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ESTABLISHING A MISSION-BASED CULTURE: ANALYZING THE RELATION BETWEEN INTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION AGENTS, MISSION VALENCE, PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION, GOAL CLARITY AND WORK IMPACT

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ABSTRACT: *This study contributes to our understanding of how organizations can craft a mission-based culture by examining the relationship between mission valence, PSM, goal clarity, and work impact. More specifically, the study assesses how value-laden communication with multiple intra-organizational socialization referents is related with the cited variables. The developed hypotheses are tested using structural equation modelling and a sample of 585 non-managerial employees employed by a public welfare organization. The findings confirm the claim that position in an organizational hierarchy is not likely to influence the analyzed relationships. The magnitude of the relationships, however, diverges. In contrast to previous research, the study results indicate that, in the case of lower-level employees, PSM is the most powerful predictor of mission valence. Furthermore, the results indicate that exposure to organizational values via interaction with internal socialization agents is positively related with their perceived importance. The results thus not only confirm the relevance of incorporating the institutional setting when analyzing mission valence, but also provide further proof for an institutional theory of PSM by highlighting that different organizational socialization agents could play a distinctive role in crafting PSM and a mission-based culture.*

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INTRODUCTION

Since Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) passionate plea for mission-driven organizations, salient missions have been viewed as a key element to enhance the effectiveness of public organizations (Pandey and Rainey 2006). More specifically, it has been argued that by clarifying what the organization strives for and how these aspirations benefit the community (Wright, Moynihan, and Pandey 2012), public organizations will not only raise employee awareness of organizational values and goals, but also strengthen alignment between the organization's ideology and employee values (Paarlberg and Lavigna 2010), thus motivating employees to help maximize the organization's societal impact (Vandenabeele 2014). Such attraction to a salient organizational mission has been labelled "mission valence" (Rainey and Steinbauer 1999) and denotes "an employee's perceptions of the attractiveness or salience of an organization's purpose or social contribution" (Wright et al. 2012:206).

Given the presumed potential of salient missions to kindle passion, dedication, and diligence (Goodsell 2010), the question is raised as to how public organizations can increase mission attractiveness and create a mission-based culture. Research on the topic indicates that public service motivation (PSM), goal clarity, and work impact are related to higher levels of mission valence (Caillier 2015, 2016a, 2016b; Wright and Pandey 2010, 2011). However, despite the emergent knowledge base, existing research (1) focused predominantly on analyzing the perceptions of senior managers; and (2) paid limited attention to the organizational processes underlying the development of mission valence (Wright and Pandey 2011).

Based on the identified research gaps, this article aims to contribute to the literature in two distinct ways. First of all, this study intends to test the external validity of previous research by analyzing the relationship between PSM, goal clarity, work impact, and mission valence using a sample of lower-level employees. Second, given the lack of insights on how the cited relationships could be influenced by organizational conditions, the study analyzes how intra-organizational socialization agents influence employees. Because previous research indicated that public organizations can be viewed as social institutions in which employees' organizational perceptions and attitudes are primarily shaped through interactions with other members (Moynihan and Pandey 2007; Taylor 2008), we examine how interaction with multiple sources of socializing influence (i.e., top management, supervisors, and co-workers) is related to perceptions of mission valence and its antecedents (i.e., PSM, goal clarity, and work impact). As such, this study forms an antidote for the fact that public management research has often neglected to take into account the role of social networks (Moynihan and Pandey 2008) and intra-organizational interaction as a mechanism for shaping and imparting a mission-based culture (Garnett, Marlowe, and Pandey 2008; Pandey and Garnett 2006).

The developed hypotheses are tested using structural equation modelling and a sample of 585 non-managerial employees employed by a public welfare organization. With respect to the first goal, the study results lend credibility to Wright et al.'s (2012) claim that position in an organizational hierarchy is not likely to influence the relationship between PSM, goal clarity, work impact, and mission valence. The magnitude of the identified relationships, however, diverges. In the case of lower-level employees, PSM

seems to be the most powerful predictor of mission valence. Regarding the second goal, the results indicate that exposure to organizational values via interaction with internal socialization agents is positively related to their perceived importance. The results thus not only confirm the importance of incorporating the institutional setting when analyzing mission valence (Moynihan and Pandey 2008), but also offer further proof of an institutional theory of PSM (Vandenabeele 2014) by highlighting that different organizational socialization agents could play a distinctive role in crafting PSM and a mission-based culture (Vandenabeele 2011).

In what follows, we elaborate on the concept of mission valence and what is empirically know about its antecedents. Next, we present our hypothesized model and discuss how organizational socialization can influence individual levels of mission valence by impacting PSM, goal clarity, and work impact. The theoretical section is followed by a discussion of the methodology, data analysis, and the results.

THE CONCEPT OF MISSION VALENCE AND ITS ANTECEDENTS

Building on the work of scholars from Barnard to Luther Gulick and James Q. Wilson, many public management authors have emphasized that salient and clear missions are conducive to organizational effectiveness and stressed that public agencies are more likely to perform effectively if they are characterized by higher levels of mission valence. Rainey and Steinbauer (1999:16), for example, stated, based on Vroom's expectancy theory, that "the more engaging, attractive and worthwhile the mission is to people, the more the agency will be able to attract support from those people [. . .] and to motivate them to perform well in the agency." Consequently, the higher an employee's perceptions of the attractiveness of an organization's social contribution (i.e., mission valence) (Wright et al. 2012), the more likely an employee will be motivated to contribute to the advancement of this mission (Osborne and Gaebler 1992; Rainey and Steinbauer 1999; Brown and Yoshioka 2003; Wright 2007; Goodsell 2010; Paarlberg and Lavigna 2010). Mission valence, in turn, is argued to be impacted by three specific antecedents: PSM, goal clarity, and work impact (Caillier 2015, 2016a, 2016b; Wright et al. 2012; Wright and Pandey 2011).

First, we focus on PSM. Empirical evidence on the subject indicates that PSM is an important predictor of mission valence (Caillier 2015; Wright et al. 2012; Wright and Pandey 2011). Perry and Wise (1990:368) described the concept of PSM as "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions," while other authors decoupled the concept from its roots in the public sector and used a more encompassing definition by indicating that PSM refers to the individual motivation to "do good for others and shape the well-being of society" (Perry and Hondeghem 2008:3) and to "go beyond self-interest and organizational interest" (Vandenabeele 2007:547). A major contribution of PSM is that it provides "a theory of motivation that links the pursuit of the public interest with administrative behavior" (Moynihan and Pandey 2007:41). Hence, employees with high levels of PSM are more likely to perceive their organization's mission as meaningful (Pandey, Wright, and Moynihan 2008; Vandenabeele 2014; Taylor 2014).

Second, we turn to goal clarity and work impact. The link between goal clarity and mission valence is rooted in goal setting theory (Locke 2004), which indicates that employees will be more motivated to perform well when they clearly understand the organization's goals and find them challenging (Wright 2007). However, merely clarifying organizational goals seems not enough. Employees not only need to know what the organization stands for but also how their actions contribute to the overarching mission of the organization (Boswell 2006; Paarlberg and Perry 2007). According to Wright and Pandey (2011:24), an organization must strengthen the degree to which employees perceive "their work as making a meaningful contribution to the organization and its external constituents [because] without such information, investing significant effort toward achieving the goals will either seem futile or inconsequential." Such perceived connection between an employee's tasks and the value creation processes of the organization has also been labelled "line of sight" (Boswell 2006). Line of sight is deemed critical for an organization's success as employees who "see themselves as effective contributors to the organization's goals or objectives [...] should be more likely to perform at a higher level" (Boswell and Boudreau 2001:851). Such "aligned employees" are expected to display higher levels of engagement, given their increased awareness of the organization's essence, its importance, and how their job contributes to the organization's capacity to achieve these goals (Biggs, Brough, and Barbour 2013).

THE IMPACT OF SOCIALIZATION AGENTS

Although analyzing how PSM, goal clarity, and work impact are related to employee mission valence provides valuable insights, one could argue, from a socialization perspective, that mere focusing on individual employee attitudes provides only partial understanding of the issue at hand because employee attitudes and behavior are influenced by organizational institutions and the actors within (Hart 2012). The majority of the research on the subject seems to have analyzed how proximate outcomes of adjustment (i.e., PSM, goal clarity, and work impact) are related to a distal outcome of organizational adjustment (i.e., mission valence), but neglected to analyze the organizational socialization processes underlying the development of these outcomes (Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg 2003).

Shifting the focus to disentangling the complex patterns of socializing influences within organizations not only ties in with an increasing interest in how organizational factors act as mechanisms for shaping a value-based culture (Moynihan and Pandey 2007; Quratulain and Khan 2015; Vandenabeele 2014; Vandenabeele, Brewer, and Ritz 2014) and transmitting a "public institutional logic" (Brewer 2008; Pandey and Garnett 2006), but is also congruent with various theories trying to explain the influence of institutional environments on employee attitudes and perceptions. Paarlberg and Lavigna (2010), for example, refer to Pfeffer and Salancik's (1978) theory of social information processing to argue that employees use information from their social context to develop perceptions about the meaning of their work, while social cognition theorists often build on the uncertainty reduction theory to argue that organizational members use various organizational information sources to make sense of their environment (De Vos and

Freese 2011). In the case of non-managerial employees, it has been argued that the information needed to fuel these sense-making processes is gathered primarily through social interactions with three specific organizational information sources: top management, direct supervisors, and co-workers (Ashfort, Sluss, and Saks 2007; Hart 2012; Klein and Heuser 2008). Hence, the assumption is made that value-based social interactions within an organization can act as a socialization mechanism (Chen, Hsieh, and Chen 2014; Vandenabeele 2011), impacting employee mission valence and its antecedents. Figure 1 portrays these assumptions in detail.

The hypothesized relevance of top management as an organizational socialization source ties in with the research stream on transformational leadership. More specifically, it has been argued that organizational leaders who articulate the importance of organizational goals and values (Podsakoff et al. 1999) are able to influence the perceived attractiveness of the organization's purpose (Wright et al. 2012). By communicating a compelling vision that arouses strong emotions, organizational leaders are able to raise employees' consciousness about idealized goals and, as such, generate a stronger understanding of the organization's mission (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012; Park and Rainey 2008; Wright and Pandey 2011), as well as help employees to understand how they contribute to the social purpose of the organization (Paarlberg and Lavigna 2010; Wright and Pandey 2008). These two concepts (i.e., goal clarity and work impact), in turn, have been argued to be related to an employee's motivation to advance the expressed

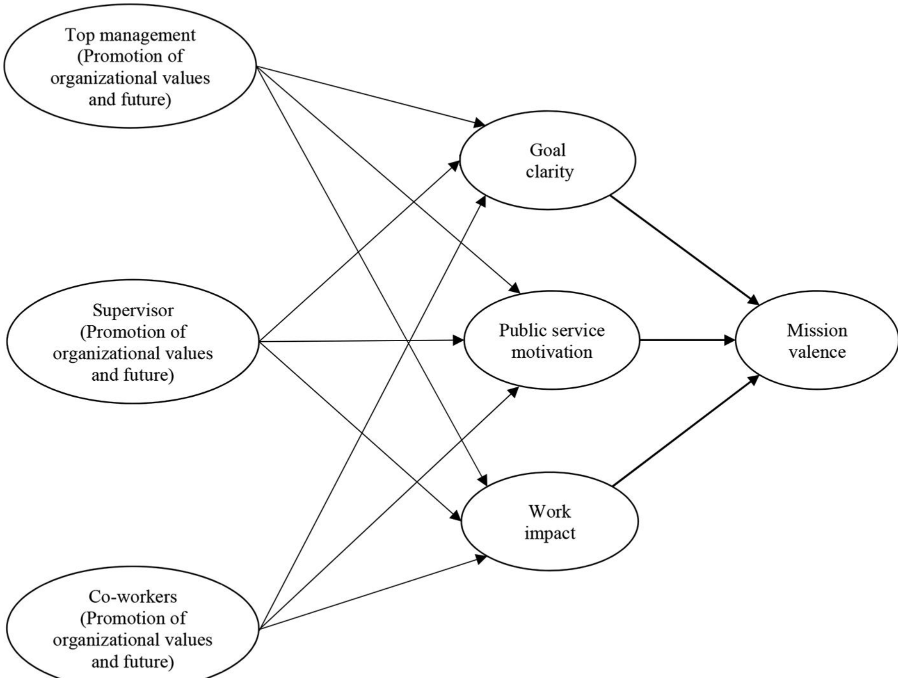

Figure 1. Proposed Theoretical Model.

purpose of the organization (Boswell 2006). In addition, transformational leadership has been deemed an instrument to establish value-based management and stimulate PSM development (Vandenabeele 2014). By clarifying the organization's goals and values, and linking them to the larger organizational public purpose, transformational leaders are expected to provide employees with "higher levels of intrinsic and altruistic motivation (e.g., PSM) to work for collective and community goals rather than to pursue self-interest or extrinsic rewards" (Park and Rainey 2008:112). We thus hypothesize that:

Hypotheses 1 to 3: Promotion of organizational values and future by the organization's top management team is indirectly positively related to employee mission valence through its influence on goal clarity (H1), PSM (H2), and work impact (H3).

Although an organization's top management is likely to be an important source of information about the organization's essence (Hart 2012), top managers often rely on written, mediated messages (which limit the possibility to facilitate rapid feedback, to establish a personal focus, or to utilize natural language (Lengel and Daft 1988)) to disperse information about the organization's purpose. Consequently, employees frequently turn to direct supervisors and co-workers in order to remove equivocality (Camilleri 2007). Although value communication is often associated with the top of an organization, research indicates that organizational members much lower in the organizational hierarchy can be a source of value-laden information and, as such, impact someone's work-related identity (Vandenabeele 2014). More specifically, direct supervisors interact almost daily with their subordinates, which provides various opportunities for mission clarification while co-workers form the most accessible intra-organizational referent (Kramer 2010). Consequently, we hypothesize that:

Hypotheses 4–6: Promotion of organizational values and future by an employee's supervisor is indirectly positively related to employee mission valence through its influence on goal clarity (H4), PSM (H5), and work impact (H6).

Hypotheses 7–9: Promotion of organizational values and future by an employee's co-workers is indirectly positively related to employee mission valence through its influence on goal clarity (H7), PSM (H8), and work impact (H9).

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Setting and Data Collection

As previous studies analyzing mission valence and its antecedents stress that their results could lack generalizability because they are based on samples of senior managers (Wright et al. 2012; Wright and Pandey 2011), we decided to complement these studies by

focusing on the perceptions of employees at the opposite end of the organizational hierarchy. More specifically, we use data collected amongst the non-managerial employees employed by a Belgian social welfare organization. This organization falls under the authority of a Flemish city and is responsible for a wide variety of services, predominantly related to elderly care. The organization provides non-residential (e.g., meal services, cleaning services, and home care services) and residential services (e.g., the organization manages community centers, residential care facilities, and a large number of assisted living facilities). A smaller part of the organization's services involves the management of youth homes. The organization has grown in the last 10 years as a result of a series of mergers of municipal services and organizations. The primary driver of these mergers was cost efficiency. The organization is facing increased economic pressures due to growing demand for services (i.e., aging population) and the need to cut costs at the city level. These pressures led to an increasing tension between the societal goals of the organization and its financial reality. The organization's need to address a variety of issues related to upscaling, austerity measures, and growing demand for services is representative of the majority of Western municipal organizations.

In total, we contacted 1978 employees via e-mail and provided them with an Internet link which gave access to an online questionnaire consisting of 46 items relevant for the study and 21 buffer items. After two weeks, an electronic reminder was sent. The electronic survey was closed after a total of four weeks. Within this time frame, 585 respondents provided sufficient information to test the full model, which resulted in a response rate of 29.6% (see section 2.3 of the online supplement for a detailed discussion about non-response at respondent and item levels). Given that unit non-response is only deemed to be a problem (and a potential source of error) if non-respondents differ significantly from respondents on key characteristics (Weisberg 2009), the characteristics of respondents and non-respondents were further analyzed. Table 1 provides an overview of the analyzed characteristics.

Table 1 indicates that the respondents do not differ significantly from the population with respect to gender, age, seniority, and proportion of permanent tenure, but that there are discrepancies regarding function. More specifically, with respect to the distribution of functions, respondents from the categories "Administration and Maintenance" and "Health Professional" are slightly overrepresented in the sample, while respondents from the categories "Nurses" and "(Non-)Certified Aides" are underrepresented. The fact that the questionnaire was distributed via e-mail and that the members of the first two functional categories usually spend more time on a computer during their working hours than the latter two functional categories could be an explanation for the identified discrepancies. Given that the respondents do not differ from the population on four of the five analyzed characteristics and the identified difference is rather small, potential non-response bias is believed to be small (Weisberg 2009).

Measures

The study variables were measured using multiple survey items taken from previously used scales (although sometimes slightly adapted to enhance their focus) (for more details, see Appendix). All 46 items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging

TABLE 1
Characteristics of the Survey Respondents and the Organization's Workforce

	Respondents (%)	*Population (%)*	*Significance*	*Null hypothesis*
Function			$\chi^2 = 12.9$, $p = .005$ (1)	Rejected
Administration and maintenance	32.8%	28.9%		
Health professional	17%	13.9%		
Nurses (registered and licensed vocational)	19%	21.5%		
(Non-)Certified aides (predominantly elderly care)	31.1%	35.7%		
Permanent tenure				
Yes	46.2%	43.9%	$\chi^2 = 1.2$, $p = .275$ (1)	Accepted
Seniority				
Years	16.8 (SD = 10.7)	17.3 (SD = 11.3)	$p = .245$ (2)	Accepted
Gender				
Female	75.4%	79.6%	$\chi^2 = 3.2$, $p = .075$ (1)	Accepted
Age (years)				
Avg. age	43.1 (SD = 10.6)	43 (SD = 11)	$p = .822$ (2)	Accepted

Note: 1 = Chi square test, 2 = One-sample T-test.

from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (7). Mission valence was measured using a two-item indicator adapted by Wright et al. (2012) from a previous measure of mission valence (Wright 2007) and reflects an employee's perceptions of the attractiveness of an organization's purpose. Goal clarity, which denotes an employee's perceptions of the clarity of the organization's goals, was measured using a three-item scale devised by Rainey (1983). PSM was measured using five items from Perry's 40-item scale representing the affective or normative motives most closely associated with the altruistic appeal of public sector value, which has been often used in previous studies (Wright and Pandey 2008, 2010, 2011). Perceived work impact indicates the degree to which employees are able to see a clear connection between their work and larger organizational goals (Scott and Pandey 2005). Work impact was measured using a three-item scale developed by Wright and Pandey (2011).

To measure the extent to which employees perceive their organization's top management team as promotors of organizational values and future, we selected four relevant items from a five-item scale developed to measure transformational leadership (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2012; Wright et al. 2012). The same items were used (although slightly rephrased) to measure the extent to which supervisors and co-workers provide information about the organization's values and future.

Characteristics of the Selected Research Design

This study relies on perceptual data about both the predictor and criterion variables collected through self-report questionnaires. Although the central objective of each survey is to make accurate inferences from a sample to the population, the accuracy of these inferences is inversely proportional to the errors that may have arisen in the design, collection, and analysis of the survey data (Biemer 2010). Given that survey designs are "even under the best circumstances and given an unlimited budget and time" never error-free (Biemer 2010:821), researchers should provide a detailed description of the survey process and the potential sources of error (Lee, Benoit-Bryan, and Johnson 2012). A useful tool to accomplish this goal is the total survey error (TSE) paradigm (Weisberg 2009). The TSE paradigm provides a theoretical framework which distinguishes several potential sources of error and can help researchers to, *a priori*, optimize their survey design and, *post hoc*, discuss the potential impact of potential error on survey data quality (Biemer 2010). In Online Supplement 1, we discuss at length the potential sources of error and how they were dealt with in the study at hand using the framework developed by Groves and Lyberg (2010). Table 2 provides a summary of this discussion (layout of the table and selection of definitions inspired by Tummers and Knies (2013)).

A large part of Online Supplement 1 is devoted to the issue of measurement error. An often discussed type of measurement error is common method variance and, more specifically, common source variance. The obvious way to avoid common source variance is to obtain predictor and criterion variables from different sources (Podsakoff et al. 2003). However, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff (2012:549) argued that this approach may not be suitable when "both the predictor and criterion variables are capturing an individual's perceptions, beliefs, judgments, or feelings" (Podsakoff et al. 2012:549). Moreover, various authors argued that when studying individual-level behaviors, attitudes, and interpretations of events, self-reports are often the theoretically most relevant measurement method (Conway and Lance 2010; Meier and O'Toole 2013). Using self-reports is deemed especially relevant in organizational research because individual perceptions can be viewed as "critical determinants of individual behaviour in organizations, mediating the relationship between objective characteristics of the work environment and individual responses" (Wright et al. 2012:209). Given that the study at hand analyzes how individual perceptions are related with perceived mission valence, using common source perceptual measures seems to be justified. However, various possibilities to mitigate the effect of common source bias were examined and, if possible, applied. The remedies used are discussed in the Online Supplement 1 and 2, and comprise a series of *ex post* and *ex ante* measures.

First, to help avoid bias related to consistency motif and halo effect (Favero, Meier, and O'Toole 2014), items related to the predictor and criterion variables were separated in the questionnaire by including other variables, buffer items, and a cover story (i.e., psychological and proximal separation) (Podsakoff et al. 2012). Second, given that the targeted respondents have a wide variety of educational and functional backgrounds, and Podsakoff et al. (2012:560) argued that common method bias is more likely to be a problem when the respondents can't provide accurate responses (a function of their ability and the difficulty of the task), a series of procedural remedies targeted at this

TABLE 2
Description of Total Error Framework and Utilized Tests and/or Remedies for Each Source of Potential Error in the Data Used

Type of error	*Definition*	*Used remedies and tests for potential errors in the data*
1. Validity	The validity of a measure refers to whether the selected instruments accurately measure the underlying construct of interest (Weisberg 2009).	• All used scales have been validated in earlier research. • Assessing score validity using advanced techniques (i.e., construct, convergent, discriminant and content validity) (SEM—measurement model – CFA).
2. Measurement error	Measurement error indicates the difference between a measured quantity and its true value.	• The probability of common method bias was reduced by applying a variety of procedural remedies aimed at increasing the ability and motivation of respondents to provide correct answers (MacKenzie and Podsakoff 2012; Podsakoff et al. 2012). • Given the focus of the study, enticement for respondents to provide social desirable answers is deemed to be limited (Lee et al. 2012). • The CFA Marker Technique was used to assess the presence of common method variance (Williams et al. 2010). Results suggest that the impact of error on the original estimates is probably limited.
3. Processing error	"Processing error tends to arise in postdata collection procedures such as data coding, editing, weighting construction, and estimation procedures" (Lee et al. 2012:88).	• Discussion of data cleaning process. • Discussion of the use of Likert scales and impact on statistical techniques. • VIF-test to assess multicollinearity. • Assess presence of outliers using Z-scores. • Use of scatterplots to assess linearity. • Analysis of missing data patterns. • Imputation of missing data at item level using EM missing value imputation. • Use of advanced techniques to test hypotheses (structural model—SEM).
4. Coverage error	"Coverage errors are a form of nonsampling error occurring when the target population and the sample frame(s) are mismatched in coverage" (Lee et al. 2012:89).	• Specification of target population and sampling frame. • Non-coverage (error) is not believed to be an issue, given that the sample frame mirrors the target population.

(*Continued*)

TABLE 2
Continued

Type of error	Definition	Used remedies and tests for potential errors in the data
5. Sampling error	"Sampling error arises when the entire target population, or universe, is not selected and decreases as the sample size increases (Lee et al. 2012:88).	• Sampling error is not believed to be an issue, given that the entire target population was included in the research design.
6. Nonresponse error	"Nonresponse error occurs when there are systematic differences in responses between respondents and total sampled persons" (Lee et al. 2012:88).	• Disclosure of response rates. • Statistical analysis of sample characteristics and population characteristics.
7. Inferential error	Deriving conclusions from the data which are not supported by the data of method of analysis.	• Discussion of endogeneity and the potential presence of omitted variables, measurement error, and simultaneous causality (Bascle 2008) in the limitations of the study.

issue were adopted (e.g., assessing item ambiguity by means of a pre-test). Third, next to a respondent's ability to provide a correct answer, a respondent's motivation to provide an accurate response has a large impact on the degree of measurement error (Podsakoff et al. 2012). Hence, based on the work of MacKenzie and Podsakoff (2012), information believed to increase a respondent's motivation to provide accurate measures was included in the survey (i.e., use of a detailed cover letter). Furthermore, the probability of socially desirable answers was decreased by only including items focusing on respondents' motivations, attitudes, and perceptions of work and organizations (in contrast to more personal or sensitive topics) and guaranteeing anonymity (Lee et al. 2012).

Although the selected *ex ante* procedural remedies are primarily aimed at minimizing shared method variance due to a respondent's consistency motifs, halo effect, and social desirability (MacKenzie and Podsakoff 2012), they are often not able to eliminate the presence of shared method variance. Hence, as an *ex post* measure, the CFA Marker Technique was used to assess the presence of common method bias and its impact on the original estimates (the selection process of the marker variable and the analyses are discussed in detail in Online Supplement 2). The CFA Marker Technique consists of three distinct phases (Williams, Hartman, and Cavazotte 2010). In Phase I, models are estimated and compared to obtain the factor loading and measurement error variance estimates (i.e., model comparisons). Phase II quantifies the amount of method variance associated with the measurement of the latent variables (i.e., reliability decomposition), while Phase III analyzes if "the method factor loadings lead to different conclusions about

the impact of marker-based method variance on factor correlations than the original estimates" (i.e., sensitivity analysis) (Williams et al. 2010:500). Applied to this study, Phase III indicates that, despite the manipulation of the method factor loadings, the introduction of method effects, and increasing the size of the method factor loadings, the correlations between the latent variables remain significant and relatively unchanged. Williams et al. (2010:500) argue that if the conclusions of the estimated models are not different, "concerns about [...] error associated with the original estimates are lessened."

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Prior to the actual data analysis, the collected data were (1) screened for coding errors; (2) re-coded when reverse coding had been used; and (3) checked for missing values. Missing values were dealt with by multiple imputation using the expectation maximization (EM) algorithm in SPSS Statistics 22.

Univariate and Bivariate Analysis

Table 3 depicts the univariate and bivariate statistics for the study's measures.

Multivariate Analysis

A latent variable model was employed to test the hypothesized relationships among the constructs of interest. The analysis followed a two-step approach (Anderson and Gerbing 1988) using Amos 21.

Step 1: The Measurement Model

A maximum likelihood estimation with bootstrapping (5000 bootstrap samples) was used to estimate a multi-factor measurement model aimed at assessing the fit of the measurement model to the data. The tested model has a normed Chi-square (chi-square/df) value of 2.2 ($\chi^2_{208} = 453.41$ ($p < .000$)), which is below the threshold of 3.00 and thus meets the criterion for acceptance (Kline 2005). Although a significant Chi-square test could indicate that the model is unacceptable, research indicated that (given its sensitivity to sample size) the Chi-square statistic nearly always rejects models based on large samples (x > 200) (Hair, Black, and Babin 2010; Hooper, Coughlan, and Mullen 2008). In such cases, the significant Chi square can be disregarded if the more sensitive fit statistics provide evidence of model fit. The tested model meets the required thresholds: CFI = .97, GFI = .94, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .04. Thresholds (for models with $N > 250$ and the number of observed variables between 12 and 30) are CFI ≥ .92, GFI ≥ .90, SRMR < .08, RMSEA < .07 (Hair et al. 2010).

After establishing an acceptable model fit, we tested the measurement model for construct, convergent, discriminant, and nomological validity. First, the proposed factor structure was supported (i.e., construct validity). The loading of each factor was significantly different from zero and nontrivial (absolute standardized loadings > .60). In addition, the factor loadings of the items are significantly related to their respective

TABLE 3
Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
			Correlations[a] and construct reliabilities in parentheses												
Study variables															
1. Top management	5.6	1.3	(.88)												
2. Supervisor	5.1	1.5	.45**	(.93)											
3. Co-workers	4.4	1.2	.52**	.52**	(.86)										
4. Goal clarity	5.7	1.2	.45**	.47**	.48**	(.85)									
5. PSM	5.4	1.0	.26**	.16**	.28**	.33**	(.74)								
6. Work impact	5.5	1.0	.40**	.27**	.28**	.41**	.36**	(.79)							
7. Mission valence	5.0	1.4	.49**	33**	49**	.54**	.46**	.48**	(.83)						
Control variables															
8. Gender[b]	–	–	−.07	−.01	−.05	.01	.01	−.04	−.02	(n.a.)					
9. Age	43	11	.05	−.04	−.04	.05	.20**	.13**	.02	−.08	(n.a.)				
10. Tenured[c]	–	–	.01	−.03	.03	.10*	.07	−.09*	−.04	.49**	.80**	(n.a.)			
11. Education[d]	–	–	−.12**	−.01	−.02	−.07	−.10*	−.09*	.24**	.04	−.06	−.04	(n.a.)		
12. Org. tenure	17	11	.01	−.06	−.07	.04	.13**	.17**	−.07	−.10*	.80**	.66**	−.05	(n.a.)	
13. Function[e]	–	–	−.12**	−.07	−.07	−.05	.04	.02	−.13**	.03	.00	.24**	.09*	.15**	(n.a)

Note: [a]All calculations are Pearson correlations.
[b]0 = female; 1 = male.
[c]0 = non tenured; 1 = tenured.
[d]1 = Master's degree; 2 = Bachelor's degree; 3 = High school degree.
[e]0 = Administrative or technical function; 1 = (para)medical function.
*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).
**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

constructs: the explained variance ranges from .38 to .84, while the average variance extracted and the construct reliability of each construct exceed the threshold of .50 and .60, respectively (Hair et al. 2010). Second, the significant size of the completely standardized factor loadings ([.62, .91], average $\lambda = .78$) provides evidence of convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981) Third, all constructs are believed to be discriminant-valid because the square root of variance extracted for each construct is greater than the correlations between the given construct and any other construct (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Moreover, multi-collinearity tests suggest that multi-collinearity is not an issue (the largest bivariate correlation (.65) is below the .85 threshold (Kenny 2012)). Fourth, nomological validity is expected because the correlations among the constructs are, as expected, all positive.

Step 2: The Structural Model

The significance and strength of the hypothesized effects were analyzed with MLE using bootstrapping (5000 bootstrap samples). The results indicate that the developed model is acceptable: $\chi^2 214 = 570.83$, $p < .000$, CFI = .95, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .06 (see Step 1 for cut-offs).

Given that the proposed model actually consists of three clusters of multiple mediations (socialization agents via goal clarity, PSM, and work impact on mission valence), the validity of the model was further analyzed using the phantom model approach (Ledermann and Kenny 2012). The phantom model approach provides an antidote for the fact that some SEM programs (including AMOS) are not able to test specific indirect effects because it allows for the estimation of specific indirect effects and associated confidence intervals nested within complex multi-mediation path analytic models (Sweet, Ginis, and Tomasone 2013). More specifically, the phantom method involves "creating a separate latent variable model (i.e., the phantom model) that represents the specific effect to be tested as a total effect" (Fenton et al. 2014:456). Once the necessary phantom models are created, bootstrap bias corrected confidence intervals (5000 samples) are used to determine the significance of the specific effects: where the confidence interval does not cross zero, a significant indirect effect is assumed (Preacher and Hayes 2008). Because the phantom approach does not allow the estimation of standardized effects, unstandardized effect sizes are reported (Fenton et al. 2014). Table 2 reports the results of the conducted multiple-mediation tests, including both direct and indirect effects (Ledermann and Kenny 2012; Preacher and Hayes 2008).

The results listed in Table 4 confirm that there is a significant multiple mediation effect between top management and mission valence. More specifically, the findings indicate that public service motivation, goal clarity, and work impact partially mediate the relationship between top management and mission valence (95% bias-corrected bootstrap CI: indirect effects from large to small: goal clarity [.063, .218], $p < .001$; public service motivation [.036, .202], $p < .001$; work impact [.048, .196], $p < .001$; and direct effect of top management on mission valence 0.223 [.077, .318], $p < .001$). These findings support Hypotheses 1 through 3. With respect to the potential socialization impact of direct supervisors, the results offer support for Hypothesis 4 and suggest that goal clarity mediates the

TABLE 4
Unstandardized Estimates and Confidence Interval Limits for the Phantom Mediation Tests

	Direct effect			*Indirect effect*			*Total effect*		
Path	*b(SE)*	*95% CI*	*Sign.*	*b(SE)*	*95% CI*	*Sign.*	*b(SE)*	*95% CI*	*Sign.*
Top mgt. → Goal clarity → Mission valence	.223 (.07)	[.088, .373]	.001	.127 (.04)	[.063, .218]	.000	.453 (.09)	[.298, .642]	.000
Top mgt. → PSM → Mission valence	.223 (.07)	[.088, .373]	.001	.107 (.04)	[.036, .202]	.000	.453 (.09)	[.298, .642]	.000
Top mgt. → Work impact → Mission valence	.223 (.07)	[.088, .373]	.001	.103 (.04)	[.048, .196]	.000	.453 (.09)	[.298, .642]	.000
Co-workers → Goal clarity → Mission valence	.114 (.06)	[.000, .232]	.050	.110 (.03)	[.055, .182]	.000	.314 (.07)	[.173, .451]	.000
Co-workers → PSM → Mission valence	.114 (.06)	[.000, .232]	.050	.111 (.04)	[.048, .194]	.000	.314 (.07)	[.173, .451]	.000
Co-workers → Work impact→ Mission valence	.114 (.06)	[.000, .232]	.050	.060 (.03)	[.016, .130]	.006	.314 (.07)	[.173, .451]	.000
Supervisor → Goal clarity→ Mission valence	−.074 (.04)	[−.154, .012]	.094	.079 (.02)	[.044, .124]	.000	.036 (.03)	[−.022, .102]	.210
Supervisor → PSM → Mission valence	−.074 (.04)	[−.154, .012]	.094	−.030 (.02)	[−.078, .009]	.132	.036 (.03)	[−.022, .102]	.210
Supervisor → Work impact → Mission valence	−.074 (.04)	[−.154, .012]	.094	.006 (01)	[−.025, .036]	.652	.036 (.03)	[−.022, .102]	.210

relationship between supervisor and mission valence (indirect effect: .079, [.044, .124], $p < .001$), but do not confirm Hypothesis 5 (supervisor → PSM → mission valence) and Hypothesis 6 (supervisor → work impact → mission valence). In addition, the model also supports Hypotheses 7 through 9: public service motivation, goal clarity, and work impact partially mediate the relationship between co-worker and mission valence (95% bias-corrected bootstrap CI: indirect effects from large to small: public service motivation [.048, .194], $p < .001$; goal clarity [.055, .182], $p < .001$; work impact [.016, .130], $p < .01$; and direct effect of co-worker on mission valence 0.114, [.000, .232], $p < .050$.

Given the identified partial mediations, the hypothesized structural model was extended with a direct effect of top management and co-worker value communication on mission valence. The model fit indexes suggest that the revised structural model was accurate: CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .06, $\chi^2 212 = 540.87$, $p < .000$) and (marginally) outperforms the original model. Figure 2 presents the parameter estimates for the final structural model as standardized regression weights (in order to allow comparisons with the results of previous studies) and the explained variance of the endogenous variables.

Except for two relationships (i.e., supervisor → PSM and supervisor → perceived work impact), the path coefficients of the hypothesized relationships are significant ($p \leq .05$), non-trivial (absolute values >.10), and have the expected sign. The developed model is able to explain 63% of the variance in mission valence. A score which, at first glance, seems very high is consistent with the results of a previously tested model using the same

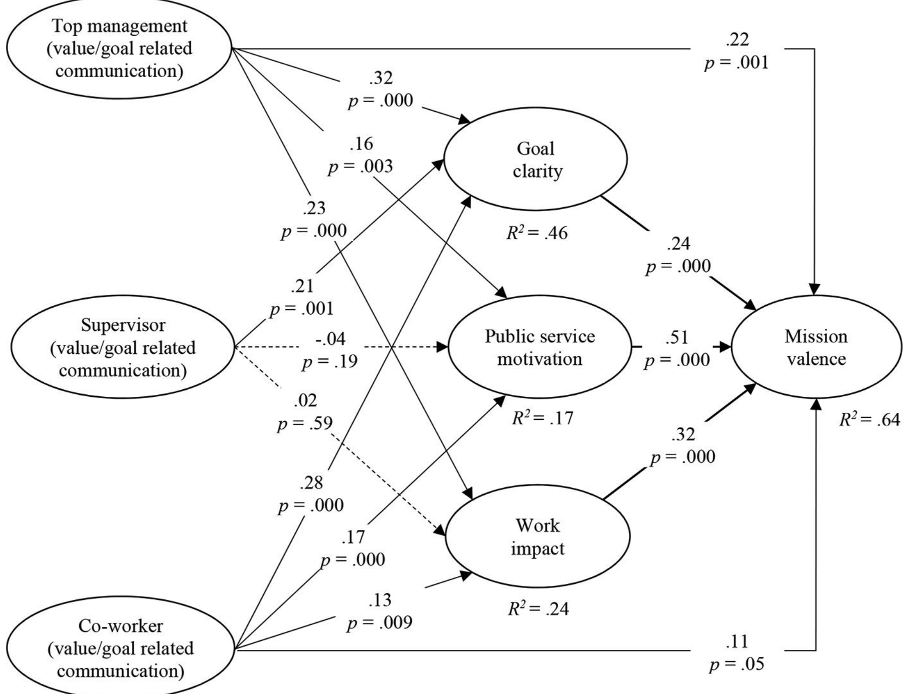

Figure 2. Final Structural Model.

antecedents which was able to explain 62% of the variance in reported mission valence (Wright and Pandey 2011). Furthermore, the results indicate that including the effect of organizational socialization agents in the model helps to gain insight into the drivers of mission valence. More specifically, the variables used to measure social influence explain 46%, 17%, and 24% of the variance in goal clarity, PSM, and perceived work impact, respectively.

DISCUSSION

This article has two objectives. First of all, it tests the external validity of previous research by analyzing the relationship between PSM, goal clarity, work impact, and mission valence using a sample of lower-level employees. Second, the theoretical model extends previous work by examining the relationship between the cited antecedents and multiple sources of socializing influence in attempt to shed light on how organizational context and mission valence are related.

With respect to the first goal, the study results lend credibility to Wright et al.'s (2012) claim that position in an organizational hierarchy is not likely to influence the relationship between mission valence and the selected antecedents. As a result, the available knowledge on the relationship between mission valence and its drivers, which is primarily derived from samples of senior managers (Wright et al. 2012; Wright and Pandey 2011) and mixed samples (Caillier 2015), is probably valid for all employees, regardless of organizational position.

However, although the study results confirm the significance of the relationships between mission valence and the hypothesized antecedents, dissimilarities in effect sizes can be noted. Research based on samples of senior managers indicates that goal clarity is the dominant predictor of mission valence ($\beta = .68$ and $\beta = .54$, respectively) and assigns a supplementary role to PSM ($\beta = .15$ and $\beta = .33$, respectively) and work impact ($\beta = .16$) (Wright et al. 2012; Wright and Pandey 2011). In contrast, the data from non-managerial employees deem PSM to be the dominant predictor of mission valence ($\beta = .51$), followed by work impact ($\beta = .33$), and attribute slightly less relevance to goal clarity ($\beta = .24$). The results thus suggest that the impact of the selected mission valence predictors varies according to a respondent's position in the organizational hierarchy, a difference which might be explained by the high level of interpretive leeway that often characterizes organizational goals (Chun and Rainey 2005). Organizational goals are normally formulated at an abstract level (e.g., "delivering the highest possible quality" and "serving the community"), which means that organizational members need to engage in sense-making processes to enable cognitive elaboration and refinement of these abstract goals (Gioia and Chittepeddi 1991). Given their responsibilities, managers have more access to information about the organization's mission and are given more opportunities to engage in cognitive elaboration via two-way communication than lower-level employees (Desmidt 2016). In addition, it could be that the content of organizational goals has a different motivational impact on managers than lower-level employees. In many public organizations, often due to NPM reforms, business-like values (e.g., higher levels of accountability and an

increased emphasis on performance) have become more prominent in the organization's mission (Vigoda-Gadot 2008). Consequently, it could be that the detected differences between managers and non-managers are rooted in a different form of value congruence. While managers could be more motivated by those business-like organizational goals, lower-level employees could be more driven by the social and nurturing goals of the organization (as reflected in PSM) and the opportunity "to make a positive difference in the health, safety, and well-being of individuals, groups, and communities" (i.e., work impact) (Grant 2008:49), a perspective which aligns with Paarlberg and Perry's (2007) comment that employees are not merely motivated by the values of the organization, but by broad societal and cultural values. Hence, future research should not only focus on goal clarity, but also goal content, as well as the potential negative effect of value conflict on mission valence.

The second goal of the article was to examine mission valence from a socialization perspective and shed more light on how organizational settings act as mechanisms for imparting a value-based culture. The study results indicate that value-laden interactions with organizational socialization agents are related to internalizing those values and a motivation to contribute to their realization. The results not only confirm the importance of incorporating the institutional setting when analyzing mission valence (Moynihan and Pandey 2008), but also provide further proof for an institutional theory of PSM (Vandenabeele 2014). With regard to those organizational socialization agents, the study results support the assumption that value-laden communication with different organizational socialization agents can play a distinctive role in crafting PSM and a mission-based culture (Vandenabeele 2011). Hence, focusing on a specific socialization agent or using a general socialization construct which amalgamates socialization sources could be misleading (Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg 2003).

Besides providing evidence for the importance of the institutional setting, the study results also create insights into the possible mechanisms through which organizational socialization agents impact organizational members. Research by Pandey et al. (2016) indicates that organizational socialization agents can influence the use of values and activate higher-order goals using a direct (infusion) and/or an indirect (convince others) pathway. When using the direct pathway, organizational socialization agents raise the attractiveness of broader social and organizational priorities by articulating an appealing vision for the organization (inspirational motivation) and acting as a role model (idealized influence) (Pandey et al. 2016). In the case of the indirect pathway, the same transformational behaviors create "favorable conditions for accentuating the positive relationship between employee beliefs and work-related outcomes" (Pandey et al. 2016:210). The results suggest that different organizational socialization sources impact organizational members through different (combinations of) pathways.

First of all, the total effect of top managers on mission valence seems to be the largest, given that they use an indirect pathway (mediation of goal clarity, PSM, and work impact) in combination with a relatively strong direct pathway (direct relationship between value-based interaction and mission valence) to impact organizational members. The relatively strong direct pathway effect can probably be explained by the fact that articulating and embodying the organization's mission and values are inherent parts of their function. Consequently, the results suggest that value-laden interaction with top managers has

the ability to directly impact mission valence, a finding which diverges from previous research (using a sample of senior managers) indicating that "transformational leadership does not have a direct relationship with mission valence but operates through other factors" (i.e., the indirect path) (Wright et al. 2012:212). Further research is needed to provide insights into the identified difference. Simons et al. (2007), for example, stress the importance of managerial word-deed alignment and indicate that a lack of perceived alignment decreases a managers' credibility. It could be that a higher frequency of interactions between top managers and senior managers provides senior managers with more opportunities to identify inconsistencies, which decreases both the attractiveness of top management's communication and its direct impact on mission valence.

In addition, and in accordance with the findings of Wright et al. (2012), the results provide support for the indirect pathway by suggesting that top managers displaying transformational qualities create favorable conditions to strengthen mission valence. More specifically, the findings suggest that value-laden interaction with top managers energizes employees about the importance of their work by clarifying organizational goals, linking employees' work to these organizational goals, and nurturing PSM (Paarlberg and Lavigna 2010; Vandenabeele 2011).

Despite existing research's predominant focus on the impact of top managers, the results indicate that value-laden communication with co-workers has roughly the same impact. These findings reflect the small-group socialization perspective which "de-emphasizes the organization and focuses on how individuals learn from those occupying similar roles" (Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg 2003:783). First of all, the findings indicate that top managers are not the only socialization agent "set[ting] the table for success by shaping key mediating variables" (Moynihan et al. 2012:142); interaction with co-workers impacts PSM, goal clarity and, to a lesser degree, work impact. Second, value-laden interaction with co-workers also has a direct effect on mission valence, albeit smaller than the effect of top managers.

A third organizational socialization agent, namely direct supervisors, seems to be less successful at influencing mission valence. There is no direct pathway from value-laden interaction with supervisors to mission valence, and the indirect pathway is only significant for goal clarity. These results suggest that direct supervisors provide information about the organizational goals but do not succeed in motivating employees to contribute to them or clarifying how these goals are related to individual jobs. These findings are surprising, given that direct supervisors are expected to act as an intermediary level between the organization and the employee. In addition, these findings conflict with previous research indicating that supervisors can act as promotors of organizational values, provide meaning to actions and, as such, influence PSM (Vandenabeele 2014). An explanation for these findings could lie in the fact that supervisors are, in some organizations, perceived as being "duty-bound" to advance organizational goals, which hampers discussion and interaction. In addition, in some organizations employees feel uncomfortable discussing organizational policies, issues, or decisions with supervisors out of fear of damaging one's image or being labelled in a negative manner (Milliken, Morrison, and Hewlin 2003). Consequently, although the results seem to lend support to the assumption that the often-adopted "cascade" mechanism whereby top management communicates strategy and values only to middle managers and depends on them to disseminate it to frontline workers is flawed

(Galunic and Hermreck 2012), future research on the impact of value-laden interaction with direct supervisors is warranted, as well as on how study design characteristics might provide a potential explanation for these conflicting results.

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The study addresses the call from Wright and Pandey (2011) for more research on the drivers of mission valence by not only testing the external validity of existing research findings, but also extending its scope by examining the issue from a socialization perspective. As such, it counterbalances the fact that public management research has often neglected to use intra-organizational interaction as a mechanism for shaping and imparting a mission-based culture (Garnett et al. 2008; Pandey and Garnett 2006). The results confirm the presumed importance of incorporating the institutional setting when analyzing mission valence (Moynihan and Pandey 2008) and provide further proof for an institutional theory of PSM (Vandenabeele 2014) by highlighting that different organizational socialization agents could play a distinctive role in crafting PSM and a mission-based culture (Vandenabeele 2011).

Although the study results complement the existing knowledge base, we would like to stress that the results of any single study based on cross-sectional survey data should be interpreted with caution. Even if researchers would be able to collect error-free survey data (see Online Supplement 1 for a detailed discussion), one can still draw wrong conclusions from the data. Consequently, it needs to be stressed that, given the characteristics of the selected research design, the presence of endogeneity is always a risk. Although endogeneity can have a myriad of sources, the following instances are often discussed in the literature (Bascle 2008):

- "Omitted-variable bias arises when an omitted—or latent factor—exists which both affects the dependent variable and is correlated with one or more explanatory variables" (Clougherty, Duso, and Muck 2016:287). Given that there are no direct tests to determine whether there is an omitted variable (Antonakis et al. 2014), the presence of omitted-variable bias cannot be ruled out.
- Measurement error can render estimates inconsistent and impede accurate inferences. Although various measures have been taken to minimize the impact of measurement error, the selected data analysis method is viewed as "the method of choice for treating measurement error in latent constructs with multiple indicators" (Antonakis et al. 2014:98), and the applied CFA Marker Technique indicates that substantial measurement error is absent, the study results should be interpreted with caution.
- "Simultaneous causality occurs when the causality runs in both directions: from the regressor(s) to the dependent variable and from the dependent variable to the regressor(s)" (Bascle 2008:291), and cannot be controlled in a cross-sectional-survey design. Consequently, although the implied directions of the relationships in the developed models are strongly rooted in the appropriate literature, simultaneous causality could be a threat to the internal validity of the study results.

With respect to the external validity of the study, we need to stress that data were collected in one organization. Although we focused on analyzing relationships on an

individual level and the examined organization is probably, to a large extent, representative of large public organizations, organizational characteristics such as the degree of bureaucracy, communication climate, and functional area could influence the results (Moynihan and Pandey 2007). We thus advise readers to interpret the study results with some caution, as future research should use samples from multiple organizations to assure generalizability and analyze the examined relationships in different organizational settings.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Supplemental data for this article can be accessed at the publisher's website.

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APPENDIX

Promotion of organizational values and future: Top management team

- The organization's top management clearly articulates its vision of the future.
- The organization's top management leads by setting a good example.
- The organization's top management says things that make employees proud to be part of the organization.
- The organization's top management has a clear sense of where our organization should be in 5 years.

Promotion of organizational values and future: Supervisor

- My supervisor provides me with information about the organization's vision of the future.
- My supervisor sets a good example.
- My supervisor provides me with information which makes me proud to be part of this organization.
- My supervisor provides me with information of where our organization should be in 5 years.

Promotion of organizational values and future: Co-workers

- My co-workers provide me with information about the organization's vision of the future.
- My co-workers set a good example.
- My co-workers provide me with information of where our organization should be in 5 years.
- My co-workers provide me with information which makes me proud to be part of this organization.

Goal clarity

- It is easy to explain the goals of this organization to outsiders.
- This organization's mission is clear to everyone who works here.
- This organization has clearly defined goals.

Public service motivation

- Meaningful public service is very important to me.
- I am often reminded by daily events about how dependent we are on one another.
- Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements.
- I am prepared to make sacrifices for the good of society.
- I am not afraid to go to bat for the rights of others even if it means I will be ridiculed.

Work impact

- I can see how my work contributes to the performance of my work unit.
- I can see how my work contributes to the performance of my organization.
- I can see how my work contributes to meeting the needs of external clients & organizations.

Mission valence

- This organization provides valuable public services.
- I believe that the priorities of this organization are quite important.