Comparing public service motivation within various Europe countries: do institutional environments make a difference ?

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1. Introduction

The motivation of public servants in general (Behn 1995), and public service motivation (PSM) in particular (Perry and Hondeghem 2008b), have always been important issues in public administration and public management research. In recent years, research on public service motivation has made significant progress, finally living up to the status it has been attributed (Perry and Hondeghem 2008a). Whereas public service motivation research always has been focused on public service as an independent variable, trying to explain its consequences, some recent empirical and theoretical research has been more aimed at unveiling origins of public service motivation (Perry, 1997; Perry 2000; Vandenabeele 2007; Perry and Vandenabeele 2008; Vandenabeele 2008a; Moynihan and Pandey 2007; DeHart-Davis et al 2006; Camilleri 2007).

This latter type of studies often, implicitly or explicitly, resorts to institutions as an explanation for individual public service motivation. Public service motivation can be easily fitted into the idea of 'logic of appropriateness', the drive to behave according to a normative standard applicable to certain institutions, which is opposed to the more calculative 'logic of consequence', a self-interested utility maximization as a driving force (March and Olsen 1989 & 1995). Therefore, the link between public service motivation and institutions is self-evident and theorists of public service motivation often rely on institutions, being a type of value-based, structured interaction, as explanatory variables for public service motivation (Perry and Vandenabeele 2008; Perry 2000; Vandenabeele 2007). Institutions are partly country specific in the sense that both the type of institutions as their character differ between countries. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004) have shown in their classic study in public management reform how these type of institutions affect the nature of public sector reform. It is clear that national institutions (Scott 2001; Raadschelders 2003) have a defining power with respect to which values are considered to be important in a national society. With regard to public service

motivation research, this becomes even more important. On the one hand, as the measurement of public service motivation is reported to differ to some extent between the United States, where the concept empirically originated (Perry 1996), and Europe, where other dimensions or a different clustering of dimensions is found (Vandenabeele 2008a; Vandenabeele 2008b; Castaing 2006). On the other hand, as current public service motivation research is at present globally disseminated (Perry and Hondeghem 2008b), it is important to assess what the actual impact is of the national environment. Different levels of public service motivation or related concepts have been found in various countries (Vandenabeele and Vandewalle 2008; Norris 2003), which only encourages researchers to further investigate this issue.

This paper contributes to the discussion of the impact of this type of institutions at the individual level of public service motivation of public servants. It is a comparative approach, based on public service motivation data collected in six European countries. These data were collected by individual members of the Study Group on Public Personnel Policies (SG III) within the scope of the European Group on Public Administration (EGPA).

First, the paper begins with an overview of the literature and a discussion of the relevant theoretical concepts. Based upon this discussion, a set of hypotheses is formulated. Second, the individual countries are shortly described, as well as the data collection. Next to this, the issues concerning the combination of the data in one dataset and some of the issues in the application the relevant statistical techniques are given some consideration. Finally, the results are presented and discussed and some conclusions based upon these findings are formulated.

2. Theoretical framework

Public service motivation refers to the motivation individuals have to contribute to the public interest, or to society at large, disregarding their own interests. Although this topic has a long

history (Horton 2008), it was only formally defined by Perry and Wise, who defined it 'as an individual predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions (1990 : 368)'. However, other authors have applied their own definitions (Brewer and Selden 1998; Rainey and Steinbauer 1999), focusing on particular elements of the concept. Moreover, other concepts, such as public service ethos (Chapman 2000; Woodhouse 1997) or 'l'éthique du bien commun' (Chanlat 2003), have been developed to describe the similar or related phenomena. This plentitude in similar concepts has hampered empirical research and in order to overcome this Babel, we apply an encompassing definition, which defines public service motivation as 'the belief, values and attitudes that go beyond self-interest and organizational interest, that concern the interest of a larger political entity and that motivate individuals to act accordingly whenever appropriate (Vandenabeele 2007 : 549).

Although the research on public service motivation has grown substantially for the last decade (Perry and Hondeghem 2008a), few of these studies have been concerned with what actually engenders the phenomenon. In a review study of antecedents, Pandey and Stazyk (2008) distinguish between social-demographic antecedents as gender and age (Dehart-Davis et al 2006), institutional antecedents as family socialization, religious or volunteering experience (Perry 1997; Perry et al 2007) and organizational antecedents (Moynihan and Pandey 2007). However, when theorizing about public service motivation (Perry 2000; Vandenabeele 2007; Perry and Vandenabeele 2008), many, if not all of these antecedents, can be thought of as institutional, especially when looking at the definition of Peters (2000 : 14), who defines institutions as 'a formal or informal, structural, societal or political phenomenon that transcends the individual level, that is based on more or less common values, has a certain degree of stability and influences behavior'. By means of socialization processes, individuals are socialized into the appropriateness of certain public service values, which causes them to behave in a public service motivated manner.

National cultures and institutional systems can be considered to be a special case of institutions. Vandenabeele and Van de Walle (2008) have explored the relationship between the national environment and public service motivation and found, based upon secondary data, that public service motivation levels between various countries differed substantially. Therefore, fitting our research question about the country-specific effect on the presence of public service motivation in this theoretical consideration of public service motivation, our first hypothesis can be stated as follows :

H1 : Average levels of public service motivation among civil servants will differ over country

3. Methods

Testing these this hypothesis on a quantitative basis will involve the use of analysis of covariance. As this is not frequently found in public administration studies, some elements will be highlighted to make the analyses more accessible to readers with a less statistical background. However, before tackling this, the data collection and the measures used in this study are discussed.

3.1 Description of the cases and data collection

The study will compare public service motivation across 6 different countries : Belgium, the Netherlands, Malta, Italy, Austria and Switzerland. It uses aggregate comparative data on these six cases, which has been gathered for different purposes, using different methods of data collection. Therefore, an overview of the case and the data collection is provided below.

The data on Belgium were collected with the Flemish State government. As the state level is the strongly developed in Belgium, many important competencies are covered by this level (Hondeghem 2000). Only competencies as defense, foreign affairs and taxation are not present at this level (although some counterparts are present, except for defense). The data were collected in spring 2005, by means of a web-based e-mail survey with a response rate of 33% (see Vandenabeele 2008a for a more elaborate description of the data collection process).

Austria is characterised by a strong Rechtsstaat tradition, Max Weber's rational legal form of authority and a related specific "Beamtenethos" (civil servant ethos) (eg. Luhmann & Mayntz 1973, Meyer & Hammerschmid 2006) around ideas of neutrality, impartiality, public interest, legal security and a tenured civil service status. The data for this paper originate from an on-line survey among employees of the City of Vienna. Vienna has a special role in Austria as it is both city and federal state and executes a broad variety of both city and state functions as well as functions delegated from federal government. The survey conducted in spring 2006 covers a sample of 1.890 public sector employees (response rate 39.4%) from 14 departments in different policy fields.

The data on Italy refer to an on-line survey conducted in the first half of 2006 on the personnel of the Italian Revenue Agency.[1] In the end the respondents were 1258 (out of 36799 total employees) (See Cerase and Farinella (in press) for a more detailed description of the data collection process.)

The data on Malta consisted of a cross sectional study with a research sample consisting of about 3,400 Maltese public officers at a national level occupying administrative grades of various job types in all Government ministries. The research survey was administered on a census basis and anonymously completed during paid working hours. The

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[1] D. Farinella has contributed to the research.

paper-pencil survey administration was incorporated as being part of an information seminar on public service financial management reform. At the beginning of each seminar session the purpose of the study was explained and employees were asked for voluntary anonymous participation. The overall response rate was 71.5%.

The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations has executed a regularly survey within the public sector since 1999 (compare Steijn & Leisink, 2006). The survey of 2006 was answered by almost 30,000 public sector workers. In this survey, the respondents were asked if they were prepared to take part in regularly short surveys to be held by the ministry (so called 'Flitspanel'). In total, 17,277 were willing to do so. After a representative weighting procedure, 9,440 employees were invited to take part in this survey. The response was 4,156 or 44%. However, only civil servant working at the national level were retained in the current dataset. This resulted in data for 351 respondents at a national level who – compare the data for Malta – occupy various job types in all Government ministries.

The Swiss data were collected within the framework of the 2007 employee survey of the Swiss federal administration (Ritz forthcoming). Based upon the responses and the statistical indices of the 2005 personnel survey, one representative random sampling per unit was taken, which was additionally examined according to the representative distribution of socio-demographic features (language, sex, age, salary). A total of 26,774 persons were given the questionnaire. The response rate was 51% of those surveyed (13,532 responses).

3.2 Combining the datasets

In order to combine the data into one dataset which could be comparatively analysed, some integrating actions were taken. First, the data was standardized to the same answer scale. Some of the cases used a different response scale (6- or 7-point instead of the 5-point scale) and therefore the scores were recoded to metric values with 1 as its minimum and 5 as

its maximum. For the remainder of the analysis, the entire dataset will therefore be treated as being metric, rather than ordinal. Second, also for some of the control variables, the dataset needed to be recoded to make it comparable. Where categories were used for age and tenure (in the Austrian and the Swiss cases), the middle between the two ends of the category score (e.g 60-65 years old) was used as a metric value of the variable. These operations rendered a dataset that certainly has its flaws, but can be used comparatively, as the scores have more or less the same meaning throughout the set.

3.3 Statistical techniques

To investigate the hypothesis, one should compare the mean scores of each country. However, as the samples are unequal, both in size and in composition, one should correct for possible covariates. Therefore, an analysis of covariance should be performed.

When comparing mean scores between various groups in an experimental design, one usually uses analysis of variance or ANOVA (Edwards 1979). However, this requires very strict experimental conditions to be fulfilled, something which usually is not the case with survey data. An extension of this model in analysis of covariance or ANCOVA, which enables to control for a set of specified covariates. When controlling for the covariates, the analysis of variance is able to assess effects of the grouping or independent variable (as for the control variables) on the dependent variable without the necessity of experimental conditions (Tabachnick and Fidell 2001). This procedure also enables a researcher to calculate a least squares mean for each group, which has been adjusted for these control variables (this can be interpreted as the mean score for the group controlling for these control variables). An issue in ANOVA and ANCOVA is pairwise comparison of scores. A general ANCOVA model only test whether one of the adjusted means is significantly different from the other ones, but does not compare pairwise. Consequently, multiple comparisons have to be made

separately. However, as doing multiple comparison increases the 'Familiywise error rate' (Westfall et al1999), the p-value one gets are not correct (doing 20 tests at a p-level of .05 will statistically result in one wrong test; therefore the p-level has to be lowered). Therefore, the p-levels of the pairwise comparisons will be adjusted through simulation (Westfall et al 1999).

3.4 Dependent, independent and control variables

The core dependent variable used in this analysis is public service motivation. James Perry (1996) originally conceived it to be a multi-dimensional 24-item measurement construct, having four dimensions : interest in politics and policy-making, public interest, compassion and self-sacrifice. Although replication of the model not always proved to be possible by using the original items, most of the replication studies (Vandenabeele 2008a; Coursey and Pandey 2007; Coursey et al 2008) confirmed the general factorial structure (sometimes adding or removing a dimension).

As our goal is to compare public service motivation between six countries, we decided to stick with the original four dimensions of the concept as formulated by Perry. As in the present dataset[2], four items, one four each dimension of the original construct, were similarly measured, we were able to do. These four items each represent the dimension they originally belong to in the original measurement scale (Perry 1996). The items have been measured on different response scales (5-, 6- or 7-point), all indicating to what extent one agreed with the statements but have recoded to make them comparable.

TABLE 1 : *Public service motivation items and their corresponding dimension (based on Perry (1996))*

Politics	I do not care much about politicians (inverted)
Public interest	Meaningful public service is very important to me
Compassion	I have little compassion for people in need who are unwilling to take the first step to help themselves (inverted)
Self-sacrifice	Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements

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[2] For the Swiss case, compassion was not included in the set.

The main independent variable is country. Next to this, a number of control variables are also included in this analysis. On the one hand, these are dummy variables of gender (with male being the reference group) and supervisory position (with being in a non-supervisory position as the reference group). On the other hand age and organizational tenure, both measured in years, have been included as additional controls.

TABLE 2 : *Descriptive statistics of the variables*

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum
Politics	22539	3,42	1,20	1	5
Public interest	22445	3,76	1,01	1	5
Compassion	9069	3,27	1,21	1	5
Self-sacrifice	22386	3,36	1,00	1	5
Age	21863	42,32	10,59	17	66
Tenure	21889	16,06	11,58	0	45
Gender	21889	0,35	0,48	0	1
Supervisory position	21859	0,34	0,48	0	1
Belgium	22658	0,15	0,36	0	1
Netherlands	22658	0,02	0,12	0	1
Italy	22658	0,05	0,23	0	1
Malta	22658	0,09	0,29	0	1
Austria	22658	0,08	0,28	0	1
Switzerland	22658	0,60	0,49	0	1

4. Analysis and results

Inspection of the correlation matrix (table 3), shows that, due to a large sample size, very small correlations are statistically significant. Concerning the first hypothesis, country variables as well as control variables correlate with public service motivation levels. This latter relationship supports our application of ANCOVA to compare means of public service motivation over groups, at the same time controlling for a set of control variables.

TABLE 3 : *Correlation matrix of variables (missing included)*

	sig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1 Politics	***	1,00													
2 Public interest	***	0,14 ***	1,00												
3 Compassion		0,03 **	0,04 ***	1,00											
4 Self-sacrifice	***	0,13 ***	0,41 ***	0,18 ***	1,00										
5 Age	***	0,13 ***	0,03 ***	0,03 **	0,11 ***	1,00									
6 Tenure	***	0,02 ***	0,02 **	0,04 ***	0,06 ***	0,63 ***	1,00								
7 Gender	***	-0,14 ***	0,06 ***	0,03 **	-0,02 **	-0,22 ***	-0,20 ***	1,00							
8 Supervisory position	***	0,10 ***	0,11 ***	-0,10 ***	0,04 ***	0,16 ***	0,20 ***	-0,21 ***	1,00						
9 Belgium	***	-0,04 ***	-0,01	-0,03 **	0,06 ***	-0,01 *	-0,19 ***	0,12 ***	-0,08 ***	1,00					
10 The Netherlands	***	0,07 ***	0,07 ***	0,02 *	0,03 ***	0,01	-0,02 **	0,01	-0,04 ***	-0,05 ***	1,00				
11 Italy		0,00	0,11 ***	-0,03 **	0,20 ***	0,01	-0,02 *	0,06 ***	-0,06 ***	-0,10 ***	-0,03 ***	1,00			
12 Malta	***	-0,33 ***	0,13 ***	0,27 ***	0,04 ***	-0,13 ***	0,02 **	0,08 ***	-0,04 ***	-0,14 ***	-0,04 ***	-0,08 ***	1,00		
13 Austria	***	-0,04 ***	0,28 ***	-0,24 ***	-0,02 *	-0,02 ***	0,07 ***	0,08 ***	0,24 ***	-0,13 ***	-0,04 ***	-0,07 ***	-0,10 ***	1,00	
14 Switzerland	***	0,23 ***	-0,30 ***	- ***	-0,16 ***	0,09 ***	0,10 ***	-0,21 ***	0,01	-0,52 ***	-0,15 ***	-0,29 ***	-0,39 ***	-0,37 ***	1,00

*** : p<.001; ** : p<.01; * : p<.05; - : Not available

TABLE 4 : *Unadjusted and adjusted means of the variables by country*

	Belgium		The Netherlands		Italy		Malta		Austria		Switzerland	
	Unadjusted mean (SDT)	Adjusted mean	Unadjusted mean (SDT)	Adjusted mean	Unadjusted mean (SDT)	Adjusted mean	Unadjusted mean (SDT)	Adjusted mean	Unadjusted mean (SDT)	Adjusted mean	Unadjusted mean (SDT)	Adjusted mean
Politics	3,32	3,33	4,06	4,07	3,42	3,45	2,19	2,28	3,27	3,23	3,65	3,63
	1,25		1,00		1,31		1,12		1,18		1,07	
Public interest	3,73	3,72	4,32	4,36	4,22	4,23	4,15	4,18	4,71	4,64	3,51	3,51
	0,91		0,80		0,87		0,82		0,51		1,01	
Compassion	3,22	3,19	3,41	3,37	3,18	3,15	3,86	3,90	2,69	2,73	-	-
	1,13		1,23		1,24		1,11		1,15		-	
Self-sacrifice	3,49	3,51	3,56	3,60	4,18	4,20	3,50	3,55	3,31	3,30	3,23	3,22
	0,87		1,04		0,97		1,14		1,05		0,95	

First, as part of the analysis to test H1, the means for the various dimensions of public service motivation are provided. An adjusted mean, cancelling out the uneven distributions of gender, age, tenure and supervisory position, is calculated based upon simulation (Westfall et al 1999). These results demonstrate that the Maltese sample of civil servants is the least interested in politics and policy-making, whereas the Dutch sample is the most interested. The Austrian sample of civil servants has the highest regard of the public interest, whereas the Swiss scores the lowest. For compassion, the Maltese score the highest and the Austrians score the lowest, whereas the Italians score the highest and the Swiss the lowest on self-sacrifice.

However, the information in table 4 does not show whether the country scores are statistically different from one another. Therefore, we tested these adjusted means on their statistical difference based upon the models provided in table 5 (see appendix 1 for pairwise comparison). The results demonstrate that average public service motivation levels are statistically different at a level of .05 in most countries. For politics, only Austria and Belgium cannot be significantly discerned. For public interest, Italy and Malta and Italy and the Netherlands cannot be distinguished (Malta and the Netherlands are marginally different, with a p-level of over .02). For compassion, the Belgian average is not different from the Dutch and the Italian scores (although the Dutch and the Italian again can be marginally distinguished). For self-sacrifice, the Belgian, the Dutch and the Maltese scores cannot be statistically distinguished, as is the case for the Swiss and the Austrian scores.

These statistical different means are reflected in table 6, which assesses the significance of a model with the respective dimensions of public service motivation as dependent variable and with country as the main independent variable, controlled for the four control variables. For each dimension the models are statistically significant and the R^2's range from .07 to .15. These models, and in particular the η^2's (these can be similarly

interpreted as a squared part correlation), which indicate the unique explained variance, demonstrate that country accounts for the bulk of the explained variance in these models. For politics and public interest, the difference in country accounts for 11% of the total variance, whereas for compassion, 9% of the variance is uniquely explained by difference in country and for self-sacrifice 6% can be explained by country differences. The control variables typically are statistically significant, but have very small effect sizes (a η^2 of less than 1% of the total variance).

TABLE 5.A : Analysis of covariance for 'Politics'

	SS	Df	F		η²
Age	179,261	1	145,52	***	0,006
Gender	141,013	1	114,47	***	0,005
Supervisory position	164,502	1	133,54	***	0,005
Tenure	93,835	1	76,17	***	0,003
Country	3423,887	5	555,89	***	0,110
Error	26318,80	21365			
Adjusted total	31074,10				
R²	0,153				
F-value model	428,92	***			
N	21375				

*** : p<.001; ** : p<.01; * : p<.05

TABLE 5.B : Analysis of covariance for 'Public Interest'

	SS	Df	F		η²
Age	73,782706	1	83,71	***	0,003
Gender	17,087398	1	19,39	***	0,001
Supervisory position	106,86333	1	121,24	***	0,005
Tenure	20,905149	1	23,72	***	0,001
Country	2402,1315	5	545,05	***	0,111
Error	18765,71	21290			
Adjusted total	21590,16				
R²	0,131				
F-value model	356,04	***			
N	21300				

*** : p<.001; ** : p<.01; * : p<.05

TABLE 5.C : Analysis of covariance for 'Compassion'

	SS	Df	F		η²
Age	67,267024	1	51,12	***	0,005
Gender	34,491309	1	26,21	***	0,003
Supervisory position	12,640453	1	9,61	**	0,001
Tenure	5,978724	1	4,54	*	0,000
Country	1137,5959	4	216,11	***	0,092
Error	11023,93	8377			
Adjusted total	12351,56				
R²	0,107				
F-value model	126,11	***			
N	8386				

*** : p<.001; ** : p<.01; * : p<.05

TABLE 5.D : Analysis of covariance for 'Self-sacrifice'

	SS	Df	F		η²
Age	132,45256	1	143,86	***	0,006
Gender	10,649565	1	11,57	***	0,001
Supervisory position	31,404618	1	34,11	***	0,001
Tenure	0,217702	1	0,24		0,000
Country	1246,6147	5	270,8	***	0,059
Error	19561,04	21246			
Adjusted total	21073,21				
R²	0,072				
F-value model	182,49	***			
N	21256				

*** : p<.001; ** : p<.01; * : p<.05

5. Discussion

The results of the analysis demonstrate that the country where one lives accounts for a substantial part, up to 11%, of the variance in individual public service motivation levels. This is a rather large explanatory value to be attributed to one single variable, certainly in this type of research. This finding necessitates some further thought about the origins of this variance. There are several possible explanations, some rivalling, others having more potential to be integrated into a single larger theoretical perspective.

First, such a variance between the samples could, as in all types of survey research, be due to a bias in the sampling. A potential hazard of this type of comparative survey research is that the different samples are less comparable than we would like them to be. However, there are some indications that indicate that biased sampling is not the main cause of the variance between the country samples. First, the analysis method used is designed to counter this kind of effects, by controlling for a set of correlates. The correlates used in this analysis account for most of the known general effects of antecedents on public service motivation, but admittedly do not include the possible effect of different organizational tasks. After all, in federal states, the central level has other competencies than the central level in centralized countries, and the same can be said for state levels versus federal levels. This differential distribution of competencies could lead to a serious bias in the aggregate sample. Nevertheless, the danger for this latter type of bias can be riposted by a second argument, based upon the average scores on the different dimensions for each country. Countries that have the same profile with regard to these characteristics (for example Malta and the Netherlands, both central governments; or Belgium and Austria, both state levels in federal countries), do not exhibit similar scoring patterns (see also annex 1). Therefore, it is more likely that other explanations can cast a light on the variance.

As stated by Raadschelders (2003 : 90), '… both Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman traditions have influenced Western political culture at large…' and therefore, we will provide some frameworks focusing on national culture in general, and national political culture in particular, in which the results of the analysis of public service motivation can be interpreted. However, as multiple explanatory frameworks intersect in our empirical observations, it will not be possible to attribute findings to a single effect. Nevertheless, each of them can contribute to the interpretation of the results.

A first theory that can aid in the interpretation is the theory of post-materialism (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Norris and Inglehart 2004). This theoretical perspective claims that societies evolve from materialist to post-materialist values when becoming more advanced. Once older (materialist) concerns are settled, people turn to new (post-materialist) concerns, mainly through socialization in the youth, which has caused a 'silent revolution' which led to a shift in values since WWII (Lane and Svenson 2002).

According to Inglehart and Welzel (2005), these post-materialist values, which are more humanistic in their perspectives, are opposed to materialist values, which are more ego-centric in their outlook. These post-materialist values are illustrated by the 2-item Eurobarometer instrument 'giving people more say in important government decisions' and 'protecting the freedom of speech', whereas the materialist values are operationalised as 'maintaining order in the nation' and ' fighting rising prices' (Lane and Svenson 2002). Research by the world values survey initiative (and in particular the works of Inglehart), have developed further and more elaborate instruments.

Post-materialist values are claimed to have a strong impact on the development of democratic institutions (Inglehart and Welzel 2005), which would in turn foster public service motivation (Perry and Vandenabeele 2008). Base upon their scores of post-materialist values, this could in part explain the public service motivation scores (especially on the politics and

public interest dimensions) of the Netherlands, as they are situated further towards the post-materialist pole than any of the other countries in the present study (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). The other dimensions (self-sacrifice and compassion) are much more related to what is considered to be traditional values (and therefore more materialist). Therefore, countries scoring lower on post-materialism, could score higher on these dimensions of public service motivation.

Another related theoretical framework that can be used to explain the national differences in public service motivation is found in the work of Inglehart and Norris (2004), where they focus on the influence of religion on civic engagement and social capital. They have found that higher religious engagement increases political and social activism and that it increases social capital. In turn, social capital, and in particular religious activity and volunteering, leads to higher public service motivations scores (Perry et al 2007). This would explain the higher scores on compassion and self-sacrifice for Malta and Italy, as these countries have a higher rate of religious participation than the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland (Inglehart and Norris 2004). However, it does not explain the particular low score of Austria on compassion, despite having a rather high rate of religious participation.

When discussing national cultures, another source that often is mentioned is the work by Hofstede (Hofstede 1980; Hofstede and Hofstede 2005). This could therefore also be considered as an influence on the development of public service motivation. Power distance-egalitarism, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity and security-insecurity are dimensions distinguished by Hofstede in any national culture. These dimensions can make an appeal to the dimensions of public service motivation, in particular the individualism-collectivism axis, which could explain the low scores of Belgium and Switzerland on public interest (but not the Austrian score) and the power distance-egalitarism dimension, which could explain the high scores on politics for the Netherlands compared to the other countries.

However, the dimensions used by Hofstede are not always clear-cut and comparable to public service motivation, which makes application to public service motivation not easy. Nevertheless, for particular public service motivation dimensions, Hofstede's work can be insightful.

A final perspective to explain differences in public service motivation scores can be found in the differences in the politico-adminstrative systems (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004). The state structure, type of executive government, the relations between the political and administrative elites and the administrative culture are key-features of politico-administrative regimes. With respect to the state structure, they distinguish between various types of both a unitary and a federal government. The type of executive government ranges can be describes as consensual, coalition, or majoritarian government. The relations between the elites can be on the one hand integrated or separated, and on the other hand the degree to which these are politicized can vary. Finally, the general administrative culture can be tending towards a 'rechtstaat', towards a 'public interest' culture or towards consensual or even corporatist cultures. All of these dimension can influence people's perceptions of the public service and therefore the individual level of public service motivation. For example, the higher politicized relationships between the political and administrative elites in Belgium and Italy could explain the lower scores on interest in politics, compared the more separated relationships in the Netherlands that may account for the higher scores on interest in politics. It would be therefore interesting if further research could investigate these dimensions further and expand the analysis to more countries, based on Pollitt's and Bouckaert's framework.

However, none of the above mentioned explanations can fully account for the country differences in public service motivation and neither is the this list of explanatory theories exhaustive, as the nature of this study far too exploratory to support such claims. It is therefore crucial that subsequent research efforts try to work along these lines in order to

further understand the impact of national environments and institutions on the development of public service motivation. In comparative studies, and in particular case studies in which specific falsifiable claims of one or more theories are tested, will enhance our understanding of these effects. Next to developing sound research frameworks, measurement (in survey research or in more qualitative settings) should sufficiently invariant to avoid bias in the comparison due to flawed measures.

6. Conclusion

This paper addressed the possible institutional effect of different countries on the average PSM scores of civil servants in these countries. With regard to this research question, the results clearly demonstrate that even when adjusted for sample characteristics, the average scores may very well depend on a country's institutional background and national (political) culture. These result indicate that with regard to individual civil servants the origins of individual PSM are subject to the institutional context in which they are situated. This finding on the one hand corroborates the institutional theories of PSM. On the other hand, due to the many possible combinations offered in the comparative design of this study, no conclusive findings could be derived of this analysis. Therefore, this paper has before everything an exploratory perspective, in which the findings are not falsified but rather try to explain empirical results. Nevertheless, these findings can be helpful in futhering the knowledge about public service motivation theory.

Despite these interesting findings, one should be careful in interpreting these results. First, the analysis is cross-sectional, which may pose a threat to the internal validity of the data. Especially with regard to the discussion of the possible institutional explanation, it is not easy to establish strong causal relationships in this comparative design. This is somewhat countered by embedding the findings in existing theoretical frameworks but still caution is

warranted when drawing conclusions from these data. Second, although efforts were made to make the data of different countries comparable, the initial samples were not conducted with the aim of comparison in mind. The samples have been corrected with regard to some social-demographic characteristics by using ANCOVA as an analysis method. However, other variables which were not measured in this dataset could still bias the results. Therefore, further research based upon a true comparative design should be done to corroborate the finding that were obtained in this study. Third, only single items are used which have been translated from the original PSM-measurement scale developed by Perry are used in this study. Single items are in general less reliable in capturing the dimensions of PSM compared to a more elaborated instrument. Next to this, translation issues could further threaten the validity of the items in measuring similar concepts. However, because of the

Nevertheless, as every possible measure has been take to overcome these problems, the conclusions of this study are valid. As such, this paper offers a contribution the body of knowledge concerning public service motivation in general and the institutional dependence of the concept in particular. However, further research remains absolutely necessary to study the questions addressed in this paper more into detail. A true comparative design, with balanced sub-samples and the application of a more elaborated instrument for measuring PSM would avert some of the shortcomings which can be found in the presented study and subsequent findings.

7. Appendix

APPENDIX 1 : *Pairwise comparison of statistical significance of country means for 'Politics'*

	Belgium	The Netherlands	Italy	Malta	Austria
The Netherlands	<,0001				
Italy	0,0125	<,0001			
Malta	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001		
Austria	0,0717	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001	
Switzerland	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001

TABLE 5.B : *Pairwise comparison of statistical significance of country means for 'Public Interest'*

	Belgium	The Netherlands	Italy	Malta	Austria
The Netherlands	<,0001				
Italy	<,0001	0,1865			
Malta	<,0001	0,0202	0,7943		
Austria	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001	
Switzerland	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001

TABLE 5.C : *Pairwise comparison of statistical significance of country means for 'Compassion'*

	Belgium	The Netherlands	Italy	Malta
The Netherlands	0,0555			
Italy	0,8491	0,0192		
Malta	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001	
Austria	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001

TABLE 5.D : *Pairwise comparison of statistical significance of country means for 'Self-sacrifice'*

	Belgium	The Netherlands	Italy	Malta	Austria
The Netherlands	0,5813				
Italy	<,0001	<,0001			
Malta	0,6446	0,9576	<,0001		
Austria	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001	
Switzerland	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001	<,0001	0,0979

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