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Elements in Public and Nonprofit Administration

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PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION AND PUBLIC OPINION

*Examining Antecedents
and Attitudes*

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-96400-5 — Public Service Motivation and Public Opinion
Jaclyn S. Piatak, Stephen B. Holt
Frontmatter
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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108964005

DOI: 10.1017/9781108966672

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First published 2021

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-108-96400-5 Paperback

ISSN 2515-4303 (online)

ISSN 2515-429X (print)

Additional resources for this publication at www.cambridge.org/piatak

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Public Service Motivation and Public Opinion

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DOI: 10.1017/9781108966672
First published online: February 2021

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Abstract: Practitioners, policy makers, and scholars across fields and disciplines seek to understand factors that shape public opinion and public service values, especially in today's polarized context. Yet we know little about how the two relate. Research on public service motivation (PSM), a drive to help others grounded in public institutions, has grown to examine career decisions and behaviors within and outside the workplace, but does the influence of PSM extend to individual values? Using data from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study surrounding the 2016 US presidential election, we first examine the antecedents of PSM: How do individual characteristics as well as socioeconomic and sociocultural factors influence levels of PSM? Second, we describe the role PSM plays in shaping public opinion on policy preferences, budget priorities, and political behaviors. Findings have implications for understanding both who has PSM as well as how PSM shapes public preferences, attitudes, and behaviors.

Keywords: PSM antecedents, public opinion, public service motivation, policy preferences, political participation

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ISBNs: 9781108964005 (PB), 9781108966672 (OC)

ISSNs: 2515-4303 (online), 2515-429X (print)

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