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By

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GENERATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
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Abstract

Public sector employers are challenged by the changing landscape of a diverse workforce and an evolving employment environment. This paper analyzes the relationship between generational cohort and public service motivation (PSM). Drawing upon PSM theory and social generation frameworks, this investigation explores Millennials' level of PSM compared to other generations and how Millennial PSM relates to the job outcomes of organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Results from a survey of state governmental agency employees indicates that Millennial public sector workers are less likely than older generation workers to have high levels of PSM. Other aspects of PSM are explored. Results overall are insufficient to warrant organizational attention on generational differences of PSM.

Introduction

Problem Statement

The American workforce is becoming more diverse. Workers age 55 and older are the only age group that experienced increases in labor market participation from 1994 to 2014, comprising a significant portion of the overall workforce. Although participation in the labor market by America's young workers is projected to decrease, young people born between 1982 and 2002 – the Millennial generation – are now the most populous age cohort and more ethnically and racially diverse than previous generations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

America's older workers include the Baby Boomer generation, those born between 1943 and 1960, and Generation X, those born between 1961 and 1981 (Howe & Strauss, 2000). As the Millennial population joins the workforce, Boomers are starting to retire, and the oldest Generation Xers are now age 50. Boomers are expected to retire later than previous generations, and many not retire at all, contributing to one of the most diverse labor forces in U.S. history (Newport, 2015). The human resource community anticipated Millennials' arrival. There has been a surge in editorial and research conversations providing speculation, evidence, and recommendations to employers to prepare their older workers to train and manage Millennials and to implement organizational strategies to recruit and retain them. However, most of this information is speculative and designed for consumption by the private sector leaving public sector leadership guessing about how to navigate the changing landscape in their field. And despite the influx of young people to the overall U.S. labor market, the public sector will have to fight to attract and retain them. Government work, in particular, is

not the industry of choice for most Millennials (Partnership for Public Service, 2013; Ertas, 2015), and early indications are that Millennials are leaving government jobs soon after taking them (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2014).

Further challenging organizations is the purported clash of intergenerational workplace values and behaviors, which is reported as a significant source of conflict among employees (Burke, 2005; Fox, 2011; Karp & Sirias, 2001). Millennial workers have joined the workforce under much criticism about their perceived untraditional approach to work. Popular media has helped shape a stereotype of Millennials as high maintenance – a generation raised by doting parents whose excessive praise developed a population of young people requiring constant feedback, rewards, and rapid advancement. CBS News (Safer, 2007) reported, "Stand back all bosses! A new breed of American worker is about to attack everything you hold sacred." Millennials are said to have untypical attitudes about work, including a demand for more leisure activity, desire for less supervision, and higher intention to job hop (Twenge et al., 2010; Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Recent research has offered some level of confirmation for these observed entitled behaviors, demonstrating that Millennials have higher rates of narcissism than previous generations, thus earning this cohort the title of "Generation Me" (Twenge, 2014).

Compounding the challenge employers face due to a rapidly diversifying workforce is the sluggish economic recovery from the Great Recession. The job market suffered a significant surge in job loss, increasing from a rate of 5% unemployment in December 2007 to 10% in October 2009. The two-year recession resulted in the most rapid unemployment rise in U.S. history, compared to all other recessions (U.S. Bureau

of Labor Statistics, 2012). The Great Recession officially ended in 2009 yet the recovery experience for the public sector lags behind that of the private sector. The private sector has consistently added jobs since 2010 and is projected to return to pre-recession employment levels by 2017. Conversely, public sector employment dropped off with the Great Recession and has never regained (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Looking specifically at the government sector, 750,000 jobs were lost after the official recession end in 2009 to 2013 with local and state government jobs accounting for the largest losses. Many state governments are expected to continue experiencing budget shortfalls (Williams, 2015), which will further hamper government job growth and threaten government job benefits such as pensions that have traditionally helped the sector compete with private businesses for desirable workers. Millennials, coming of age during the economic crisis, experienced difficulty finding employment despite high levels of postsecondary education and lag behind other age groups in regaining losses during the recession (Council of U.S. Economic Advisors, 2014).

Research Purpose

Faced with the departure of aging workers, the integration of Millennials, and continued projected downsizing, how do governmental organizations attract and retain the up and coming young workforce? Public administration research on Public Service Motivation (PSM) offers an enticing opportunity for potential solutions. PSM theory contends that individuals who choose public sector employment differ from those in the private sector in their motivations and work values. People exhibiting high levels of PSM seek public service opportunities and are motivated by intrinsic rewards such as

the satisfaction of meaningful work and desire to participate in policy making (Perry, 1996). High PSM also translates to increased work engagement, resulting in better job performance and satisfaction among other outcomes. Understanding PSM traits of the Millennial generation may present an opportunity upon which the public sector can capitalize. The present research seeks to add to the PSM research by drawing upon generation theory to examine the relationship between PSM and age, specifically generational cohorts. The aim of this research is to address the questions: (a) Is there a relationship between one's generational cohort and level of PSM? (b) How do Millennials compare to other generations on the dimensions of PSM? and (d) Does high PSM among Millennials predict positive job outcomes?

Theoretical Framework

The guiding theoretical framework that will be used to investigate the stated research questions is a construct known as PSM as developed by Perry and Wise (1990). The basic tenet underlying PSM theory is that individuals who pursue service in public sector organizations possess motivating characteristics unlike those in the private sector. Perry and Wise (1990) define PSM has an individual's "predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily and uniquely in public institutions and organizations" (p. 368). Perry theorizes, and subsequent empirical evidence supports, four motivation constructs positively connected to PSM: (1) attraction to public policy making, (2) commitment to the public interest and civic duty, (3) compassion, and (4) self-sacrifice. These four dimensions serve as measures of one's level of PSM and drive the relative likelihood that an individual would pursue a role in public service work.

PSM helps attract committed employees, and it is also predictive of positive employee outcomes. Individuals with high PSM are more committed, have higher job satisfaction, perform better, are less likely to leave their job, and exhibit prosocial behaviors such as whistle blowing (Crewson, 1997; Brewer & Selden, 1998; Naff & Crum, 1999; Bright, 2008).

Research applications of PSM theory extend to the examination of its origins. The demonstrated antecedents of PSM include demographic factors such as age and gender as well as individual-level factors such as education and religion. Organizational variables also contribute to increased PSM. For example, Moynihan and Panday (2007) found that the prevalence of red tape and longer tenures had a negative effect on the PSM of managers at state health and human services agencies. Organizations not only benefit from identifying PSM traits among potential employee candidates, but should also understand how to develop PSM among current and future employees. If certain factors define or develop PSM in individuals, then employers could implement any number of institutional strategies to cultivate those conditions.

Perry (2000) first developed the theory that individuals come into a desire for civic service, in part, through a socialization process. For example, people who are raised by parents committed to civil duty have higher rates of PSM than those whose parents are not. Parental influence creates a favorable expectation that their children may learn is normative to act upon. Formative life experiences shape an individual's orientation toward or away from public service. The propensity to serve the public results from a confluence of motives that are both rational choice and a result of normative processes. Rather than solely viewing behavior as intrinsically self-

motivated, Perry further developed PSM as a learned social process. People may choose public service to fulfill individual needs, but those needs are influenced by socially constructed norms and cultural expectations.

As Perry posits, understanding PSM origins is fundamentally rooted in the larger context of motivation theory. Perry contends that people's preferences and motivations are framed through rational choice, affective bonding, and normative conformity. The two premises of affective bonding and normative conformity are social constructs developed largely through one's identification with groups and through learned behaviors during the life course. Through the lens of social identity theory and social generation theory, an expanded view of PSM takes shape. If a desire for public service is produced through socializing experiences such as parental influence, might one's shared generational experiences develop orientations toward or away from public service? If shared experiences translate to shared characteristics among groups of people (generations), there may be traits among Millennials that lend to the increased or decreased expression of PSM.

Examination of the stated research questions is grounded in PSM theory yet it is further elaborated through social generation theory. In brief, one's level of PSM, its dimensions, and its outcomes may be influenced by the shared experiences of their generational cohort and/or the individual's socialized identification with their birth cohort.

Literature Review

Public Service Motivation

Defining Public Service Motivation. The concept of public service motivation (PSM) was popularized in the public administration literature by Perry who developed the theory that individuals who desire public service work are motivated by factors that uniquely reside in public and civic organizations. PSM theory captures the idea that people with public interests and motives fundamentally differ from others in their attraction and commitment to features of public sector work. 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). Generally, public service motives are aligned with features of a service ethic (Rainey, 1982) and altruism. Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) highlight the connection to selfless concern in their definition of PSM "as a general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation, or humankind" (p. 23). The theory of PSM is largely based in western, American workplace culture. Recent global approaches to the study of PSM has led to an expanded view, including that of Vandenabeele (2007) who defines PSM as "the belief, values and attitudes that go beyond self-interest and organizational interest, that concern the interest of a larger political entity and that motivate individuals to act accordingly whenever appropriate" (p. 547).

Altruistic and other PSM-like traits are not exclusive to those working in the public sector (Lyons, Duxbury & Higgins, 2006) nor do all public sector workers demonstrate high levels of PSM (Pandey et al., 2008). Much of the early PSM research focused on the comparative study of differences among public and private sector

employees. Some research has found limited or no remarkable difference in work motives and values among workers in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors (Gabris and Simo, 1995; Lyons, Duxbury & Higgins, 2006). However, in support of Perry's primary theme that those who are drawn to public service are uniquely different from their private sector counterparts, there is dominant evidence supporting more difference than sameness in employee work values and levels of PSM across sectors (Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2000; Wittmer, 1991). There is increasing interest in developing a fuller understanding of PSM among those in pseudo public sector organizations and private entities due to the growing use of nonprofits and contractors for work traditionally performed by governmental entities. In this way, the view of "public service" continues to expand to also include volunteerism and charitable behaviors. Further, Brewer and Selden (1998) remind the public administration community that PSM is an *individual* characteristic and behavior rather than a *sector* quality. In other words, PSM exists within people and should not be viewed as an attribute of the public sector itself. Brewer, Selden and Facer (2000) demonstrate this point in their study of how holders of PSM view the construct. They found that people report varying priorities of PSM which place them into at least four distinct archetypes - Samaritans, Patriots, Humanitarians, and Communitarians – thus supporting the idea that PSM is an individually held notion.

PSM Measures. In a relatively short period of time, the study and measurement of PSM has transformed from theory to an empirical principle. Perry (1996) put forth a measureable scale of four PSM dimensions: (1) attraction to public policy making; (2) commitment to the public interest; (3) self-sacrifice; and (4) compassion. Perry's measures have largely remained the standard in public administration research and

serve as the backbone of other PSM instruments. Efforts such as those by Kim et al. (2013) seek to revise Perry's measures to "improve and internationalize the PSM scale" for effective application outside of the United States. Attraction, commitment, self-sacrifice, and compassion not only serve as metrics for assessing the presence and intensity of PSM, they also converge to form the intention that directs people toward public service. Attraction to public policy making refers to the pull that individuals have toward governmental institutions that are likely to align with their civic-centered disposition. Scholarly research supports the notion of PSM attraction. Studies of university students' work preferences, for example, demonstrate that those with higher levels of PSM are more likely to desire future employment in the public sector (Vandenabeele, 2008; Clerkin & Coggburn, 2012; Carpenter, Doverspike & Miguel, 2012; Ko & Han, 2013) and to select public-oriented positions even outside of public institutions (Christensen & Wright, 2011). As Perry and Vandenabeele (2015) explain in a recent paper about future directions of PSM research, the attraction motive was originally intended to capture one's relationship with the public organization in which they worked rather than the actual act of policy making. Perry argues for a revised conception of attraction to more closely align with Kim et al.'s (2013) interpretation of attraction as loyalty to the government regime. Perry's second dimension of PSM is commitment to the public interest and civic duty. Commitment, as a measure of PSM, is intended as the level at which a person desires to serve their country. It speaks to one's sense of social obligation to give back and contribute in meaningful ways. Perry contends that the commitment and attraction indicators of PSM are the two most connected to public institutions or governmental organizations where one's need to

participate in civic processes can be met, as opposed to other public sector entities. The remaining two dimensions of Perry's (1996) PSM are compassion and self-sacrifice, which trace most closely to the concept of altruism. Perry adopts Fredrickson and Hart's (1985) benevolence framework for his definition of compassion. Compassion is a combination of love for humankind and the system of government. As public sector work is typically a helping, service-oriented field, compassion should be viewed as a core value. There is general, continued acceptance for inclusion of compassion in the PSM. Interestingly, despite support for PSM as having global merit, Perry's (1996) compassion does not translate well internationally and may be a unique feature of U.S. service culture and/or speak more toward a quality of certain public sector work such as charity and volunteerism as opposed to professional roles (Vandenabeele, 2009). Self-sacrifice is the willingness of individuals to forfeit their own needs, without return, in favor of the public good. In Brewer, Selden, and Facer's (2000) work to define PSM as an individually held construct, those who demonstrate the highest levels of self-sacrifice are known as "Patriots". Patriots report great altruistic behavior to serve others at even great threats to personal loss. Self-sacrifice represents the essence of intrinsic motivation as demonstrated by Houston (2000), Crewson (1997), and Bright (2005) in studies of government employee's reward preferences. Public sector workers are more likely to forego extrinsic rewards in favor or meaningful work and the sense of accomplishment.

PSM Outcomes. As scholarly work continues on the refinement of PSM measurement, focus has trended toward the study of PSM outcomes. PSM is of high value to employers. Those with high PSM contribute positively to their organizations

and exhibit positive workplace behaviors. For example, PSM is predictive of higher job satisfaction (Naff & Crum, 1999; Bright, 2008). A recent meta-analysis of 28 studies supports this finding on job satisfaction (Homberg, McCarthy, & Tabvuma, 2015). Similar positive PSM effects have been demonstrated for improved organizational commitment (Kim, 2013; Crewson, 1997). Scott and Pandey's (2005) study of public sector managers found that employees with higher PSM were also more accepting of bureaucratic processes and thus more likely to be satisfied in their organization. High PSM is also associated with positive job behaviors, including work performance (Kim, 2005; Houston, 2000); lower turnover intention (Naff and Crum, 1999); and helpful, considerate behaviors toward co-workers (Pandey, Wright & Moynihan, 2008). In one of the few studies that has examined the relationship between PSM and actionable employee behavior, Brewer and Selden (1998) found that higher PSM government employees are more willing to engage in whistle-blowing out of concern for the public interest. PSM's positive effect on attitudes and behaviors has been corroborated and extends beyond the workplace to external civic actions. Public sector employees are more likely than private sector employees to volunteer and donate (Houston, 2006), and they are more civically engaged (Brewer, 2003). The PSM effect not only impacts the employee but also the service recipient. More recent research measures the effect of PSM on the actual outcome of the service provided rather than solely examining the output (i.e. job satisfaction) of the worker. Andersen, Heinesen, and Pedersen (2014) found that a teacher's level of PSM and their students' performance are highly related. High school students who were taught by teachers with high PSM had better test scores than students instructed by teachers with lower PSM.

PSM Origins. Perry (2000) posits that the four dimensions of PSM are driven by three motives: (1) rational choice; (2) affective motivation; and (3) normative motivation. Grounded in motivation theory, each of Perry's motives helps explain the public service pathway of human behavior, including the development of a civic orientation, attraction to public institutions, and altruistic and prosocial behaviors. Perry (2000) theorizes that attraction to public policy making is influenced by rational choice; commitment to the public interest by normative processes; and compassion with affective motives. Wise (2000) further explains that individuals develop PSM based on utility maximization decisions, weighing costs and benefits, to the individual (rational); through personal identification and affinity for a certain program or services (affective); and as a result cultural cues that define what is normal, right, and acceptable (normative). She contends that motives act collectively and personally with each person tapping one or more motives. Similarly, Perry acknowledges that motivation represents a confluence of factors. He supports the role of rational, self-interested choice but emphasizes that individual motives are largely socially constructed. Perry (1997) tested the normative process of PSM, finding that the socializing antecedents of parental influence, professional identification, and religious socialization are related to one's level of PSM. More recently, Perry and Vandenabeele (2015) called for a renewed interest in investigating further how PSM is manifest. Understanding PSM as a predisposed, static human trait as opposed to or in addition to PSM as a dynamic orientation that can be developed by organizations has great merit for managers, education systems, and even philanthropic organizations interested in cultivating PSM for its benefit. However, PSM causality based on these theories is underdeveloped.

A variety of PSM antecedents have been explicitly examined or implicitly observed in the course of other study. Ritz, Brewer & Neumann's (2015) systematic review of PSM literature identified sociodemographic variables such as age, gender, and education as the most commonly studied antecedents of PSM, each in over 20 occurrences. Results indicate that females have higher rates of PSM; age and education also correlate to higher PSM rates (Perry, 1997; Camilleri, 2007; Bright, 2005; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007; Vandenabeele, 2011). However, age and gender are frequently included as control variables and not the focus of study.

The study of sociohistorical experiences continues to grow as does support for the notion that PSM is shaped by individuals' interaction with micro and macro level institutions. Parental influence, religious socialization, educational experiences, and identification with professional groups are examples of institutional processes that socialize individuals into their thinking disposition, beliefs and orientation of what is acceptable, expected and normal. Each has been positively associated with PSM (Bright, 2005; Kjeldsen, 2012; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). Moynihan and Pandey's (2007) seminal study on organizational influence demonstrates that PSM is a normative, dynamic process. They found that government employee's PSM was positively and negatively impacted by organizational experiences, such as exposure to 'red tape' bureaucratic processes, hierarchical culture, tenure, and reform efforts. Similarly, a more recent experimental research study by Bellé (2013) finds that certain organizational conditions increase PSM levels. This and other scholarly research supports Perry's theory that PSM is dynamic and takes shape as part of a sociohistorical development process (Cable & Parsons, 2001).

Generationalism

There is growing conflict among academic researchers about the meaningfulness, relevance, and empirical evidence supporting generational differences. The popularization of categorizing birth cohorts into generations traces to Howe and Strauss (1991) who defined generations as "a special cohort-group whose length approximately matches that of a basic phase of life, or about twenty-two years" (p. 34) and who gave currency to the popular culture terms that operate today, including Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Millennials (Howe & Strauss, 2000). The theory shaping popular notions of generation is fundamentally a sociological principle advanced by the likes of Mannheim's (1952) social generation theory and Elder's (1994) life course theory. Mannheim (1952) describes generations as groups of people who experience similar cultural norms, life course events, and other defining social values due to their shared point-in-time exposure. Mannheim posits that generations are social constructs of how people of a similar time experience the world. Similarly, Elder (1994), who conducted longitudinal studies of Depression era children (1974, 1999), describes life course theory as the connection between human lives and historical context. Elder's definition contends that "issues of timing, linked lives, and human agency identify key mechanisms by which environmental change and pathways the course and substances of human lives" (p. 5). Using this theoretical framework, generations share more than a similar age; they share a common experience that influences the development of their orientation and identity as a social group (Costanza et al., 2012; Foster, 2013). Additionally, generation theory extends to principles of social psychology in the recent

applied study of birth cohort beliefs, attitudes, and values (Twenge & Campbell, 2008; Twenge, 2010).

Conflict around the application of generation theory to social science research includes three main areas of dissention: (1) the lack of clear generational definitions; (2) the lack of a strong empirical theoretical basis; and (3) methodology problems that compromise study rigor (Pritchard & Whiting, 2014; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Of particular criticism is the interplay of age-period-cohort effects, which makes determination of causality extremely challenging. Observed and documented differences in values, attitudes, and behaviors may be the function of one's chronological age and maturation, the period in time or stage of life, and/or sociohistorical experiences, exposures, and events occurring during a given point in time shared among a cohort group (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Cross sectional study designs involving generations compare one population to another at a single point or points in time, and it is difficult to distinguish whether age, period, or cohort created the effect even though they are all likely related (Mason & Wolfinger, 2001).

Generations at Work

Generational research has proliferated in the area of workplace concerns. American employers must contend with an evolving human resource, and intergenerational conflict is reported as a significant source of conflict among workers (Karp & Sirias, 2001; Burke, 2005; Fox, 2011). Comparative studies have emerged aimed at developing a better understanding of the differences between workers and informing organizational practices to successfully integrate a multi-generational labor

force. In balance, there appear to be marked differences between older and younger generations with regard to work. Altruistic values, intrinsic work motives, and views of the public sector are three measures that align with public service motives. Younger generations are less likely than older generations to report altruistic values (Chen & Choi, 2008); less likely to be motivated by intrinsic rewards (Wey Smola & Sutton, 2002; Twenge et al., 2010); and less likely to want public sector work (Lewis & Frank, 2002). Conversely, many studies demonstrate little to no difference in altruistic values and intrinsic motives (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Jurkiewicz, 2000; Real, Mitnik & Maloney, 2010; Twenge et al., 2010), suggesting homogeny across ages.

A search of peer-reviewed public administration literature explicitly studying the relationship between PSM and generational birth cohorts yields no result. Bright (2008) acknowledges the importance for public sector employers to understand key mechanisms at play in PSM development and needed organizational "strategies to attract the next generation of employees" (p. 149). Jurkiewicz and Brown (1998) authored a study after the emergence of Perry's (1996) PSM theory to examine differences between Generation X and Boomers in the public sector, finding limited difference, yet they did not apply the measures or theory of PSM in their work. Arguably, only two of Jurkiewicz and Brown's fifteen indicators somewhat align with PSM measures – chance to benefit society and chance to make a contribution to important decisions. Neither of the two demonstrated statistically significant differences. Ko and Han (2013) examine PSM and sectoral job choice among Chinese university students; however, inclusion in the sample is not based on age or generation but years of education. Ng and Gossett (2013) are responsible for the single study that

comes closest to the present study's aim. The authors examine the career choice and fit among Canadian Millennial university students born after 1980. Ng and Gossett (2013) find that Millennials who report a desire to contribute to society also report public service as their preferred career, which indicates general support for "something like public service motivation" (p. 352). However, Ng and Gossett do not measure PSM, per se, in their study. Age is used as a control variable in several PSM studies, resulting in inconsistent findings of a relationship. According to Panday and Stayzk (2008), despite findings of no relationship by Moynihan & Panday (2005) and Naff and Crum (1999), age has been found overall to have a modest, positive relationship with PSM (Camilleri, 2007; Houston, 2000; Perry; 1997). Younger workers generally have lower levels of PSM.

So what can employers expect from the new cohort of workers? Empirical answers to this question are challenged by the aforementioned age-period-cohort dynamic. Critics of cross-sectional research argue that documented differences are coincidental; speak to effects of life stage or situation such as level of education, organizational tenure, career stage and hierarchical position; or wrongly cast Millennials as a homogenous generation and ignore their diversity (Pritchard & Whiting, 2014). Twenge and Campbell (2008) advocate for longitudinal and time-lag studies, and suggest that organizations use evidence-based approaches for Millennial workers that deal with real differences as opposed to those that may go away with age and development. However, studies that use longitudinal and time-lag methods to examine Millennial behavior and values at work are limited. Twenge et al. (2008) and Twenge and Campbell (2009) use longitudinal design to compare narcissism scores

among thousands of U.S. college students from the 1970s to 2000s concluding that narcissism has increased. Arguably, narcissistic beliefs would be inconsistent with PSM values and negatively influence one's level of compassion and self-sacrifice. Similarly, Westerman et al. (2012) studied Millennial undergraduate business and psychology students, and concluded that narcissism has increased among college students. However, these limited studies were conducted among students rather than Millennials in the workplace and do not measure the constructs of PSM. Twenge's scholarly work on Millennial narcissism is not without criticism for alleged study flaws and liberties taken in study interpretation (Arnett et al., 2013). Whether or not narcissism is actually increasing among Millennials, narcissism among employees could present a credible threat to organizations due to the relationship between narcissism and counterproductive work behaviors such as interpersonal aggression and disrupted productivity (Fisk, 2010), hence the attention of researchers on the subject. Twenge, Campbell and Freeman (2010) are also responsible for a time lag study on Millennials' intrinsic motivations, altruistic work values, and civic orientation, which are measures that align well with the dimensions of PSM. Using archival data collected from large samples of high school and college students, the authors found that Millennials prefer intrinsic motives less than previous generations at the same age; are less likely to want to work in social service or want a job worthwhile to society; are decreasingly less likely to report a concern for others; and have lower civic engagement and interest in government. With regard to the outcomes of Millennial workplace values, a review of evidence by Twenge (2010) did not support the notion that Millennial workers have poor job outcomes such as intention to leave, low job satisfaction, and decreased

organizational commitment. Kowske et al. (2010) analyzed a large sample of U.S. employee data and concluded that Millennials are actually more satisfied with their jobs than older generations and have similar intentions to leave as other generations.

Methods

Research Design

The present study utilized a cross-sectional design to reflect on the questions raised by Brewer, Selden & Facer (2000): "To what extent are levels of PSM environmentally induced, that is, created by socialization and culture?...Do individuals' levels of PSM vary over time, and if so, what patterns exist?" (p. 261). As the understanding of PSM has evolved as a dynamic, developmental concept the current research draws upon the notions of social generation theory and the empirical evidence of generational differences in work values and motives to test the following hypotheses.

H1: Public service motivation (PSM) is positively associated with generational affiliation. Millennial public sector workers have lower levels of PSM than older generation workers.

H2: The individual dimensions of PSM – commitment to public interest, self-sacrifice, compassion– are positively associated with generational affiliation. Millennial public sector workers score lower than older generation workers on these dimensions. The dimension of attraction to public policy making is negatively associated with generational affiliation. Millennial public sector workers score higher than older generation workers on this dimension.

H3: Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are positively associated with generation. High levels of PSM among Millennials are positively associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Research Methods

Participants. The focus population for the present study is public service employees at a state government agency. The data were collected in 2013 as part of an employee engagement study conducted by Oklahoma State University as a web-based survey employees across all work divisions at a large health and human services agency. The agency has staff located in positions across the state. Organizational personnel included in the employee database serve in direct care roles as well as administrative roles for the agency and are representative of the general staff population overall. A total of 2,045 employees were invited to participate in the study.

Procedures. The original investigators utilized the census employee database provided by the organization to send an email invitation for participation in a survey about employee engagement. Each employee received a description of the research project and detailed instructions about how to participate. Employees were directed to a secure website, Qualtrics, to complete the questionnaire. Recipients were informed of the research purpose, participant expectations, rights and confidentiality, investigator contact information, and IRB approval status. Employees were required to indicate agreement to participate in the study by active consent acknowledgement on the pre-survey form. After consenting to participate, respondents were provided a direct link to the survey instrument on the web-based Qualtrics software platform. They survey included items measuring employee engagement and demographics such as age and gender.

Confidentiality. All responses were completed anonymously. Participants were informed of their study participation rights and confidentiality. Random identification

codes were assigned to each employee email address provided, and there were no personal identifiers attached to survey responses. Data storage and protection information was provided in the confidentiality disclosure statement prior to survey administration. Data provided for the current research by the original investigators contained only numeric codes that cannot be traced to individual respondents. No identifiers were included in the dataset used for the current study.

Measures

The current study utilized secondary survey data from employees of a state government agency in the health and human services sector. The survey consisted of seven questions with subscales totaling 56 items. Respondents indicated their agreement or disagreement for each item on a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree).

Public Service Motivation. The measures of PSM originate from Kim (2010) and included items related to the four PSM dimensions defined by Perry (1996) as follow:

Attraction to Public Policy Making

1. I am interested in making public programs that are beneficial for my country or the community I belong to.
2. Sharing my views on public policies with others is attractive to me.
3. Seeing people get benefits from the public program I have been deeply involved in brings me a great deal of satisfaction.

Commitment to the Public Interest

1. I consider public service my civic duty.
2. Meaningful public service is very important to me.
3. I would prefer seeing public officials do what is best for the whole community even if it harmed my interests.

Compassion

1. It is difficult for me to contain my feelings when I see people in distress.
2. I am often reminded by daily events how dependent we are on one another.
3. I feel sympathetic to the plight of the underprivileged.

Self-Sacrifice

1. Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements.
2. I am prepared to make enormous sacrifices for the good of society.
3. I believe in putting duty before self.

Organizational Commitment. Included in the dataset is the Allen and Meyer (1997) eight-item questionnaire to measure the extent to which employees view themselves as belonging to an organization as follow:

1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
2. I really enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it.
3. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
4. I do not think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one.
5. I feel like 'part of the family' at my organization.
6. I feel emotionally attached to this organization.

7. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
8. I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.

Job Satisfaction. To measure job satisfaction, a three-item questionnaire from Cammann, Finchman, Jenkins and Klesh (1979) was included as follow:

1. My job is enjoyable.
2. I am satisfied with my job.
3. I like doing the things I do at work.

A composite score for each scale was determined by adding the scores of the individual items comprising each scale (public service motivation, organizational commitment, job satisfaction) and creating an average score for each construct. A composite score was also calculated in the same manner for each subscale of PSM (attraction to public policy making, commitment to the public interest, compassion, self-sacrifice).

Generation. Each survey respondent was categorized into generation based on their reported age at the time the survey was administered using Howe and Strauss's (2000) definitions. Those up to age 31 were classified as Millennial; those age 32-52 as Generation X; those age 53-70 as Baby Boomer.

Data Analysis

Data were provided by the original investigators in a Microsoft Excel file exported from the Qualtrics program. The raw data was cleaned to exclude indicators not related to the current study, delete incomplete responses and develop new variables. Given the current research interest, the dataset was reduced to exclude responses with no response to age. Respondents' ages were coded into four generation cohorts (Howe

& Strauss, 2000). Composite scales for PSM, each dimension of PSM, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction were calculated to develop new variables for inclusion in the study. The cleaned data were imported to SPSS Statistics for analysis. The analysis tools used in SPSS Statistics for the current investigation included simple descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations using two-tailed Spearman's correlation coefficients, and linear regression.

Results

The current study utilized survey records from government employees working at a state health and human services sector agency. A total of 2,045 employees were invited to participate in the survey; a total of 669 employees participated. After cleaning the data for study eligibility, a total of 464 records were suitable for inclusion in the current study; 205 records were excluded due to missing responses on the items used for the current study or inaccurate data (i.e. age reported as younger than the legal employment age of 18). Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the sample. The youngest respondent was age 18; the oldest was age 61. The average respondent age was 31.5 years. Female respondents were considerably more numerous than male (80%).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Sample

	N	*%*
Gender		
Male	80	17.2
Female	371	80.0
No Answer	13	2.8
Ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	427	92
African American	12	2.6
Hispanic	4	.9
Asian	3	.6
American Indian	9	2
Other Ethnicity	7	1.5
No Response	2	.4
Generation		
Millennial (Ages 18-31)	172	37.1
Generation X (Ages 32-52)	285	61.4
Baby Boomer (Ages 53-70)	7	1.5

Hypothesis 1. I hypothesized that Millennial public sector workers would have lower levels of PSM than older generation workers. The mean PSM score for Millennial workers was lower (3.72) than Generation X (3.82) and Baby Boomers (3.93). A SPSS Independent Samples t-Test analysis of the differences in these means, indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the PSM score for Millennials and Generation X workers ($t = -1.925$, $p = .05$). The chance of finding a larger difference between the two means is about 5%.

The bivariate and multivariate analyses performed in the current study used variables that are modeled as continuous variables. The variable of PSM, for example, is developed from a composite score of an ordered scale and is therefore an ordinal variable where a high and low PSM score demonstrates higher or lower PSM but does not take into account the difference between individual PSM scores. It is important to note that these variables are treated as continuous variables in the current analysis. Results of Pearson correlation coefficient testing (Table 2) indicate there was a positive correlation between age and PSM, although not statistically significant ($r=.039$, $p=.363$). Correlation tests were also conducted for the variable of generation and the overall PSM composite scores. After grouping individual respondents into generation cohorts and testing the relationship between generation affiliation and PSM rates, a similar effect remained ($r=.40$, $p=.345$). Due to low response rates from workers in the sample age 53 and older (n=7), responses from workers assigned to the Baby Boomer generation were excluded from the sample to further test the effect. When Baby Boomer respondents were excluded to compare Millennials to only Generation X respondents,

the effect remained. Overall, there was a moderate, positive correlation between PSM and age and generation. Increased age is correlated with increased PSM.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Variables

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Age	-						
2	Generation	.923**	-					
3	PSM	.039	.040	-				
4	Attraction to public policy making	.000	-.003	.780**	-			
5	Commitment to public interest	.019	.013	.867**	.612**	-		
6	Compassion	.099*	.111**	.726**	.419**	.507**	-	
7	Self-Sacrifice	.024	.023	.839**	.481**	.659**	.495**	-

*Correlation is significant at the level $p < .05$
**Correlation is significant at the level $p < .001$

Hypothesis 2: Perry and Vandenabeele (2015) argued that it is important to unpack PSM to better understand the influence and relationships of its individual dimensions. Due to evidence suggesting that younger generation workers are less intrinsically motivated than older generation workers, I hypothesized that Millennial public sector workers would report a lower commitment to the public interest, self-sacrifice, and compassion than older workers. Due to evidence suggesting that Millennials may have increased narcissism and Perry's (1996) description of attraction to public policy making as speaking to one's desire to influence change, I hypothesized that young workers would report a higher level of attraction to policy making than older generation workers. For all dimensions of PSM, there was a positive relationship with generation affiliation with the exception of attraction to public policy making, which was a weak, negative relationship with generation. As summarized in Table 2, the older the generation, the higher the level of commitment to the public interest, self-sacrifice,

and compassion. The younger the generation, the higher the attraction to public policy making. The relationship between generation and compassion was statistically significant.

Further, Table 3 summarizes how Millennials performed on each dimension of PSM. Millennials' level of self-sacrifice was the lowest dimension, followed by commitment to the public interest, compassion, and attraction to public policy making in ascending order. Generation X employees' level of self-sacrifice was the lowest dimension, followed by commitment to the public interest, attraction to public policy making, and compassion in ascending order. As compared to Generation X employees, Millennials had a lower mean score on every PSM dimension. A SPSS Independent Samples T-Test analysis of the differences in the means for attraction to public policy, indicates that there is not a statistically significant difference between the score for Millennials and Generation X workers ($t = -.650$, $p = .516$). The t-test analysis of the differences in the means for commitment to the public interest, indicates that there is not a statistically significant difference between the score for Millennials and Generation X workers ($t = -1.078$, $p = .282$). Conversely, the t-test analysis of the differences in the means for compassion, indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the score for Millennials and Generation X workers ($t = -2.526$, $p = .012$). Additionally, the t-test analysis of the differences in the means for self-sacrifice, indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the score for Millennials and Generation X workers ($t = -2.053$, $p = .041$).

Table 3: Public Service Motivation Dimensions by Generation

PSM Dimension Scale		*Millennials*	*Generation X*
Attraction to public policy	Mean	3.82	3.87
	SD	.697	.648
Commitment to the public interest	Mean	3.77	3.86
	SD	.678	.704
Compassion	Mean	3.81	3.95
	SD	.580	.566
Self-sacrifice	Mean	3.43	3.59
	SD	.750	.782

To understand the degree to which the PSM dimension of compassion, the only statistically significant construct, is predicted by the independent variables of age and generation and to look at these variables simultaneously, a multiple regression analysis was calculated (Table 4). The results of the regression analysis show that when controlling for the other variables, generation had the stronger predictive relationship although neither generation nor age were significant.

Table 4: Regression Analysis

	Multiple Regression Weights		
Variable	B	ß	Sig.
Age	-.001	-.029	0.796
Generation	.108	.138	0.213

Hypothesis 3. Research has indicated that PSM predicts positive job outcomes; therefore, it was hypothesized that Millennials with high PSM would have increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In the current study, there is a significant, positive correlation between PSM and job satisfaction (r=.266) and organizational commitment (r=.260) among all respondents. Millennials, overall, reported lower

average job satisfaction (3.77) as compared to Generation X (3.80) and Baby Boomers (4.05). Millennials also reported only slightly lower than average organizational commitment (3.02) as compared to Generation X (3.08) and Baby Boomers (3.05). A correlation coefficient was calculated to assess the relationship between Millennials' PSM and job satisfaction and organizational commitment. There was a weak, positive correlation between the variables, job satisfaction (r=.168, *p*=.028) and organizational commitment (r=.12, *p*=.116); neither relationship was significant. However, increases in Millennials' PSM were correlated with increases in both job outcomes measured in the current study.

Discussion

The aim of this research was to address the questions: (a) Is there a relationship between one's generational cohort and level of PSM? (b) How do Millennials compare to other generations on the dimensions of PSM? and (c) Does high PSM among Millennials predict positive job outcomes? The current investigation sought to explore the relationship between generational cohort and PSM. Perry and other PSM researchers have studied age, gender, and other factors as antecedents to PSM. However, study of generational affiliation in relation to PSM values had not been undertaken. The current study sought to build upon the current understanding of PSM as a developmental process, partially shaped by sociohistoric factors such as parental influence, religious socialization, and organizational influences as established by Moynihan & Pandey (2007) and Bellé (2013). As much as members of like generation cohorts share experiences that influence their belief systems and values, common PSM characteristics may be expressed.

As such, the current research suggests that PSM is positively associated with generation, and Millennial public sector workers report lower levels of PSM than their older generation counterparts. Being affiliated with a younger generation was associated with decreased levels in the PSM dimensions most closely related to altruistic values – compassion, self-sacrifice, and commitment to public interest – and associated with increases in the PSM dimension of attraction to public policy making. Millennials had the lowest levels on every PSM dimension as compared to older generations. This study also supported the finding that PSM contributes to better job outcomes, including being satisfied with the work and committed to the organization. Despite Millennials rating

weaker on PSM than older workers, those Millennials with high levels of PSM demonstrated similar positive job outcomes. These findings suggest that attracting young workers with high PSM or working to actively develop PSM among young workers may yield positive benefits to the employee and the organization in terms of retention, engagement, delivery of service and performance.

Significance and Application

The current research has both academic and practical relevance for the field of public administration and administrative leadership. Existing research on the newest generation of workers has focused largely on the study of the private sector or young people who have not yet entered the workforce. The current study offers observations of young people already working in the public sector, which should be of particular interest to government employers due to the dearth of PSM research in this area.

Popular, editorial conversation is largely guiding organizational leaders toward change strategies that will 'fit' the perceived needs of young workers and 'fix' the purported conflict caused by Millennial work behaviors. While the current study supports some measure of difference in PSM between Millennials and older generations, the differences are weak. Moreover, not all Millennials have low PSM. Millennials in this study with high PSM demonstrate the similar types of positive job outcomes – satisfaction and organizational commitment - as observed among employees overall in previous studies. Results are likely insufficient to warrant organizational attention on generational difference. Rather, organizational leaders may be better served to emphasize sameness with regard to PSM and resist costly investments in training and

other practices that reinforce generational difference and stereotypes. Instead, public sector leaders may invest in early identification of PSM traits among young employee candidates and select recruits demonstrating strong public service values. Government employers should be proactive and swift in orienting new employees to the PSM values of the organization due to evidence that young workers may be departing government service after short tenures. Additionally, due to the constraints and demands of public sector work, organizations may have difficulty meeting expectations of Millennial workers such as preference for leisure time and extrinsic rewards (Lyons & Kuron, 2014), so it may be important to focus effort in attracting PSM oriented young workers and addressing deficits in PSM among Millennials.

Little attention has been paid to examining the individual dimensions of PSM. Brewer (2008) and Perry and Vandanabeele (2015) called for the unbundling of the PSM scale to better understand the origins and influence of the different variables. The current study tested how Millennials performed on each dimension of PSM. Millennial public sector workers may need organizational assistance in cultivating certain aspects of PSM, with perhaps more attention on young workers in general in the area of self-sacrifice and less on attraction to public policy making. For example, organizational leaders may identify ways to connect young workers to the impact of their work (Grant, 2008) such as direct exposure to service recipients to foster meaningfulness and other altruistic values. Such practices are likely of value to younger and older workers alike.

Limitations

The data set utilized for the current study was selected because it offered the best available large-sample data of public, governmental employees that included PSM items and at least two job performance outcome measures. One challenge of the present study was defining generational cohorts post survey administration. This investigation used respondents' ages in the survey year to categorize generational cohort. Birth years for each generation were selected by the current study author using the best available working definition by Howe and Strauss (2000). However, there is little agreement on what constitutes a generation. An alternate method for future study may be to allow study participants to self-identify characteristics, experiences, and beliefs associated with each generation category, rather than birth year.

The current study's most notable limitation is its cross-sectional design, which compared workers in their current state at the time of the data collection rather than comparing cohorts across different points in time. Due to the aforementioned age-period-cohort effect challenge, the present study is unable to establish generation as causal as opposed to age or career stage. According to Parry and Urwin (2011), cross-sectional generational research may not satisfy the most rigorous of empirical standard, but there are measures that can be taken to mitigate limitations. Use of employee tenure as a control variable would have helped explain findings due to career stage rather than age; however, the dataset did not include tenure. Therefore, the study could not control for the influence of years of services or experience in the organization or field on the results. Future research should employ time-lag methods, which can distinguish generational effects from age and career stage effects (Twenge, 2010). Despite the

stated limitations, the practical applications of such exploratory research and observation may still inform employers, whether or not the effects are due to age, period or cohort.

The current study utilized existing data from a convenience sampled employee survey. All employees were invited to participate in the survey rather than a random selection of employees. Survey results, therefore, are unlikely to be representative of the population of study. It is likely that employees who volunteered to participate in the survey over-represent or under-represent employees of the overall organization. For example, bias in this sampling method may mean that employees with higher PSM were more likely to participate or conversely discontent employees may have viewed the survey as an opportunity to grieve and therefore be disproportionately represented. Further, the survey response rate of 33% and the disparities in employee demographics suggest that the results may not be representative of the general employee population at this agency. Survey results are not generalizable to this organization or state government employees overall, and interpretations should be used cautiously.

Conclusion

Public service organizations, particularly governmental entities, are continually challenged by constrained budgets and work environments that can make it difficult to attract and retain talented and committed employees. As workers age and young people's engagement in the workforce declines due to increased rates of higher education enrollment and a struggling job market after the Great Recession, organizational leaders must contend with remaining viable and attractive employers. Perry's PSM offers public employers a method to uncover a population of employees who are fulfilled by the intrinsic rewards of public service, possess altruistic values, seek meaning in their work, and are civic minded. Employees with high PSM are not only attracted to public service organizations but they perform better and display a multitude of positive job behaviors.

Popular rhetoric about the entitlement of the Millennial generation of young people suggests that public sector employers should beware. Millennials will conflict with older workers, make demands that the public sector cannot meet, and will stay away or leave public service jobs. The empirical evidence supporting or contradicting these notions about Millennials is limited and mixed. While some differences in work attitudes and preferences appear to exist between Millennials and older generations, there are significant inconsistencies in the quality and methods employed in these studies and there is a gap in the literature on PSM among Millennials in the public sector.

This study attempted to explore the question of how Millennials compare to other generations with respect to PSM, its individual dimensions, and if Millennial PSM

contributes to positive job outcomes. Evidence that PSM is shaped by sociohistorical factors suggest that one's formative experiences within a shared cultural period, or generation, could influence PSM levels. This study affirms previous related studies that there are differences in work values between the generations, although small. The current study found lower levels of PSM among Millennial public sector employees than older generations. The relationships in this study are important to note and generation was shown to be the strongest predictor of PSM, yet the relationships overall were weak to moderate. Factors such as tenure and experience should be taken into account in future research to better address the influence of career stage on the results. It is unclear if generation or some other factor is contributing to the observed relationship. Most promising in the findings is that Millennials who possess high PSM have positive job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Special attention should be focused on this finding because it underscores the importance of PSM and recognizing the PSM potential in all employees. The tasks of public sector organizational leadership should be to account for PSM values in the selection of young employees and to actively develop and apply PSM values in young employees' everyday work experience.

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