

Summer 6-24-2014

# Public Service Motivation, Role Ambiguity, and Job Satisfaction Among Municipal Police Officers

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*Research Papers*. Paper 545.  
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PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION, ROLE AMBIGUITY, AND JOB SATISFACTION  
AMONG MUNICIPAL POLICE OFFICERS

by

Katharine M. Volle

B.A., Southern Illinois University, 2011

A Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Maser of Public Administration

Department of Political Science  
in the Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
August 2014

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MPA RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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A Research paper Submitted in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements  
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Master of Public Administration

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June 24, 2014

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

Katharine M. Volle, for the Master of Public Administration degree, presented on June 24, 2014, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

**TITLE: PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION, ROLE AMBIGUITY, AND JOB SATISFACTION AMONG MUNICIPAL POLICE OFFICERS**

**MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Randall S. Davis**

Research in public management consistently asserts that public service motivation (PSM) facilitates beneficial work behaviors and attitudes. However, few studies have been designed to examine PSM in specific occupations. Law enforcement agencies may provide unique places to examine PSM because the public benefit of policing is directly and immediately observable by officers. Yet, law enforcement occupations are highly stressful. This study attempts to connect one form of occupational stress – role ambiguity –, public service motivation, and job satisfaction in municipal police officers. Findings from a regression model indicate that the dimensions of public service motivation are important drivers of job satisfaction among police officers. Findings also suggest that minimizing occupational stress, in the form of clarifying organizational roles, plays a significant, and primary, role in shaping job satisfaction.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Many police officers experience intensely stressful situations that most other occupations do not encounter with similar frequency (Jaramillo, Nixon, & Sims, 2005). Under stressful situations employees often adopt unhealthy mechanisms to cope with work demands and expectations. High rates of alcohol abuse, drug abuse, increased aggressiveness, and high suicide rates among law enforcement officers resulting from high stress is concerning, and deserves scholarly and practical attention (Jarmillo et al., 2005). Given the already stressful environment many police officers face, it is important for public administrators to leverage organizational design to mitigate certain stressors to the maximum extent possible. Role ambiguity serves as one form of occupational stress originating from organizational design that adds to externally derived stressors inherent in law enforcement.

For the past forty years organizational scholars have examined the existence and outcomes of role ambiguity, or conversely role clarity (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, & Snoek 1964; Katz & Kahn, 1966; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Role ambiguity refers to situations where employees lack necessary information required to adequately define job-related tasks and expectations (Rizzo et al., 1970). This form of stress often occurs in law enforcement when there is a discrepancy between job descriptions and the reality of work tasks (Jaramillo et al., 2004). Role ambiguity maintains scholarly and practical relevance because it has several significant side effects for employees including anxiety, depression, tension, anger, fear, decreased motivation, and reduced job satisfaction (Kahn et al., 1964; Pandey & Wright, 2006; Rizzo et al., 1970; Wright, 2007; Wright & Millesen, 2008). Given that role ambiguity can

compromise both employee health and factors associated with organizational performance it is important to understand factors that alleviate role stress.

Job satisfaction represents one critical outcome of role ambiguity, particularly because it has the capacity to influence organizational performance (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001). Employee job satisfaction has been defined as a “pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisals of one’s job” (Locke 1976, 1300). Job satisfaction has direct and indirect bearing on important individual and organizational outcomes, including work motivation, turnover, productivity, and commitment (Mobley et al., 1979; Mobley, Homer, & Hollingsworth 1978; Locke 1976; Wright 2001, 2004; Wright & Davis 2003). In fact, Mobley and colleagues (1979) argue job satisfaction is the single best predictor of employee turnover, which itself imposes a substantial burden on organizational performance and productivity (Mobley et al., 1979; Staw 1980; Balfour & Neff 1993; Moynihan & Pandey 2008). To the extent that role ambiguity shapes job satisfaction it is useful to uncover factors that can mitigate this form of occupational stress.

One potential factor that could offset the negative outcomes of role ambiguity on job satisfaction is Public Service Motivation (PSM). PSM can be defined as an “individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public intuitions or organizations” (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 368; Perry, 1997, 2000; Brewer et al., 2000). PSM has been connected to myriad organizational benefits including lower absenteeism, strong organizational commitment, and greater job satisfaction (Pandey & Stazyk, 2008; Naff & Crum, 1999; Wright & Grant, 2010). One policy arena where this relationship may be particularly pronounced is law enforcement. Law enforcement officers are in a unique position to protect and serve the public, which may communicate higher degrees of public service motivation.

However, the extent to which the influence of PSM on job satisfaction is more pronounced than clarifying organizational roles remains in question. While individual dispositions such as PSM likely increase job satisfaction, research indicates that some elements of organizational structure are more important in cultivating favorable job attitudes (*e.g.* Stazyk & Goerdel, 2011). As such, the thesis I present is that in law enforcement organizations PSM can serve to counterbalance elements of organizational stress, but leveraging organizational structure is more important in the process of facilitating job satisfaction.

The research gap in this area is concerning because law enforcement work is of critical importance to our society. It warrants our attention as the public is the beneficiary of more than 800,000 full-time police officers (Bureau of Justice, 2005; Jaramillo et al., 2005), and law enforcement ranks among the top five most stressful occupations worldwide (Jaramillo et al., 2005). Many of these acute stressors come from within the organization itself, role ambiguity represents one of those forms of stress. Job stressors internal to the organization have been shown to negatively influence an employee's commitment and motivation (Jaramillo et al., 2005). Nonetheless, it may be possible for management to leverage aspects of organizational structure to harness certain employee characteristics to relieve some of the stress associated with police work.

This paper proceeds in four sections. The first section of the paper reviews the literature on job satisfaction, public service motivation, and role ambiguity to develop four hypotheses regarding the connections between three dimensions of public service motivation, role ambiguity, and job satisfaction among law enforcement personnel. Second, I discuss the data, measures, and method used to test the hypotheses. Third, I present the findings from an ordinary least squares regression model. Findings indicate that three dimensions of public

service motivation – commitment to the public interest, self-sacrifice, and compassion – contribute to higher job satisfaction. Additionally, role clarity is a significant, but more pronounced, predictor of job satisfaction. Finally, I discuss the findings and present concluding remarks on the relative importance of clarifying roles and fostering PSM for enhancing job satisfaction. I also discuss the findings with reference to practice.

**CHAPTER 2**  
**JOB SATISFACTION, PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION, AND ROLE**  
**AMBIGUITY**

*The Influence of Public Service Motivation on Job Satisfaction in law enforcement.*

Police officer job satisfaction has been approached as a way to diminish police officer stress, increase organizational commitment, and reduce factors such as absenteeism, burn-out, alcoholism, substance, abuse and suicide (Greene, 1989). Thus, more satisfied police officers will improve upon police and community relations as well as improve the quality of services they provide to citizens. As the motivational potential of the job increases, negative work behaviors are likely to decrease (Greene, 1989). Organizational behavior research examining motivation suggests that work tasks should be structured in ways that ensure performance directly and indirectly through providing a satisfying experience for the worker (Greene, 1989). Given this observation, it may be useful to examine how unique motivational forces associated with public service influence job satisfaction among police officers.

Public service motivation references “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations” (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 368). Though the initial definition of PSM has changed over time (see Perry & Hondeghem, 2008), many of the underlying dimensions have remained the same (but see Vandenberg, 2008). Initially, PSM was comprised of four dimensions across three categories of motives. Self-sacrifice was associated with rational motives, compassion was associated with affective motives, and commitment to the public interest and self-sacrifice were associated with norm based motives (Perry, 1996, 1997; Perry & Wise, 1990). While recent studies have questioned the usefulness of the attraction to policy making dimension (see Coursey, Perry,

Brudney, & Littlepage, 2008) the remaining three are consistently associated with the PSM construct. As such, I examine these three dimensions independently.

There is good reason to expect that law enforcement agencies are uniquely situated to capitalize on the behavioral benefits of PSM. Individuals who embrace strong norms and emotions about performing public service are likely to feel that public service is one of the highest forms of citizenship. Even in the presence of PSM, other factors are likely to affect the level of officer satisfaction and commitment to the police organization, such as officer personality, educational attainment, attributes of the police organization, and the fit between officer predisposition characteristics and the requirements of the police role (Greene, 1989). Nevertheless, law enforcement officers are often expected to sacrifice their personal welfare to protect the public in the line of duty. If this is the case, it is reasonable to expect strong connections between PSM and public safety occupations. Indeed, many law enforcement qualities fall into the four individual conceptions of PSM identified by Brewer, Selden, and Facer. (2000).

According to Brewer, Selden, and Facer (2000) there are four possible ways individuals can view the motives associated with PSM, which are samaritans, communitarians, patriots, and humanitarians (pp. 258-260). Samaritans, according to Brewer and colleagues (2000), are considered to be strongly motivated to help others seeing themselves as guardians to the underprivileged. They are open to compassion and empathy for the people they help and make a commitment to make society fair. Communitarians are motivated by sentiments of civic duty and public service. They tend to have a sense of pride and they embrace higher ethical standards and expectations for public officials. Patriots consider duty more important than self, risking personal loss to help someone else. They view themselves as guardians of the people. Humanitarians act

out of a sense of citizenship, patriotism, and responsibility (Brewer et al., 2000). At a minimum, the occupation of law enforcement seems directly tied to the samaritan and patriot conceptualizations of PSM. The motto of “protect and serve” associated with law enforcement directly invokes the idea of guardianship, which is related to samaritans and patriots as defined by Brewer and colleagues (2000). To this extent, it may be reasonable to assume that law enforcement is closely associated with at least some of the underlying conceptualizations of PSM.

The relationship between law enforcement and PSM is important because several studies show that employees with high levels of PSM tend to be more satisfied with work and less likely to turnover (Naff & Crum 1999; Scott & Pandey, 2005). Job satisfaction is primarily determined by motivating factors that are intrinsic to the work itself while dissatisfaction is primarily affected by extrinsic concerns such as policies, procedures, working conditions, and salaries (Greene, 1989). Public employees are particularly satisfied with their jobs when their work helps individuals and contributes to society at large (Norris, 2003). In sum, most research concludes that public sector job satisfaction is positively correlated with public service motivation because those with high PSM view service to society as a meaningful work reward (Cerease & Farinella, 2006; Davis, 2013; Kim, 2005; Naff & Crum, 1999; Norris, 2003; Steijn, 2006). Importantly, research suggests that officer satisfaction leads to important behavioral outcomes that benefit the organization (Greene, 1989). If the job requirements of police officers are characterized by the basic underlying tenets of PSM, and PSM leads to heightened levels of job satisfaction I expect that:

*Hypothesis 1:* Increases in self-sacrifice leads to increases in job satisfaction among law enforcement officers.

*Hypothesis 2:* Increases in commitment to public interests leads to increases in job satisfaction among law enforcement officers.

*Hypothesis 3:* Increases in compassion leads to increases in job satisfaction among law enforcement officers.

*The Influence of Role Ambiguity on Job Satisfaction.* The connections between job performance and evaluations tend to be less clear for more complex jobs such as police work, and these complexities may lead to increased levels of role ambiguity (Organ & Greene, 1981; Rousseau, 1978, Sorenson & Sorenson, 1974).<sup>1</sup> A common belief in the public management literature is that public organizations suffer unclear goal expectations (Chun & Rainey, 2005a, 2005b; Davis & Stazyk, 2014a, 2014b; Pandey & Wright, 2006; Rainey, 2003; Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999; Stazyk & Goerdel, 2011). Unfortunately, unclear goal or task expectations often spill over into concerns regarding individual-level roles. Often individual employees find themselves in circumstances where it is difficult to understand work related expectations and find themselves struggling to fulfill work duties (Kahn et al., 1964; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Pandey

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<sup>1</sup> The converse of the role ambiguity concept is role clarity. The primary discussion in this manuscript references role ambiguity, but assumes that clarity in role is the opposite of ambiguity in role.

& Wright, 2006; Rizzo et al., 1970; Stayzk et al., 2011). Role ambiguity is born out of deficiencies in information which in turn limits role comprehension (Pearce, 1981).

Role ambiguity can be specifically associated with organizational conditions where employees “lack of information concerning the proper definition of the job, its goals, and the permissible means for implementing them” this can also be accompanied with “the information available to a person is less than required for adequate performance of his role” (Kahn et al., p.94; see also Rizzo et al., 1970). When levels of role ambiguity are high there should be significant concern for public organizations because it produces a range of harmful outcomes that include reduced performance, high turnover, illness, and chronic disease (Bandura, 1997; Katz & Kahn, 1966; Rizzo et al., 1970; Tubre & Collins, 2000; Van Sell, Brief & Schuler, 1981). High levels of role ambiguity are troubling because employees who experience role ambiguity are likely to seek potentially damaging coping strategies that further hinder organizational performance (Kahn et al., 1964; Rizzo et al., 1970).

One consistent finding in organizational behavior research is that limited role oriented information reduces overall job satisfaction. The lack of information associated with role ambiguity is likely to increase the probability that a person will be dissatisfied with their role. This often leads to anxiety, a distortion of reality, and the person will perform less effectively (Rizzo et al; 1970). Several studies support the notion that role ambiguity is inversely related to job satisfaction (*e.g.* Katz & Kahn, 1966). For example Kahn and colleagues (1964) found that a lack of information regarding performance evaluation, upward mobility opportunities, levels of responsibility, and work expectations all contributed to dissatisfaction. The findings described by Rizzo and colleagues (1970) supported these assertions.

As the complexity of job tasks increases greater role ambiguity is the likely result. It is to be expected that many of the situations encountered by police officers while on the job are situational and complex. Most every situation will require a level of decision-making authority that cannot be predefined with explicit task expectations. The nature of a municipal police officers job is hands on with the public, and requires an active team effort upon fellow officers. It has been hypothesized that employees whose job performance depends largely upon interactions with others may be more likely to experience high degrees of role ambiguity (Jackson & Schuler, 1985), this is partially due to increases in their role set (Kahn et al., 1964). A role set consists of the number of individuals who can legitimately levy role oriented demands on the role occupant (Kahn et al., 1964). If high levels of role ambiguity reduce job satisfaction, and police officers are likely to experience higher levels of role ambiguity, it is reasonable to expect that:

*Hypothesis 4:* Increases in role clarity – or conversely decreases in role ambiguity – leads to increases in job satisfaction among law enforcement officers.

## CHAPTER 3

### DATA, MEASURES, AND METHODOLOGY

The data for this study were collected from a survey of local government employees in two Kansas municipalities. Participation in the survey was voluntary and confidential as indicated in both the paper and electronic survey invitations. Researchers also made potential respondents aware their responses would also remain confidential from management. The city manager notified potential respondents about the survey prior to distribution through their city e-mail address or mailing address. 3,216 potential respondents were identified by a research team who communicated with survey respondents following the tailored design method for mixed-mode surveys (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian 2009). At the end of the data collection process 52 percent of respondents (n=1,665) had completed the survey (see DeHart-Davis, Davis, & Mohr, 2013 for a description of data collection). However, some of the data used here were collected as a planned missing data design, which allows for collecting the same amount of information with a shorter survey instrument (Graham, Taylor, & Cumsille, 2006). The missing data were then recovered through a multiple imputation procedure (see Enders, 2010). Because the purpose of this analysis is to examine characteristics of law enforcement officers only police responses were examined (N = 340). Select demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in table 1.

**Table 1: Law Enforcement Respondent Demographics (N=340)**

	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	24.4
Male	75.0
Missing	0.6

**Table 1 Continued: Law Enforcement Respondent Demographics (N=340)**

<b>Education</b>	
High School/GED	6.2
Some College	42.6
Bachelors	24.4
Some Graduate School	2.4
Graduate Degree	10.6
Other	4.7
Missing	9.1
<b>Race</b>	
American Indian	7.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.4
African American	8.5
Hispanic	7.1
White	72.4
Missing	2.7
<b>Role</b>	
Department Head	1.2
Division Head/Superintendent	2.1
Administrative or Policy Staff	3.8
Supervisor/Manager	25.3
Lead Worker	32.6
Clerical	10.6
Technical	14.4
Missing	10.0
<b>Age</b>	
Mean	43.0
Standard Deviation	9.3
Minimum	20.0
Maximum	72.0

Several survey items were used to define model constructs. First, in accord with the work of Coursey et al. (2008), I examine three component dimensions of public service motivation. Based on the scale presented by Coursey et al. (2008) I used four items to assess self-sacrifice, five items to measure compassion, and three items to measure commitment to the public interest. Second, consistent with the measurement in Davis (2013) I use three items to

measure job satisfaction. Third, I use two items to assess levels of role ambiguity. Finally, I employ race, gender, and age as controls to rule out alternative explanations. Race was dichotomized such that 0 represents minority status and 1 represents white. Gender is coded such that 1 represents females. Finally, age is a continuous variable measured in years. Because each model construct includes multiple questionnaire items I generated summative indexes to examine the effects of PSM and role ambiguity on job satisfaction. All theoretical measures used in this study are described in greater detail in the appendix. Table 2 illustrates the descriptive statistics for questionnaire items. I used ordinary least squares regression analysis to test the hypotheses presented above.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	S.D.	Correlations							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1. RA1	3.73	1.02	1							
2. RA2	3.37	1.15	.299**	1						
3. JS1	4.18	0.88	.364**	.147**	1					
4. JS2	3.75	0.96	.330**	.200**	.456**	1				
5. JS3	3.74	0.91	.325**	.235**	.407**	.804**	1			
6. SS1	3.96	0.73	.147**	-.011	.350**	.275**	.194**	1		
7. SS2	3.61	0.86	.062	-.082	.212**	.189**	.185**	.412**	1	
8. SS3	3.69	0.79	.011	-.096	.196**	.150**	.082	.340**	.353**	1
9. SS4	3.48	0.91	.042	-.045	.169**	.061	.080	.313**	.305**	.305**
10. CPI1	3.56	0.85	-.066	-.082	-.022	.128*	.173**	.334**	.376**	.376**
11. CPI2	3.78	0.86	.016	-.014	.197**	.303**	.239**	.258**	.464**	.464**
12. CPI3	3.93	0.69	.094	.076	.263**	.222**	.244**	.389**	.470**	.470**
13. COM1	2.66	1.09	.017	.019	.009	.080	.046	.120*	.285**	.285**
14. COM2	2.73	0.96	-.051	-.087	-.047	.033	.025	.119*	.103	.103
15. COM3	3.48	0.87	.018	-.024	.112*	.095	.061	.070	.247**	.247**
16. COM4	3.68	1.03	-.018	-.007	.011	-.056	-.021	-.047	-.210**	-.210**
17. COM5	3.43	0.86	-.058	-.053	.130*	.279**	.270**	.185**	.173**	.173**

Table 2 continued: Descriptive Statistics

<b>Correlations</b>										
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
8. SS3	1									
9. SS4	.377**	1								
10. CPI1	.395**	.352**	1							
11. CPI2	.442**	.291**	.380**	1						
12. CPI3	.492**	.395**	.336**	.554**	1					
13. COM1	.163**	.164**	.101	.182**	.192**	1				
14. COM2	.171**	.056	.108*	.036	.043	.210**	1			
15. COM3	.326**	.280**	.225**	.257**	.287**	.218**	.308**	1		
16. COM4	-.100	-.137*	-.058	-.139*	-.113*	-.377**	-.147**	-.344**	1	
17. COM5	.340**	.203**	.203**	.303**	.336**	.384**	.186**	.220**	-.134*	1

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

All of three of the hypotheses examining the connections between the sub-dimensions of PSM and job satisfaction are fully supported. The first hypothesis suggested that increases in self-sacrifice would lead to increases in job satisfaction. The findings I present support hypothesis 1 indicating that greater levels of self-sacrifice does contribute to higher job satisfaction among these respondents ( $\beta = 0.160, p = 0.012$ ). Practically, this means that for every unit increase in the self-sacrifice scale contributes to a 0.160 unit increase in job satisfaction. Indeed, as previous research indicates, people who display more compassion are also more satisfied with work. Second, the findings I report indicate that commitment to the public interest contributes to higher levels of job satisfaction, which supports hypothesis 2 ( $\beta = 0.171, p = 0.007$ ). As such, for every unit increase in commitment to the public interest there is a corresponding .171 unit increase in job satisfaction. In line with earlier studies those people who are more committed to the public interest also say they are more satisfied with their jobs. Finally, the relationship between compassion and job satisfaction is statistically significant at the .10 level, thus hypothesis 3 is supported ( $\beta = 0.080, p = 0.084$ ). This finding suggests that for every unit increase in the compassion subdimension of PSM leads to a .080 unit increase in job satisfaction. Again, those people who are more compassionate are also more satisfied with work.

The fourth, and final, hypothesis asserted that increases in role clarity would contribute to corresponding increases in job satisfaction. The findings I present indicate that role clarity is a statistically significant predictor of job satisfaction, which supports hypothesis 4 ( $\beta = 0.397, p < 0.001$ ). This means that for every unit increase in role clarity there is a corresponding .397 unit increase in job satisfaction. Consistent with earlier expectations people who think their roles are

clearer are also happier at work. Importantly, the major thesis of this project was that clarifying organizational roles would be more important drivers of job satisfaction in law enforcement agencies as compared to individual predispositions such as PSM. The findings I present support this assertion. While self-sacrifice ( $\beta = 0.160$ ), commitment to the public interest ( $\beta = 0.171$ ), and compassion ( $\beta = 0.080$ ) all influence job satisfaction, they pale in comparison to increases in role clarity ( $\beta = 0.397$ ). All standardized parameter estimates and significance levels are presented in table 3.

**Table 3: Standardized Regression Parameters Predicting Job Satisfaction**

	<i>EST</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>EST/S.E.</i>	<i>p</i>
1. Self-Sacrifice	0.160	0.062	2.103	0.012
2. Commitment to the Public Interest	0.171	0.077	2.572	0.007
3. Compassion	0.052	0.080	1.145	0.084
4. Role Ambiguity	0.397	0.061	1.993	0.000
5. Female	0.134	0.245	2.702	0.002
6. White	-0.125	0.241	-1.099	0.007
7. Age	0.134	0.011	4.040	0.004

**N = 340; R<sup>2</sup> = 0.312**

I also examined the role of race, gender, and age on job satisfaction to rule out potential alternative explanations. All three control variables used in this model are significant predictors of job satisfaction. First, gender significantly influences job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.146$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). As such this indicates that being a woman significantly enhances job satisfaction. Second, older employees tend to be more satisfied with work ( $\beta = 0.134$ ,  $p < 0.004$ ). This suggests for every year an employee ages there is a corresponding .200 unit increase in job satisfaction. Third, white employees among these law enforcement personnel tend to be less satisfied with work ( $\beta =$

-0.123,  $p = .007$ ). Finally, I examined the explanatory capacity of the regression model. The  $R^2$  value indicates the amount of variance explained in the dependent variable by all independent variables included in the model. In this case the  $R^2$  value I report is 0.312 suggesting that I am explaining just over 31% of the variation in job satisfaction with the three subdimensions of PSM, role ambiguity, gender, race, and age. See table 3 for these results.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

When hiring future law enforcement officers the study shows that hiring someone with high PSM and compassion is not as important as having strong sense of role clarity for shaping job satisfaction. While the individual attributes of employees are important for making them happy at work it is not a full substitute for a rationally structured organization. While managers cannot make employees more committed to the public interest or exhibit compassion what managers can do is leverage areas of organizational structure. Most managers can be more precise about what their expectations are and can actively make this happen. This is important to think about in regards to law enforcement organizations as making ambiguity clear for a police officer's is a quite challenging task. This can be partially due to the nature of the position as it is hard to be clear about expectations when one can never be certain the exact situations that will be encountered on the job. Nevertheless, there are dimensions of roles that managers can actively clarify even in law enforcement agencies.

According to the work of Kahn et al. (1964) role ambiguity comes in two dimensions. The first dimension references task ambiguity, and it has to do with the nature of job expectations and understanding how your performance relates to your job description. The other form of role ambiguity references the socio-emotional dimension. This dimension occurs when an individual is unclear about where they stand in the eyes of others or how others will interpret their actions at work. Even if managers cannot directly impact the situational circumstances law enforcement officers find themselves in they can, however adjust the socio-emotional dimension of role ambiguity. It is important that managers are clear about where they stand in relation to employees. Lack of clarity breeds anxiety because the role occupant may

have several different interpretations of what role related behaviors they are supposed to accomplish. This can lead to confusion and inconsistency in role-oriented behaviors. Work should be structured to ensure that it is performed effectively helping to contribute to a satisfying and rewarding experience for the worker (Greene, 1989). Greater role clarity can help to lower these negative work behaviors.

This paper takes the first step in examining role clarity versus public service motivation while not discounting the importance of PSM. I agree with what organizational theorists have long known, dimensions of organizational structure have the capacity to influence performance based organizational behaviors. While PSM is likely to remain important in public administration the concept of organizational roles should be at the forefront of theory and practice in public administration.

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## APPENDIX

## **Appendix A: Operational Definitions**

### **Public Service Motivation (Self-Sacrifice)**

Self-sacrifice was gauged using four items proposed by Coursey et al. (2008) These items were measured on a five point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. All items were scaled such that higher values indicated higher levels of self-sacrifice.

- SS1: Much of what I do is for a cause bigger than myself.
- SS2: Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements.
- SS3: I feel people should give back to society more than they get from it.
- SS4: I am one of those rare people who would risk personal loss to help someone else.

### **Public Service Motivation (Compassion)**

Compassion was gauged in accord with the work of Coursey et al. (2008), I used five items to assess compassion. These items were measured on a five point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. All items were scaled such that higher values indicated higher levels of compassion.

- COM1: More social programs are too vital to do without.
- COM2: It is difficult for me to contain my feelings when I see people in distress.
- COM3: I seldom think about the welfare of people whom I don't know personally (Reversed)
- COM4: I have little compassion for people in need who are unwilling to take the first step to help themselves. (Reversed)

- COM5: I am often reminded by daily events how dependent we are on one another.

### **Public Service Motivation (Commitment to the Public Interest)**

Commitment to the public interest was also gauged using Coursey et al. (2008). These items were measured on a five point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. All items were scaled such that higher values indicated higher levels of commitment to the public interest.

- CPI1: I unselfishly contribute to my community.
- CPI2: I consider public service my civic duty.
- CPI3: Meaningful public service is very important to me.

### **Role Ambiguity**

In accord with the work of Kahn et al. (1964) role Ambiguity was assessed using two questionnaire items that assess the extent of information that an employee possesses regarding job tasks and expectations. The first question asks the respondent to state the extent to which they agree or disagree with certain aspects of their job and the second asks about the distribution of authority at work. Items were scaled such that higher values contribute to higher levels of role clarity. The statements were worded as follows:

- I feel certain about how much authority I have
- I must check with my supervisor before I do almost anything. “reversed”

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction was assessed using three items rated on a five-point scale that was gauged using Davis (2013). These items were measured on a five point scale ranging from

strongly agree to strongly disagree. All items were scaled such that higher values indicated higher levels of job satisfaction.

- JS1: Doing my job gives me a sense of personal satisfaction.
- JS2: I am proud to work for this organization.
- JS3: Overall, I am satisfied working for this organization.

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Research Paper Title:

Public Service Motivation, Role Ambiguity, and Job Satisfaction among Municipal Police Officers

Major Professor: Dr. Randall S. Davis