

**Public Service Motivation, from a pure public administration phenomenon
to a universal behavior, beyond public–private divides.
A new theoretical perspective**

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Abstract

The issue of motivations and incentives of public agents has become again crucial as the New Public Management is being even more questioned. Public service motivation, an old concept from the public administration science, has recently generated a keen interest in the economic literature. However, these two strands of literature have so far completely ignored each other. This paper is the first one that attempts to merge these two strands of literature by drawing from the seminal works of Le Grand (2003), Bénabou and Tirole (2002, 2003, 2006, 2007) and Fehr (2003, 2004, 2006) an enriched concept of public service motivation with broad implications for improving public agents performance.

Keywords: public service motivation, pro-social behavior, altruism, worker motivation, incentives.

JEL codes: D11, D64, H11, J45, Z13

1. Introduction

The question of work motivation in public sector is not new, but it is more and more of a high interest, mostly today when governments are facing new and complex situations. Economic crises, public debts, budget cuttings, and the increased necessity to offer public services efficiently, made the tasks of public administration looking as herculean ones.

The wave of New Public Management in the 1980s brought a lot of hopes, promises which failed to offer satisfactory solutions. By transferring management strategies and skills from private sector, the New Public Management holds the promise of the efficiency in the provision of public services. After more than 30s years of implementation of New Public Management the results are very controversial. The monetary incentives system, a copy-past from private organizations and applied to public managers did not succeed to become a stable solution to the exigency of efficiency, more the implementation of this approach had a negative impact on public service motivation. The crowding out effect of monetary incentives on intrinsic motivation was pointed out for the first time in 1970 by Richard Titmuss. He defended the idea that monetary compensation will reduce the supply of blood donors. Many experiments confirmed the phenomenon of crowding out of intrinsic motivation by monetary incentives (Frey and Oberholzer-Gee, 1997, offer the first econometric test and experimental account of this effect), and there are many formalized approaches (Bénabou and Tirole, 2003, 2006, Fehr and Schmidt 2006, Delfgaauw and Dur 2007,etc) that account for intrinsic motivations or pro-social behaviors of individuals.

Will Hutton, the former chief executive of the Work Foundation in UK, says in the interim results on his review into the public salaries presented last December in *Management Today*, that “private sector enthusiasm to attract the best talent over the past years has sent the pay in the public sector rocketing just to keep up.” In fact, as public administrations competed with multinational business on the job market in order to attract the best talent, the only way for them to succeed in was to offer better salaries conditions. However, in the current context of huge public deficits, it is no more possible for public administrations to increase salaries. Hence, the necessity to find other levers in attracting and motivating talented people to work in public administration becomes crucial.

In this paper, we show how the concept of Public Service Motivation, enriched by the behavioral economic approach of altruism, can be a useful means of motivating employees engaged in the provision of public services. The originality of the paper consists in merging two strands of literature that have so far neglected one another, namely the traditional approach of public service motivation and behavioral economics on altruism. The paper is structured as follows. In the first part, we come back on the concept of Public Service Motivation developed by the public administration science in the 1990’s and on the negative impact of public management reforms in the last 30s years on PSM, highlighting the necessity to draw on behavioral economics approach to enrich this concept. In the second part, we focus

on the seminal works of Le Grand (2003), Bénabou and Tirole (2002, 2003, 2006, 2007) and Fehr (2003, 2004, 2006) to highlight the implications of their works on the theory of Public Service Motivation. In a third part, we deliver some theoretical conclusions and practical propositions concerning the concept of public service motivation and its implementation in daily management practices.

2. Public Service Motivation as a concept of the public administration science

2.1. The concept of Public Service Motivation (PSM)

The inaugural speech addressed by John F. Kennedy on January 20th 1961, “Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country” is like an emblem for the concept of public service motivation. According to some authors (Perry and Hondeghem, 2008), the questioning on the civil servants’ motivation can be dated up to the 19th century going back up to Tocqueville 1859. But the birth of the concept of PSM in the American tradition is much more recent. Staas (1988) is one of the first high officials in American administration talking about the concept of PSM and about the necessity to find a revival of the interest of public opinion for public services.

PSM is interesting not only for officials and professionals of American public administration but also for scholars. The academic research on public administration starts early to talk about a specific service ethic of public employment (Buchanan B., 1975, Rainey H.G., 1982), about a specific motivation for public service (Perry and Porter, 1982, Perry and Wise, 1990). All these studies are at the beginning of a new wave of research that has never stopped evolving ever since. There were two fundamental aspects that influenced the development of academic research on PSM. On the one hand, the public opinion was expressing more and more a lack of confidence in the government (the Public Choice School gave grounds to this trend), and, as a consequence, a lack of interest for public services; on the other hand, there was the necessity for the government to do more with less, reflecting a growing inefficiency of the public services and a general dissatisfaction of those benefiting from public services.

The origin of the concept of PSM is hard to identify, but we can say without hesitation that it has its roots in the studies trying to capture “the service ethic” of public managers (e.g. Buchanan 1975, Rainey 1982). It is in the article of Rainey (1982) where we find for the first

time the expression of Public Service Motivation (p. 289), and based on his work, Perry and Wise (1990) give the first classical definition of PSM :

“Public service motivation can be understood as an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations”.

A wave of academic research followed these studies. Crewson (1997), Brewer and Selden (1998), offer more general definition of PSM considered as being a force urging people to realize things that are determinant for the public, for a community, underlining its behavioral impact and its applicability beyond/above the public domain:

“The idea of civil servants acting on motives of duty and self-sacrifice promotes a positive image of the public service. In all likelihood, citizens would view civil servants more favorably if these motives were cultivated and championed. Unfortunately, this promise is not being fulfilled. PSM has not been advanced as a legitimating strategy for public administration, and it has not received careful, sustained attention in the public service or the academy.” (Brewer and Selden, 1998)

Rainey and Steinbauer (1999), by using the metaphor of elephants galloping very fast in spite of their big size and heavy weight, develop a theory of effective government organizations where the concept of PSM is central in the construction of effectiveness and receives the following definition: *“Public service motivation can be defined as a general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation, or humankind.”*

The common topic to all these definitions is the interest in others and behaving in such a way as to serve others.

2.2. PSM and the Theories of Motivation¹

Based on an analyze made by Shamir(1991), Perry (2000) sets forth a criticism of the theories of motivation² from the psychology field, unable to explain certain phenomena (e.g. public service motivation) which are present mainly in public field as well as within nonprofit organizations. The other weaknesses of motivation theories highlighted by Perry (2000) are

¹ We present here the point of view of Perry (2000) as being representative for public administration research on PSM, without taking position vis-à-vis of his conclusions.

² For an extended presentation of theories of work motivation see chapter 6 “Work motivation and satisfaction”, in *The psychology of behavior at work* by A.Furham, 2005. We find one of the first accounts on work motivation in a collective book by Kleinbeck U. et all. from 1990,*Work Motivation*, Hove and London, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

their inability to distinguish between different categories of behavior (the immediate vs. the long-term, general vs. specific, discreet vs. continuum) as well as the fact that moral values and obligations are not comprised in the intrinsic motivation. This makes necessary to propose an alternative to these theories, able to take into account a larger spectrum of behavior and therefore of motivations. This is what Perry (2000) proposes to do. There are four premises constituting the pillars of his new proposition³: 1. Rational, normative and affective processes motivate humans, 2. People are motivated by the image they have about themselves, 3. Preferences or values should be endogenous to all motivation theory, and 4. Preferences are learnt during social processes.

Perry's theory can be described as a circle beginning by asserting that preferences are learnt during social processes, thus the society creates values; considering the role of the government and of the public sector in general as sources of values, it is the latter that has to create and to promote a repertoire of behaviors and afterwards, in order to close the circle, to take them into consideration and privilege them. Given the attention paid on the one hand to pro-social behavior and on the other hand to the motivation for the public service, Perry proposes a new paradigm in the motivation domain allowing to identify the most capable people and the most wanted/desirable to work in the public sector.

2.3. The limits of the current research on PSM

As we have shown, important theoretical and empirical studies in public administration triggered the PSM concept and its dimensions. A brief aperçu of this research let us acknowledge that even after more than twenty years of research, there is room, and there is necessity for improvements, mostly concerning the theoretical foundations of the concept and the scale of measurement of the public service motivation. This statement is supported by many authors (from one of the first articles by Rainey (1982) to those last ones by Vandenberghe (2007, 2009) who mention that the complexity of the concept of PSM obliges scholars from public administration field to enrich their studies by using insights from psychology, social psychology and behavioral economics, which also study pro-social behavior and motivation.

If the difficulty of the concept of PSM obliges scholars from public administration field to look to other fields, there are also two reasons for this trend.

³ Actually only the first premise is originally suggested by Perry, all the other premises were underlined by many other authors. (Bénabou, Tirole, Le Grand, etc.)

First of all, altruistic motivation and behavior are not at all the appendage of employees of public administration, and secondly this behavior is largely studied in other fields, as psychology, behavioral economics, etc.

At this stage of the approach it becomes of high importance to deliver our understanding of the phenomenon of PSM and to explicit the way we use the terminology concerning PSM. As we may see from the definitions presented below, we have a pallet of expressions like “Individual predisposition”, “Motives of duty and self-sacrifice”, “general altruistic motivation”. These definitions do not cover the same area, and thus do not refer to same phenomenon. Between a PSM which is *a predisposition to work almost exclusively in public institutions* and a PSM which is *a general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation, or human kind* there is obviously a great difference, in the first case the frontier at the phenomenon of PSM is sketch by public institutions, in the second case the frontier delimiting the phenomenon of PSM is the state or the human kind, the reference to public institutions is in this case largely exceeded.

We can easily see that there is a kind of confusion about these definitions, which do not stop to evolve and to change. In plus, there are two terminologies that we find in studies on PSM, altruistic motivation & behavior and pro-social behavior. We have to look inside this terminologies to understand exactly what each of them uncovers and if they overlap each over⁴.

Our own perspective privileges a practical anchorage and take into account the elements underlined by the previous approaches. In our view PSM is a specific form of altruistic motivation and behavior. Altruistic motivation & behavior⁵ is an universal phenomenon that we can acknowledge in all times, in all cultures and in all kind of human organizations. In this case, how we situate the PSM? Actually, this universal altruistic motivation and behavior can take a variety of forms, thus for us the PSM is one of these forms expressed mostly by the preference that some people might have to choose to work in public administration in order to fulfill their altruistic motivation and behavior. How can we briefly describe an altruistic motivation & behavior? A general acceptance is that altruistic motivation & behavior benefits to another person and induces a cost to the altruist person.

⁴ It is fundamental to have a deep and large analysis in this sense, without which we cannot have a clear understanding of PSM and its relationship to others pro-social motivational and behavioral patterns.

⁵ We do not discuss here the articulation between altruistic *motivation* and altruistic *behavior*, we consider necessary this discussion, and we will develop it in a next study. See too Elster 2006 for this debate.

Another strand of literature studying PSM is using the concept of pro-social behavior (e.g. Gregg et al 2008). Again we have to clarify the conceptual articulation between pro-social motivation & behavior and PSM. Gregg et al (2008) define pro-social behavior as “helpful behavior intended to benefit other people unmotivated by professional obligations” and continue like this “*We draw a standard distinction between actions that agents may take as a consequence of their other-regarding preferences and the characteristic of the preferences. We use the term other –regarding, pro-social motivation, and public service motivation to refer to characteristics of agents’ preferences (see, for example, François and Vlassopoulos, 2008), whereas pro-social behavior and donated labor describe actions that agents take. Donated labor is essentially pro-social behavior in the specific labor market context.*”

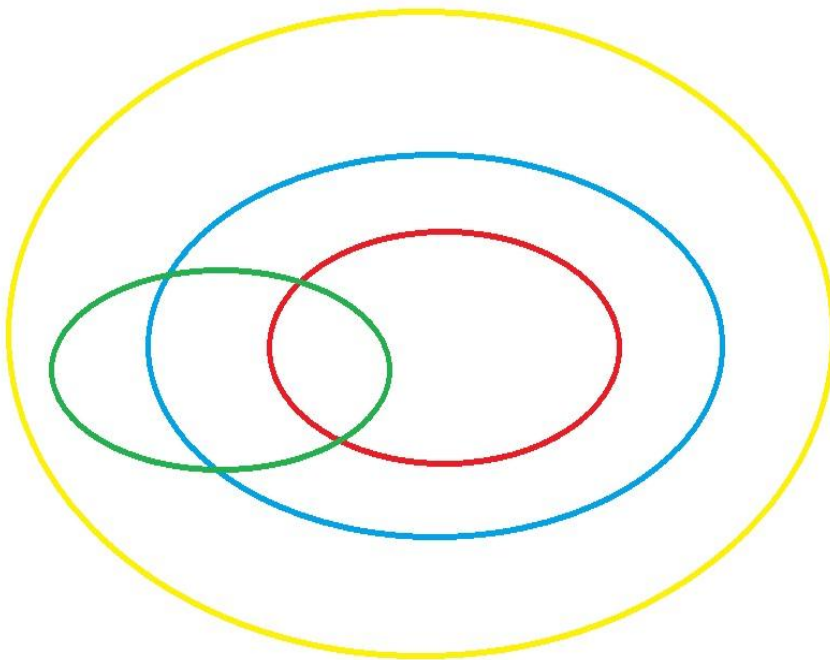
What is interesting in the definition of Gregg et al (2008) is that this helpful behavior unmotivated by professional obligations does not imply a costly effort. While the studies they use in this paper, mostly that of François (2000) and that of Besley and Ghatak (2005) talk about altruism and costly effort. The first question which arises is the following one: do we have to consider that pro-social motivation & behavior is identical to altruistic motivation & behavior? If we consider the definition they give in note 1, no, we cannot equate pro-social behavior with altruistic motivation & behavior because costly effort is absent from their definition. In the paper, they equate pro-social behavior with donated labor, measured by unpaid overtime, which is actually a costly effort, thus an altruistic behavior. In the article of François and Vlasopoulos (2008) that Gregg et al quote, pro-social motivation and altruism are used as they have the same meaning. As we can see these terminologies are interchangeable but this is not the case in all studies on pro-social behavior (see Hans.-Werner Bierhoff, 2002).

For analytical reasons it seems to us that it is necessary to specify clearly about what kind of motivation and behavior we talk about and what uncover these concepts and where we situate PSM on the map of these kinds of motivations & behaviors.

In his book *Prosocial behaviour*, Hans-Werner Bierhoff (2002) offers a classification of prosocial behaviors starting by a large category called helping behavior which can include service sector, followed by prosocial behavior which excludes service sector and altruistic behavior based mainly on empathy. In his view, the prosocial behavior can include a mix of egoistically and altruistically motivated behavior while altruistic behavior has as final objective to benefit the receiver in order to improve only his situation without any benefice

for the donor. The pro-social behavior is analyzed along with 4 dimensions: planned versus spontaneous behavior, serious problem versus non serious problem, giving versus doing, personal help versus anonymous help.

This classification does not help us more, as public service motivation is a phenomenon we analyze in a work context. But we can try to draw a map of helping behavior which includes public service motivation⁶.



Let's have the biggest circle, the yellow one, to be a general helping behavior that we observe in society, a natural tendency that people have to help somebody in need, the main characteristic of this helping behavior is that it is a more reactive than an active one and imply no cost or very low cost for the helper. Reactive means it is spontaneous, in response to an external impulse (e.g. seeing somebody falling down and helping him to stand up), and active one means planned, as result of a personal desire to help people. The second circle, the blue one, is that of prosocial behavior which is more active than reactive and supposes a higher cost for the helper, and third one, in red represents altruistic behavior which is also more reactive than active and the cost is very high, sometimes the helper lose even his life.

⁶ We will develop in a next paper this proposition, but we deliver here the big lines of understanding of public service motivation in order to take better advantage on the contributions we will present here after.

So where do we can situate public service motivation on this map? For doing that the best thing is to imagine a nurse, or a policeman, or a teacher in their daily work life? What we can intuitively observe is that public service motivation is a mixed of all these behaviors and we represented by a green circle traversing and cumulating these three kinds of helping behavior.

Starting from this scheme when we analyze PSM we will be careful to identify the cost or /and the opportunity cost, and its measure will help us to see if we are in the presence of an pro social behavior or altruistic behavior.

Before going further let's go back to the definition of Gregg et al (2008) where the term "preferences" is used several times. We attire the attention that the concept of *preferences* is very complex, and bear different meanings and in economic theory it raise very important debates. Amartya Sen consecrated a large part of his work in analyzing the concept of preferences and its use in behavioral approach and the problems engendered by the fact that the concept of preference by its dual link with choice (behavior) and with welfare, lead to misinterpretations. So, before using the term "preference" in the context of pro-social behavior we have to ensure that the critics raised up by Amartya Sen (1973) are taken into account. Another important debate is about how we define self-interest and how we define altruism and the impact that these understandings have both for economic analysis and for welfare economics. Here again Amartya Sen (1987) offers profound comments in his book *On Ethics and Economics* : " It is worth commenting – at risk of laboring the obvious - that to deny that people always behave in an exclusively self-interested way is not the same as asserting that they always act selflessly. ... The real issue is whether there is a plurality of motivations, or whether self-interest alone drives human beings".

It is not the objective of this paper to deliver a discussion on the definition of self-interest and the importance that this definition has for public service motivation theory. We just underline de idea developed by Sen (1987) that the reduction of the economic behavior to a self-interested one leads to a distance between economics and ethics, with as consequence "a weakening of the reach and relevance of welfare economic itself." This analyze is of high interest for our subject because one of the major topic linked to altruistic motivation and behavior is that of incentives (dressed up mostly at the shadow of self-interest perspective) and the response of incentives of people pro-social motivated.

As a matter of fact, one of the most important topics related to PSM is that of incentives (Dixit 2000), generally of preference rewards (Rainey 1982, Burgess and Rato 2003, Gürek et

al. 2009, Besley and Ghatak 2003, 2005) used in order to stimulate motivation. The economists have an original way to analyze the impact of incentives on pro-social behavior, our objective is then to offer to the concept of public service motivation the chance to take advantage on the economic approach.

The authors we will present in the following part, inspired by social psychology and behavioral economics, treat in an extensive way the role and the impact of incentives on altruistic behavior and offer many results and proofs of great importance for PSM.

3. Altruism in economic research and PSM

The objective of this part is to present the seminal works of Legrand (2003), Bénabou and Tirole (2002, 2003, 2006, 2007) and Fehr (2003, 2004, 2006) and to show, first at the theoretical level, how the theory of PSM can be illuminated by their works, and at a practical level, how public&private managers can apply some of their findings in order to improve daily management practice.

Before going further it is necessary to ask some relevant questions about our approach. Why have we chosen these works and what do they have in common and how they complete each other? They have in common some features which depart them from the traditional way of studying PSM. First of all they discuss in a detailed way about the role of incentives and rewards in analyzing the altruistic behavior and, secondly they implement an economic and behavioral approach of the phenomenon of altruistic behavior. While the main objective of public administration research was to prove that PSM exists as a motivation specific almost in an exclusive way in public services, the economic research has a more descriptive approach, the main objective being to understand the inner mechanism of such an altruistic motivation and behavior. In addition, their studies complete each other very well. If Le Grand analysis the altruism by using a microeconomic approach, Bénabou and Tirole take advantage on the psychological approach and propose a complex formalization of altruistic motivation, while Fehr, using experiments, tests with success several hypotheses concerning altruistic behavior.

3.1. Le Grand (2003)

This part of the article is based on his book *Motivation, Agency, and Public Policy. Of Knights and Knaves, Pawns and Queens*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003.

By using two metaphors, that of Knave and that of Knight, Le Grand proposes an economic approach of PSM through the model of demand and supply, and shows with elegance the relationship between altruistic behavior and rewards and gives interesting answers on the level and on the type of altruistic behavior.

First of all we have to understand how Le Grand is using the word *motivation*. This is of great importance. He chooses the term motivation in a way that come close to the term *preferences* that economists use, but Le Grand adds a deep nuance to this concept – the word motivation is associated with an activity – one is motivated to do something – in a way that the word *preferences* it is not. In the case of PSM, in a way, the *motivation* uncover more than *preferences*.

The main actors in Le Grand (2003) are the Knave and the Knight. Who is a Knave? This term mean simply somebody whose principal concern is to further his or her self-interest. This understanding does not equal the homo oeconomicus theory. Even if this abstraction of homo oeconomicus is helpful and has some explanatory power it cannot be considered an adequate description of the economic behavior of human beings. Many studies actually challenged this model, first of all by showing that there are some economic behaviors which cannot be explained by this model (e.g. public service motivation, altruism,), and there are also many studies which show that self-interest is a notion much, it is a composite of other many elements that we have to study if we want to understand the selfish economic behavior:

“In fact, as many authors have pointed out, self- interest has a wide variety of elements that contribute to it. These include material wealth certainly, but also such important considerations as security, autonomy, status, and power. A full list might be even broader than this, including these but also pleasure, the avoidance of pain, liberty, glory, the possession of of certain objects, fame, health, longevity, self-respect, self-development, self-assertion, reputation, honor, and affection (Kavka 1986:42, quoted in Hill 1993:1)”. (Le Grand 2003)

Who is a Knight? Facing a variety of definitions like altruism, altruistic behavior, pro-social behavior, Le Grand prefers again a simply way to talk about the knights as being those individuals that are motivated to help others. Actually, if the definition of selfishness is complex, the definition of altruism is almost impossible. Somewhere between a selfish interest make up in altruistic act and the satisfaction of a desire – thus a self-interested action – altruism is difficult to identify. Le Grand finds again a very elegant way to make the

distinction between selfish and altruist behavior. The individuals who are motivated to perform only those activities with a direct benefit for their own material welfare are knaves, and those who perform some activities “other –directed” which have no positive impact on their welfare are considered as knights.

Altruism is not only a preferred subject of philosophers or social psychologists; the very new field of evolutionary psychology brings proofs about the very existence of altruism behavior. The experiments conducted by Fehr (2003) deliver strong evidence of human altruism and also some limits.

Now, that we have a certain agreement on the existence of altruistic motivation and behavior⁷, it is time to see how we understand this motivation in the field of public services.

In the provision of public services, altruistic behavior exists and can take a variety of forms, as compassion, duty and the desire to conform. Thus, most people motivated to perform altruistic acts wish to help others and they derive also some personal benefits from performing these acts. In the terms of Le Grand we are in the presence of act-relevant knights, as different from act-irrelevant knights who help others which are in a difficult situation, or in a unfair or unjust context by compassion or pity, but they are in the same time free-rider, in the sense that these act-irrelevant knights are content if somebody else performs the altruistic act⁸.

Undertaking an altruistic act supposes a personal sacrifice, termed as the opportunity cost of the altruistic act. There is no more difficult subject linked to PSM that the relationship between the benefit that somebody derives from an altruistic act and its opportunity cost. It is assumed that an altruistic act is performed till the cost is enough great to give the feeling that this act is really altruistic so the personal satisfaction, thus the benefit is great too. If the cost is too low there is no more an altruistic act, so the person does not undertake the act. The reverse is also true, if the act is too expensive there is a limit of sacrificing the own interest for the sake of others, and thus the altruistic act is again not performed.

As Le Grand says “ *there are cost thresholds that, if the cost fall below the lower thresholds or rise above the higher one, people are less likely to perform the activity than if the cost falls in between*”, p. 52. This assessment was confirmed by many evidences from dictator game and public good game (Fehr and Fischbacher 2003).

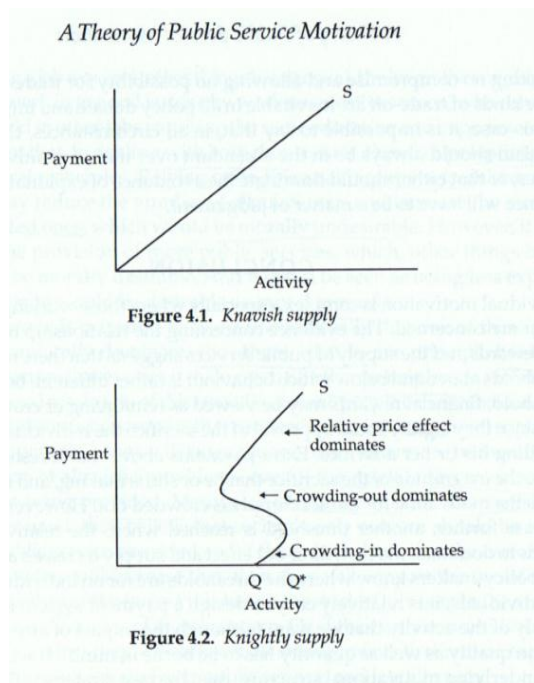
⁷ We do not discuss here the articulation between altruistic *motivation* and altruistic *behavior*, we consider necessary this discussion, we will develop it in a next study. See too Elster 2006 for this debate.

⁸ In social psychology we call this behavior the *bystander effect*, when we assist at the diffusion of responsibility if there are several people facing the situation. See Chekroun and Brauer 2002.

The most interesting contribution of Le Grand in the analysis of PSM is his economic approach of the altruistic acts and the way in which the supply of these acts depends on incentives and rewards. This is of great importance for the public management. As we have shown in the introduction, if altruism is a powerful force in society, public managers have to know how they can identify this force and to find out how they can stimulate it and even foster it in their organization.

In his diagrammatic representation of the PSM, Le Grand shows how the supply and the demand of altruistic acts are affected by rewards and by the level of payment, and this in both cases, that of knight strategy and that of knave strategy.

Let's have a look to these two schemes proposed by Le Grand (2003):



Source: Julian Le Grand, *Motivation, Agency, and Public Policy*, Oxford University Press, 2003, p.68-70.

We can observe that the case of knave situation is simple. But the case of knight behavior is much more complex and requires a deep understanding, both of the level of the demand for altruistic acts and of the way that these activities have to be rewarded. The risk is actually to offer a too high pay for undertaking an altruistic act, the result of such a strategy is a crowding-out effect, the supply falls to a point which is lower than the original supply, when no reward was offered.

In the case of a moderate demand there are two possible levels of rewards, a low one, when we are in the presence of an almost pure knight behavior, and a high one, when the knight starts to behave as a knave, his supply increase with the payment.

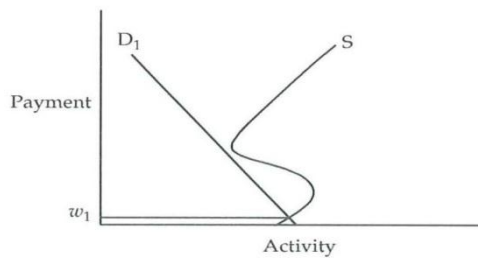


Figure 4.3. Knightly supply and low demand

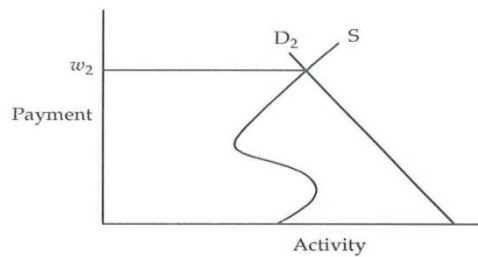


Figure 4.4. Knightly supply and high demand

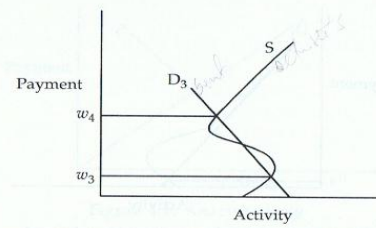


Figure 4.5. Knightly supply and moderate demand

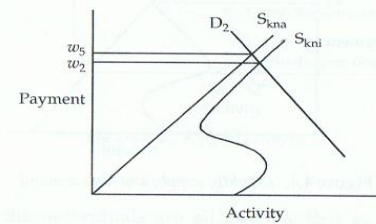


Figure 4.6. Knightly and knavish supply and demand

Source: Julian Le Grand, *Motivation, Agency, and Public Policy*, Oxford University Press, 2003, p.68-70.

In the case of a high demand, both, knightly supply and knave supply ask for high payment (w_2 and w_5 in fig. 4.6), we are no more in the presence of an altruistic behavior.

The research on PSM has some lessons to learn from Le Grand 'approach, mostly in terms of new variables to take into account like the demand of altruistic activity, the opportunity cost and the payment, etc.

1. It is very important to identify the degree of personal sacrifice (effort)
 - ✓ As a difference between personal benefit and opportunity cost
 - ✓ Little cost imply little benefit,
 - ✓ High cost imply high benefit, but if benefit \leq very high cost, no altruistic activity is undertaken.
2. It is necessary to analyze the relationship between Rewards and PSM.
 - ✓ Payment and opportunity cost; the value of the activity is function of these two variables
 - ✓ If payment is higher than opportunity cost, activity go down
 - ✓ If payment is lower than opportunity cost, activity go up
 - ✓ So how much the activity is valued by people and by the organization?
3. Identifying the offer and the demand of altruistic activity in the organization. Comparing this rapport with the structure and the content of incentives system, if possible over time.
4. Influence that others' altruistic & selfish behavior have on the general motivation of the group.

5. The altruistic behavior metamorphoses into a non-altruistic one under the influence of high level of payments.

3.2. Bénabou and Tirole' model of pro-social behavior

Bénabou and Tirole (2002, 2003, 2006) discuss also the effect that incentives have on altruistic behavior, and their models add the role that social reputation, self-respect and self-image play in performing of altruistic acts. The model formalized by Bénabou and Tirole leaning on the theory of the signal offer the most exhaustive frame suggested so far, the one closest to the reality of PSM.

In their approach, the analysis of the PSM at an individual level (self-esteem, identity etc.) is linked to the environmental frame (reputation, honor, stigmas, and social norms). Thus the PSM appears as a variable mix of altruist motivations, material interest motivations, social image (reputation) and self-esteem.

At the beginning Bénabou and Tirole propose a model with two elements (Bénabou and Tirole, 2003): extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation; afterwards they present reputation as a third component of motivation (Bénabou and Tirole 2006). But they do not only evidence the inverse relationship between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation ; their purpose is actually to provide a more precise content of what we understand by extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, they clarify when the former chases away the latter. It is by equally using the theory of the principal- agent based on the information and the signal that the principal and the agent send to each other that Bénabou and Tirole succeed in proposing a mathematical model of human pro-social behavior. This model reconciles the discoveries in the field of social psychology on the role on intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000) with the economic approach, that had long time neglected social psychology, and that had mainly leant on the rationality of the agents (i.e. Expected Utility Theory)⁹.

A set of issues analyzed by Bénabou and Tirole in their theory of pro-social behavior treats about the fact that people commonly perform good deeds and refrain from selfish ones because of social pressure¹⁰ and norms that attach honor to the former and shame to the latter (see also Elster Jon 2006, Tirole 2009).

⁹ For an interesting approach of RET enriched by psychological insights, see Wärneryd K.-E., 1997, "Demystifying rational expectations theory through an Economic-Psychological Model", in *Advances in Economic Psychology*, ed. by Antonides G., Raaij W.F., Maital S., Chichester, New York, John Wiley&Sons.

¹⁰ For an account on social influence on economic behavior see Wärneryd K.-E., 1988, and Chekroun and Brauer, 2002.

As they say : « *Codes of honor, whose stringency and scope varies considerably across time and societies, are another example of norms enforced largely through feelings of shame (losing face) or glory. To understand these mechanisms it is again important to not posit exogenous social constraints, but rather to model the inferences and market conditions involved in sustaining or inhibiting them.* » (Bénabou and Tirole, 2006).

But people do not care only about the image that other people have on them, they care also about their self-image, they need to have a good image of themselves, thus, their behavior will reflect this need too, and they will adapt their behavior in order to be aligned with this need - to have a good image of own self-image.

Psychologists and sociologists mention also this strong need for people to maintain conformity between one's actions, or even feelings, and certain values, long-term goals or identities they seek to uphold. Many empirical studies (Brown&Smart, 1991, Twenge, Ciarocco, Boumeister, DeWall, Bartels 2007, Bergami, Bagozzi 2000, Ryan and Deci 2000) brought proofs about the importance of such self-image concerns and their contribution to pro-social behavior.

Bénabou and Tirole develop a theory of pro-social behavior that combines heterogeneity in individuals' degrees of altruism and greed with a concern for social reputation or/and self-respect. For them “ *the key property of the model is that agents' pro- or anti-social behavior reflects an endogenous and unobservable mix of three motivations: intrinsic, extrinsic, and reputational, which must be inferred from their choices and the context* “.

The authors obtain four main sets of results (Bénabou and Tirole 2006).

1. *Rewards and punishments.* The presence of extrinsic incentives spoils the reputational value of good deeds, creating doubt about the extent to which they were performed for the incentives rather than for themselves. What means all this? If the society offer too much rewards to leaders and people acting pro-socially, there is the danger that we interpret such a behaviour just as one looking for rewards, in other words it results a less reputation value of the pro-social behaviour for the person performing it and also less value for the self-esteem. The result in this situation is that people will avoid behaving pro socially by fear to be perceived as someone looking only for rewards.
2. *Publicity and disclosure.* The prominence and memorability of contributions strengthen the signalling motive and thus generally encourage pro-social behaviour. When

individuals are heterogeneous in their image concerns, however, a greater one on these good deeds has also a reverse impact, a negative one because good actions become suspected of being motivated by appearances. We obtain the same result as discussed above for the rewards, but in this case people will avoid to behave pro-socially because other people can think that they behave pro-socially just for publicity.

3. *Spillovers and social norms.* The inferences that can be drawn from a person's actions depend on what others choose to do, creating powerful spillovers that allow multiple norms of behavior to emerge as equilibrium. More generally, individuals' decisions will be strategic complements or substitutes, depending on whether their reputational concerns are (endogenously) dominated by the avoidance of stigma or the pursuit of distinction. The first case occurs when there are relatively few types with low intrinsic altruism and when valid excuses for not contributing are rarer than events that make participation inevitable, or unusually easy. The second case applies in the reverse circumstances.

4. *Welfare and competition.* When setting rewards and publicizing contributions, sponsors will exploit these complementarities or substitutabilities, which respectively increase or decrease the elasticity of the supply curve of pro-social behavior. Because the sponsors do not internalize the reputational spillovers that fall on non-participants or on those who contribute through other sponsors, however, their policies will generally be inefficient.

The main contribution of the approach of Bénabou and Tirole is by showing not only the crowding out effect of incentives but also their sophisticated way to influence intrinsic motivation, self-esteem and reputation.

This is a very important result to take into consideration by managers when they implement strategies in order to foster PSM in their organization. Actually we will find concrete tools in the experimentations of Prof. Ernst Fehr and his colleagues about how can reputation be used for increasing cooperation in a group.

Lessons from Bénabou and Tirole's theory of pro-social behaviour can help research in public administration to better identify the exterior context when analyzing public service motivation, and the interior context when looking for its structure and level. They also provide new variables, as reputation and self-esteem, etc.:

1. The content of pro-social behavior could be engaging in worthy cause, in a public good, restraining from imposing negative externalities on others.
2. Testing the presence or not of a code of honor and if there are some honor & shame consequences in the life of the organization. Identifying external reputational issues, avoiding stigma or pursuing distinction.
3. Testing the image concerns of participants to the provision of public services, feeling good about oneself, need for social approval, preferences for identity.
4. Measuring the visibility or the salience of the activity of employees in the organization, impact of these factors in the organization, how many people, which period.
5. Testing the personal need and its level for conformity between actions & feelings and certain personal values. Self-selection and person fit organization theories.
6. Measuring heterogeneity of altruism and greed combined with social reputation and self-esteem.

3.3. The works of Fehr et al. (2003, 2004, 2006)

Research on altruism is large and has its roots in the sociobiology field in the 1980s. One of the first definition proposed was that of Wilson in 1975 (Piliavin, Charng, 1990), he defines *altruism as "self-destructive behavior performed for the benefit of others."* The economists followed of this definition and they emphasize too the cost implied by the altruistic behavior (Fehr and Schmidt, 2006):

“in technical terms, altruism means that the first derivate of the utility function of an individual with respect to the material resources received by any other agent is always strictly positive. Thus, an altruist is willing to sacrifice own resources in order to improve the well-being of others”. (p.619-620).

The psychologists, they have focused not only on costs implied by altruistic behavior but also on the motives and intentions which underground the altruistic behavior.¹¹

The research on altruism of Fehr et al. is one of most interesting because it brings empirical proofs of human altruism as a specific behavior of human beings and shows also which are the extents and the limits of this behavior. They experience the link between altruistic

¹¹ For an extended literature review on altruism see Piliavin and Charng 1990, and in economics see Fehr and Schimdt 2006.

behavior, reputation formation, cooperation, etc., and show those conditions favorable to the emergence of altruistic behavior and those with a negative impact on cooperation.

By implementing a public goods game they found that in spite of a majority of strong reciprocators, a small minority of selfish individuals suffices to render zero cooperation as a unique equilibrium. What this means? A public goods experiment is designed as follows: several subjects are endowed with a number of points, redeemable at the end of experimentation for real money. It is asked to the subject to participate to a public good, “a common account”, by sharing some points with the other subjects, and the remainder is kept in the “private account” of the subject. According to the standard economic model of self-interested actor, a selfish subject will share nothing. Or, during all experiments of public goods the researcher found that the groups exhibit a much higher rate of cooperation than can be assumed through the homo oeconomicus perspective. Only a fraction of subjects behaved as maximizing actors by contributing nothing, a large part started to contribute by offering a half of their endowment. If the experimentation is conducted in several rounds, the degree of participation at the “common account” decays, in the end of the game most players behave as self-interested manner. Why cooperation decays? Actually the participants who were offering a lot become angry that the others were contributing less, and the only way to punish the selfish participants was to reduce their own offer.

Many others experimentations¹² brought evidence about the altruistic punishment (reciprocators punish at their cost the selfish), and also altruistic rewarding (reciprocators reward at their cost the altruists). When costly punishment is permitted cooperation does not deteriorate. In this way a minority of strong reciprocators can discipline and educate selfish participants to behave in an altruistic way.

Another tool to improve cooperation and altruistic behavior is the reputation form effect. The data (Fehr and Fischbacher 2003) shows that both altruistic rewarding and reputation seeking are powerful determinants of donor’s behavior, which participate more when they can acquire reputation from helping.

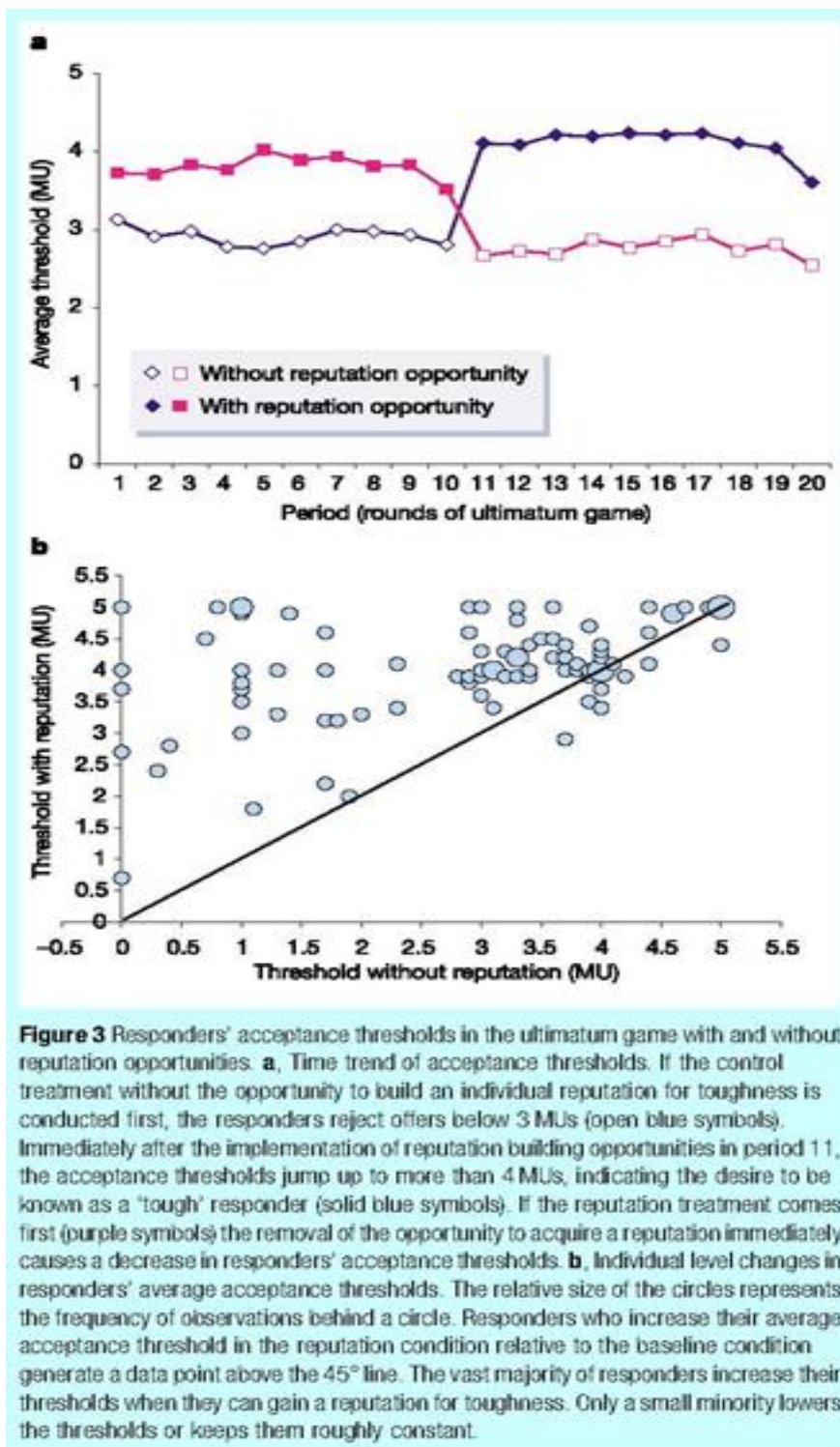
These experiments also demonstrate that people have a subjective evaluation of their economic payoff, different from economic payoff itself. The main result of these studies is

¹² For an economic and experimental approach of equity and fairness, see also Eckel C.C. and Grossman P., 1997, “Equity and Fairness in economic decisions : Evidence from bargaining experiments”, in *Advances in Economic Psychology*, ed. by Antonides G., Raaij W.F., Maital S., Chichester, New York, John Wiley&Sons.

that the level of cooperation depends on *the beliefs* that people have about the level of cooperation of the others participants.

Once the experiment is running the participation is no more dependent on the *beliefs* about the other's participation but on the *reputation* of the other. If the other has "good" reputation (he behaves altruistically), he will be rewarded, if he has "bad" reputation (he behaves selfishly) he is punished by the others.

As a conclusion we can see that these researches show that strong reciprocity and reputation-formation can explain a large part of the altruistic behavior. The mystery of altruistic behavior is not completely discovered but thanks to these experimentations we know more about it and we can start to use some of the tools proposed in order to foster pro-social behavior in groups, and thus in society.



Source : Fehr & Fischbacher 2003, in *Nature* 425, 785-791.

From Fehr et al, research on PSM can improve even more by understanding how concretely people react when asked to behave altruistically in the presence of a reputation concern in a group with multiple exchanges, this situation being very closed to that of employees in an organization.

The experiments of Fehr can be used in order to foster and create conditions to improve the level of PSM offered by employees. By answering the following questions, the public service motivation theory may find more profound and deeply ways to capture the determinants and the factors of the altruistic behavior.

1. Is the PSM dependent on the PSM of others, in level and structure? If yes, how and how much?
2. Are people with PSM interest to punish or to reward the colleagues for their too low or high PSM? Would people agree that some of their colleagues could punish /reward them when they are defecting/performing PSM activities? (see red-tape practice).
3. It is strong reciprocity a condition to perform PSM?
4. How much the reputation people get from performing PSM is important for them? And the reverse, how much the shame they get from non-performing PSM activities is important?

4. A new theoretical framework for PSM and some applications in public & private management

Now that we have showed how research on PSM can be improved on, we propose new theoretical insights as well as some practical implementations.

A balance between the demand and the supply of PSM

The main proposition of Le Grand was to identify the quantitative link between the supply and the demand for undertaking altruistic acts and that the behaviors of knave and knights can evolve function of the level of the demand and consequently the level of payment for altruistically acts will be also function of the demand. In the context of an organization the level of the demand for altruistic acts is more informal but it can be fixed by the manager and be encouraged first of all by the behavior of manager himself. In this case the employees will feel “invited” to follow the manager’s behavior. The only way that manager has to be careful is do not offer too much reward (material or non material, such as medals, honor diploma, etc.) for altruistic behavior of employees. As Le Grand shows there is a risk that the knights become knaves.

Reputation is a determinant factor

The approach of Bénabou and Tirole goes further and show that too much reputation offered for altruistic acts will lead to less participation – because one could think that the altruistic activity is no more undertaken for the sake of the activity itself but for gaining reputation.

On the other hand, there is a spillover effect of altruistic act - if someone is undertaken an altruistic act at a high level for example, his observers will undertake the altruistic act also at a high level. This phenomenon was put in evidence by Ernst Fehr and his colleagues, and this lead to a great cooperation between the members of the group. In the case of an organization, the manager could be the first one undertaken altruistic acts, and he will give the signal.

Altruism and group effect

The approach of Fehr et al. shows that what is determinant in the process of engaging in altruistic behavior is the *belief* that one member of the group has about the potential altruism of the other members of the group. If the belief is confirmed members engage more and more in altruistic behavior. But if a member starts with a high level of altruistic behavior and the other members of the group participate less, than even those who participated a lot will decay their participation. We can see how important the behavior of each member is for the cooperation. Here the manager will be attentive that when altruistic activity is performed there is a positive answer to this activity, by offering a medium level of reputation or by allowing reciprocal altruism. This is a way to develop pro-social behavior in an organization.

Disciplining the selfish

The other way proposed by Fehr et al. is to allow direct punishment – the strong reciprocators have the possibility to punish the selfish members. This path very efficient in public goods game and ultimatum game seems difficult to implement in an organization. Still there is an indirect way to punish the selfish is reputation based behavior. If the manager is offering reputation to altruistic members, the other – that is - the selfish – will feel disadvantaged compare to their colleagues, and they will decide in the future to undertake altruistic acts in order to be part of the group. This phenomenon was explained by Tirole when he shows how a pro-social behavior can became a social norm. Social norms, as Tirole (2009) mentioned, are powerful tools for implementing pro-social behavior, in other words the fact that I am

behaving pro-socially, will induce you to behave pro-socially too. Of course social norms vary from a nation to another, function of its history, culture, political governance. But what is the same is the influence that these social norms have on people and their capacity to change the behavior of people.

From these contributions we can extract new theoretical and empirical variables for PSM as in the next table:

Correspondence between the variables in the theoretical model and the variables in the empirical model for Public Service Motivation concept

Variables of the theoretical model	Variables of the empirical model	Expected sign
Le Grand		
Degree of personal sacrifice (effort), as the difference between opportunity cost (OpC) and personal benefit (PrsB)	OpC =unpaid hours (from Q(questionnaire) and Data) PrsB=joy/pleasure at work (from Q and internal satisfaction inquires)	If OpC increase, PrsB increase, thus Altruistic activity(AltrA) increase If PrsB ≤ very high OpC, AltrA decrease to 0
Relationship between rewards and level of PSM	Level of bonus compared with OpC	If Bonus ≥ OpC, decrease in AltrA If Bonus ≤ OpC, increase in AltrA
Level of demand and level of offer for AltrA	Level of offer =unpaid hours Level of demand=objectives to be realized	If demand Increase, offer increase till a threshold=max of offer.
Altruistic motivation moves into a non-altruistic motivation under the action of high payments	Diachronic analysis of the impact of bonus on the realizations of objectives	If Bonus → ∞, AltrA → 0 If Bonus → 0, AltrA → ∞
Relationship between the group characteristic (generous or selfish) and level of offer	Level of unpaid hours offered in a first period of employment compared to the mean of unpaid hours of the team = Effort 1 Level of unpaid hours offered after 3-5 years of employment compared to the mean of the unpaid hours offered by the	If Effort 1 ≥ Effort 2, selfish team If Effort 1 ≤ Effort 2, generous team

	team = Effort 2	
Variables of the theoretical model Bè nabou and Tirole	Variables of the empirical model	Expected sign
Reputational issues, codes of honor, avoiding stigma, pursuing distinction	Number of distinctions, numbers of sanctions /total number of employees/year.	If Nr. Distinction \geq Nr. Sanctions, people look for distinctions, in the opposite case people will avoid stigma.
Self-image, feeling good about oneself, need for social approval, preference for identity	Level of need strong or weak from Q Number of resignations of employees/year	If strong need, high level of AltrA, if weak need, AltrA have a low level
Alignment between employee and employer in terms of values	Number of conflicts Number of deviances from internal norms ,Number of resignations of employees	If Alignment $\rightarrow \infty$, Altra A $\rightarrow \infty$, If Alignment $\rightarrow 0$, AltraA $\rightarrow 0$
Variables of the theoretical model Fehr and all.	Variables of the empirical model	Expected sign
Strong reciprocity and PSM	Q source – feeling of getting help, support, etc.	If Recrp. is strong, Altra A is high, if Recrp. is weak, AltraA is low.
Link between reputation and self-image	Q source – for need of good self-image Reputation – number of distinctions, number of sanctions	The positive correlation between the need for self-esteem and reputation, increase the offer of AltrA, in the opposite case there is not increase in the offer of AltrA.
The effect of altruistic reward/punishment	Q source – ask opinion about allowing altruistic reward/punishment in order to obtain a plus in the quality of service, a plus in well-being of the beneficiary	If Altr.rew.and Altr-Punsh. Is accepted as a possible tool of improve quality of service, we identify the genuine altruists from fake altruists.

Variables of the theoretical model	Variables of the empirical model	Expected sign
New Propositions		
Feelings of stress at work place, emotional labor	Number of burnouts, of conflicts, of departures	If feelings of stress are strong, low motivation
Attitude toward risk	Q Source: Risk seeking, or risk aversion : Participation or not in risky procedures, taking or not decisions under pressure, accepting difficult missions.	If risk seeking , high motivation If risk aversion, low motivation
Attitude toward incertitude	Q source	If high incertitude, low motivation
Feeling of belonging	Q Source, number of years in the same organization	If strong feeling of belonging, high motivation.

We can synthetize some concrete propositions for public&private managers which can transform Public Service Motivation into a powerful lever able to improve cooperation, productivity, efficiency and last but not least, a force able to improve well-being of those participating at the provision of public services :

1. As Fehr et al. show, the behavior of people influences each other in undertaking or not altruistic behavior. The beliefs, the experience and the reputation have an impact on the altruistic behavior of people. These interdependencies are better controlled in small groups. The solution would be to imagine an organization with several small work units, each unit having an informal leader which spread the beliefs about cooperation and offer rewards good behavior. Fehr found that when altruistic punishment is allowed cooperation increases. That's could be also a tool to use with caution, in an organization where we are in the presence of several and multiple contacts, the altruistic punishment can be only a short-term strategy with objective to signalize a disapproval of selfish behavior, while at long term, altruistic reward has better impact because the behavior fostered via altruistic rewards can be transformed

into a social norm, or a code of conduct in the organizations.

2. The second idea is to offer moderate monetary incentives in trying to stimulate altruistic behavior. All authors make the statement that high monetary incentives crowd-out intrinsic motivation in undertaking an altruistic act. Monetary incentives can be useful at a moderate level in order to signalize an appreciation and a valorization of the employee by his manager and by the organization. The result is an increase in the effort supply of the employee, thus a crowding-in effect.
3. And finally from Bénabou and Tirole we learn that not only reputation but also self-reputation, self-esteem is a powerful motive for performing pro-social acts. The manager will be careful to identify this need and to signalize to employee that he appreciates the behavior of the employee, by offering reputational rewards or conferring him new charges in the organization – the motivation of employee will increase, engendering a plus, both in terms of efficiency and productivity for the organization, and in terms of well-being of employees.

5. Conclusion

Two conclusions impose themselves in the end of this approach:

- First of all, the theory of public service motivation has a lot to gain by using frameworks and tools from economic and behavioural approach of altruism.
- Secondly, we are never in the possession of the truth about the altruistic motivation and behaviour of people, but we know already thanks to the works of some economists that it is possible to create the conditions which preserve it and stimulate it.

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