFI, AGFI, NI, IFI, and CFI = 1.0; \( x^2 = 1.00 \); df = 4.

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respondents expressed highly individualistic triggers for their volunteering. Our statistical model can provide a broad-brush picture of this behavior, while the in-depth interviews can uncover the diversity of individual motivations and concerns that gave rise to it.

Two primary themes merit discussion here: (1) the complexity of motivations and the multiplicity of sources or triggers for the volunteering that led to the award, and (2) the importance of community.

**Complexity of motivations.** Although we chose half of the interview group because they indicated that they were not active religiously, almost all (85 percent) of the respondents said that they had either a religious or spiritual reason for their service activities. This finding is consistent with the structural model, in which religious activity is a significant antecedent of PSM. But the religious or spiritual reasons expressed by interviewees seldom stood alone as explanations for their voluntary activities. The moral exemplars saw their lives as wholes and did not compartmentalize different aspects of their lives. They perceived their volunteering, service to others, faith or spirituality, and the way they live as highly integrated. They also perceived strong linkages between their values and overall identities and behaviors, which supports one theoretical model of PSM (Perry 2000). One interviewee succinctly expressed the many reasons for her behavior: “So I do this from, if you want to say having faith in the traditions of Judaism, I do this because I have a social conscience, I do this because I love my child, I do this because I care about my community and my family, and that’s why I do it.”

A corollary to the complexity of motivations is that the path toward service is not a linear progression, beginning with service in youth, leading to service as a young adult, as an adult, and then as a senior. This finding is consistent with our SEM results, which did not find significant relationships between youth volunteering and PSM. Several of our respondents had not been involved in service as children or young adults, and some had had their first service experiences as late as their fifties or sixties. Others had served as children but then did not volunteer again until years later.

Our interviews revealed one trigger for exemplary moral behavior that has not been widely discussed in the motivation literature. This trigger is *life-changing events*, which Perry (2000) identifies in his process theory of public service motivation as an important sociohistorical determinant. The life-changing events that we refer to are precipitating, dramatic events that lead people to give of their time. Approximately one-fourth of those interviewed cited such moving events as part of their motivation. These respondents included a mother whose three children had been brutally murdered who became active in victims rights and counseling; a woman diagnosed with cervical cancer who could not have children who became active in prenatal and well baby care; a woman who had become active in hospice care after her father died a slow, painful death; a father who had lost his son in an automobile accident who then became active in helping at-risk youth; a man who had begun helping the homeless with foot care because of his mentally ill son.

**Importance of community.** We were struck in our interviews by the propensity of the award winners to talk about community. It was one of the primary concepts around which they viewed the world and
organized their lives. Furthermore, community is an important idea behind the PSM construct, relating directly to its civic duty subsdimension and indirectly to compassion and self-sacrifice. One interviewee used the idea of social awareness to describe her sense of community and linked it to her basic understanding of morality:

I think it’s the basic … social awareness, having to leave the world a better place than they found it. And I think the best way to do that is not by giving money necessarily, although that’s nice, but most of the people didn’t actually make the money that they give. But I think that it’s really putting yourself out there, and doing the work, and getting into the trenches…. I think it’s a moral issue.

A retired interviewee included his former employer, General Electric, in his vision of community. When queried about financial sources of support for his service to the inner-city homeless, he said: “I hit GE pretty hard…. Well, I shouldn’t say hit. They’re there to help if you want to do programs and projects, an organization called the GE Health and Volunteers.” His comment reflected the view of many we interviewed that there are few limits on who can be called on to help if someone starts with an orientation toward others.

To summarize, the in-depth interviews reinforce the findings of the structural equation model in several respects. They help to explain the absence of a significant relationship between youth volunteering and PSM. The pervasiveness of religious and spiritual values reinforces the relationships between religious activity, volunteering, and public service motivation. The moral exemplars tended to act based on deeply held values and feelings that animate their causes. The interviews also helped to clarify a wholism in worldviews that is not transparent from the survey results. Interviewees talked about their exemplary contributions as part of their identities both as individuals and as members of larger communities. This wholeness stands in contrast to rational expectation models of motivation but is consistent with self-sacrifice, compassion, and civic duty that underlie the PSM construct.

Discussion
The analysis offers further evidence for the validity of the PSM construct. Based on a large sample of more than 500 winners of the Daily Point of Light Award and the President’s Community Volunteering Award, we found that the theorized PSM model provides an excellent fit to the data. We also incorporated several antecedents (e.g., family socialization, religious activity) into structural models for PSM. The antecedents are significant but not strong predictors of PSM. Developmental processes associated with family socialization and religious activity that are normally important early in life are significant influences, but hardly the sole or even predominant determinants of PSM. For an identifiable subset of our sample, major life events triggered extraordinary acts of service for others.

Religious activity is one of the strongest PSM predictors in the structural equations, and our interviews uncovered a nearly universal disposition to attribute exemplary acts to religion, spirituality, or a higher power. These sentiments tend to reflect universal values (Monroe 1996) held by our moral exemplars. These values are likely a product of socialization and developmental processes that are not readily captured in formal quantitative models. Our interviews also suggest that powerful experiences can trigger and sustain extraordinary acts of service.

The results of our inquiry present a different picture of volunteering than usually found in the literature. In understanding and interpreting the results, we must bear in mind that the sample of award-winning volunteers is different from typical volunteers. Compared to the latter, the award winners have generally completed much higher levels of formal education, they tend to be older, and consequently more often retired (table 1). And, of course, to earn their distinctions, they volunteer many more hours, annually nearly twice the number as an “average” volunteer. Given these demographics, we find that the typical sources of volunteering, education and income, are statistically less important for this group, likely because many of our sampled award-winning volunteers are older or retired. Volunteering as a youth also seems less important, perhaps because of the role of individualistic triggering events that we discovered in our in-depth interviews.

Finally, contrary to the literature that finds women volunteering at higher rates, our statistical results suggest that, in the sample of award winners, men were more likely than women to volunteer greater number of hours to organizations (formal volunteering). Although our survey and in-depth interviews could not probe this explanation, it may be the case that consistent with gender roles, men are more likely than women to seek (and receive) recognition for their activities, including volunteering. It is also conceivable that men may more often engage in the types of volunteer (and other) activities that earn such...
recognition, whereas women undertake less visible, but no less critical, activities through volunteering (Stivers 1995). This intriguing explanation awaits further inquiry.

Conclusion
This study provides additional support for the validity of the public service motivation construct by replicating the factor structure with a sample of morally committed individuals who do important service for others but who, for the most past, were not professional public administrators. Statistical modeling indicates that PSM is significantly related to family socialization, religious activity, and volunteer experiences. In-depth interviews suggest the importance of both transcendent values, such as spirituality, doing good for others, and life-changing events, in the development of public service motivation. We found that the motivations of exemplary volunteers are quite complex, tied to self-perceptions of a need for personal integrity or wholeness in one's life, and linked to personal understandings of the importance of community.

The study also raises issues that merit further research. One important direction would be to test for simultaneity between PSM and volunteering through a time-series or panel design. The literature to date has generally modeled PSM as a dependent variable in cross-sectional studies, as the goal has been to discover what factors relate to, more than cause, PSM. However, it is important to test whether PSM influences volunteering, as much as whether those who volunteer more possess higher PSM. A cross-sectional analysis, as used in this study, is not sufficient to address this question.

Another step in research on PSM would be to consider its practical implications for the practice of public affairs. If PSM does indeed relate to more engaged, public-spirited service, the question becomes, how do we develop and maintain that in workers? Are high-PSM workers initially attracted to public service? Is PSM developed through their educational experiences? Is it developed or diminished by public job experiences? These are important questions for developing the practical utility of current PSM research.

Acknowledgments
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Notes
1. More details about these awards and their nomination processes, selection criteria, and recent awardees are available from the Points of Light Foundation Web site: http://www.pointsoflight.org/awards/dpol/ (Daily Points of Light Award) and http://www.pointsoflight.org/awards/prerescounityvol/ (President's Community Volunteer Award).

2. The interview protocol appears below:

Description of why they won the award: Developmental—
- What got you started in volunteering? Go back to the beginning ... When you are growing up, did you volunteer as a child?
- In what types of activities did you volunteer?
- How old were you when you first started volunteering?
- What factors encouraged you to volunteer?
- For those who started the program or organization: Context—
  - Tell us more about the activity for which you won the award. Do you get paid for it? Did you always get paid for it?
  - Why did you start the program?
  - What need did you see?
  - Has your program or organization succeeded in meeting this need?

Motivation—
- Why do you do this? (Tie to award content.)

Faith—
1. Was religion emphasized in your home growing up? If yes, how?
2. What about your faith is important to you now? (We can get at the creed, ritual, habit issue here.)
3. What role did/does faith or your religious tradition play in your volunteer activities?
4. If none or minimal, then what does guide you?
- Any comments you'd like to add?
3. One common solution is to simplify the model, in some cases not deleting constructs but fixing paths so that they are not estimated in the analysis. Given the strong theoretical support for the model, we felt this was less desirable than suffering the degree of freedom problems. Theory should drive analysis, not statistical convenience. The overall model quality could be assessed by the significance of the path coefficients and whether they support the theorized relationships. It is also important to note that some authors prefer to jointly estimate the measurement and structural models (e.g., Hayduk and Glaser 2000). However, such a mode would, in our case, be underidentified (i.e., more unknowns than equations) under such a specification and no estimates could be derived.
4. By formative, we mean that the indicators sum to produce the underlying construct. This means that such indicators do not necessarily correlate as a condition of reliability. For example, job satisfaction is well known to be such a construct, in which satisfaction with pay, coworkers, and bosses all "add up" to represent overall satisfaction, but it is not necessary for these items to be correlated.
5. One important issue with ML is the sensitivity to nonnormality. As a test for this, we also ran the model as a robust/modiﬁed ML that adjusts the standard errors using the asymptotic covariance matrix. We found no significant differences in the statistical conclusions, although, as expected, there were some variations in the estimated path coefﬁcients. See the measurement appendix for more detail.

6. We also ran models using the log of formal and informal volunteer hours because of possible skewness and found no signiﬁcant difference in the paths or model ﬁt.

7. We thank an anonymous PAR reviewer for suggesting this explanation.

References


Appendix: Measurement
The first two scales were derived from other research (Clary and Miller 1986; Welch and Legee 1988), and items were summed. The two volunteering indices were considered formative and also summed, but Cronbach's alpha does not apply to formative indices. Public service motivation was generated from a diagonally weighted least squares confirmatory factor analysis, with LISREL used to generate the subdimension factors, and then these were summed with a presumption of equal weights to each subdimension.

Skewness and kurtosis were examined given the possible sensitivity of maximum likelihood to non-normality. As might be expected, volunteer hours demonstrated some mild difficulties, especially in the skewed distribution of informal volunteer hours. Because of these concerns, we also ran the overall models using robust/modified maximum likelihood, which corrects the standard errors and resulting statistics for non-normality using the asymptotic covariance matrix (Jöreskog 2001; Boomsma and Hoogland 2001). No difference in statistical significant conclusions for path coefficients was found, though there were a few minor differences in estimated standardized path coefficients. For simplicity, we present the basic maximum likelihood results in the study.

However, we also ran the overall models using the log of both formal and informal volunteer hours to adjust for distributional issues and found no significant differences in findings.

Family Socialization (Cronbach's alpha = .806)
The following statements involve possible experiences within your family as you were growing up. Read each statement carefully and check the column that best reflects your experience.

| a. My parents actively participated in volunteer organizations. |
| b. In my family, we always helped one another. |
| c. Concerning strangers experiencing distress, my parents generally thought that it was more important to not get involved. (Reversed) |
| d. My parents frequently discussed moral values with me. |

| e. When I was growing up, my parents told me I should be willing to "lend a helping hand." |
| f. When I was younger, my parents very often urged me to get involved with volunteer projects for children. |

5 = Agree  4 = Somewhat agree  3 = Neither disagree nor agree  2 = Somewhat disagree  1 = Disagree

Formula: \((4a + b + c + d + e + f)\) = higher the number = higher the family socialization to volunteering

Religious Activity (Cronbach's alpha = .819)
Please indicate how often you:

| a. Attend religious services |
| b. Pray or read religious text |
| c. Practice traditional religious rituals at home |
| d. Take part in any of the activities or groups of a church, synagogue, mosque, temple or other place of worship other than attending service |
| e. Take part in any of the activities or groups of a religion or faith service organization |

1 = Never  2 = Several times a year  3 = 2–3 times a month  4 = Once a week  5 = More than once a week

Formula: \((2a + b + c + d + e)\) = higher the number = higher the religious activity

Formal Volunteering
This variable is a summation of responses to the following five questionnaire items:

Please indicate which category is closest to the number of hours you volunteered with the following type of organizations in the past year. (Response options: 0, 1–19, 20–39, 40–79, 80–159, 160+ hours)

| a. Religious organization (not church-affiliated schools) |
| b. School or educational organization (can include church-affiliated schools, libraries) |
| c. Political groups and campaigns (political parties, nonpartisan political groups) |
| d. Human service organizations (Red Cross, YMCA, day care, homelessness) |
| e. Other national or local organization(s) |

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</table>

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Informal Volunteering
This variable is a summation of responses to the following five questionnaire items:

Please indicate which category is closest to the number of hours you performed any of the following types of informal volunteering for strangers, friends, neighbors, or relatives who do not live with you, in the past year. (Response options: 0, 1–19, 20–39, 40–79, 80–159, 160+)

a. Provide transportation, shop, or run errands
b. Help with housework or with the upkeep of their house, car, or other things
c. Child care without pay
d. Any other forms of helping out

Public Service Motivation
The following statements ask for your opinions. Please read each statement carefully and check the column that best reflects your view. (Response options: agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, disagree)

Compassion
a. I seldom think about the welfare of people I don't know personally. (Reversed)
b. I have little compassion for people in need who are unwilling to take the first step to help themselves. (Reversed)
c. Most social programs are too vital to do without.
d. It is difficult for me to contain my feelings when I see people in distress.
e. I am often reminded by daily events about how dependent we are on one another.

Self-Sacrifice
a. Much of what I do is for a cause bigger than myself.
b. I am one of those rare people who would risk personal loss to help someone else.
c. Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements.
d. I think people should give back to society more than they get from it.

Civic Duty
a. I unselfishly contribute to my community.
b. Meaningful public service is very important to me.
c. I consider public service my civic duty.

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