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Does public service motivation foster justification of unethical behavior? Evidence from survey research among citizens

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ABSTRACT

A recent thread in public administration research suggests that public service motivation (PSM) may have a dark side. However, empirical research supporting this assumption remains scarce. In this study, we build on and combine previous theoretical studies on the relationship between PSM and (im)morality. In particular, we test whether highly public-service motivated individuals vary their justification of an unethical behavior when the value advanced by this behavior safeguards or puts at risk their interpretation of the public interest. The research design combines two vignettes and various survey questions. Using a sample of more than 1500 citizens in Catalonia (Spain), we provide initial support for a dark side of PSM: justification of unethical behavior. The results for vignette A confirm our hypotheses, while the results for vignette B are insignificant. The discussion addresses the different findings, and provides directions for future research.

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Introduction

Within the public administration literature, public service motivation (PSM) – or “the motivation to perform meaningful public service and to unselfishly defend the public interest” (Vandenabeele 2008:144) – has been one of the most frequently studied and discussed topics. The concept of PSM has not only been associated with positive work-related outcomes, but also with positive behaviors outside of the workplace, such as political and civic engagement (Ritz, Brewer, and Neumann 2016). Next to this optimistic view on PSM, there has been a recent thread arguing that PSM may also have potential “dark sides.” For example, Schott and Ritz (2018) theoretical article addressed the question “why PSM cannot ultimately deliver on its promise” (31), and Gailmard (2010) drew attention to its limits by combining PSM research with insights from principal-agent theory.

The authors of both studies base their “dark side argument” on the observation that people interpret the public interest – which is a central element of PSM (Perry 1996; Steen and Rutgers 2011; Vandenabeele 2008) – differently. More specifically, Gailmard (2010) argues that bureaucrats’ preferences over public policy stem from “the individual agent’s conception of good public policy, or vision of a just social order, or ideals of the public interest, and so forth” (2010:13). Because agents cannot easily abandon their values and ideals, a potential dark side of PSM is the intrusion of pluralism into the interpretation of the public interest. This perspective relies on a pluralistic view of the public interest, which entails the formulation of a balance between at times

competing interests of various stakeholders, each presenting a specific public with different plans and purposes (King, Chilton, and Roberts 2010).

In this study, we build on this line of research and provide an answer to the question: *do highly public service-motivated individuals vary their justification of an unethical behavior when the values advanced by this behavior help to safeguard their preferred public values?* In order to answer this question, we focus on highly public-service motivated citizens. Although high PSM individuals may on average be less likely to justify unethical behavior than low PSM individuals (c.f. Brewer and Selden 1998; Kwon 2014), variation regarding their tolerance for unethical behavior can be expected because of individual value preferences. Answering this question is relevant for both theory and practice. In particular, this study contributes to many years of discussion on the nature of the public interest (e.g., Bozeman 2007; King, Chilton, and Roberts 2010) by making evident the importance of considering the individual interpretation of the public interest when conducting PSM research in general and research on the “dark sides” of PSM in particular (c.f. Ripoll 2019; Schott and Ritz 2018). For practitioners, this study contributes to the debate about the desirability of selecting individuals with high levels of PSM, or stimulating it, in order to have an ethical¹ and high performing workforce.

The remainder of this study is structured as follows. The next section presents PSM and one of its central aspects: the public interest. Then, we describe our approach toward morality and delve into the relationship between PSM and ethics. Based on this discussion of the literature we formulate a hypothesis concerning the relationship between PSM and the justification of unethical behavior. After describing the empirical setting, the data and methods, we present our findings based on a large set of data with citizens (N = 1512). We conclude by discussing our findings and the limitations of this study, and also presenting avenues for further research.

Theoretical framework

Introducing public service motivation and the public interest

After being introduced by Rainey in 1982 as the result of a study investigating private and public managers’ reaction to the question of how they rate their desire to engage “in meaningful public service” (288), Perry and Wise (1990) formally defined the concept of PSM as “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations” (368). Although this definition has been modified by others (e.g., Brewer and Selden 1998; Rainey and Steinbauer 1999; Vandenabeele 2007), two main commonalities can be identified, which form the essence of the concept: PSM originates in public institutions,² and it reflects an other-oriented motivation directed to improve or serve the society (Vandenabeele, Ritz, and Neumann 2018).

Authors commonly agree that PSM is a multidimensional concept consisting of the four dimensions of 1) “self-sacrifice,” 2) “compassion,” 3) “attraction to public service,” and 4) “commitment to public values” (Kim et al. 2013). Some authors have urged scholars to analyze the sub-dimensions of PSM separately, since relationships with other variables (i.e., antecedents and outcomes) have been found to vary in strength and direction (e.g., Andersen and Serritzlew 2012; Jensen and Vestergaard 2017). However, because of the importance of the overarching meaning of PSM and the lack of publicly available datasets measuring the separate dimensions, global measures have also been frequently used in PSM research (c.f. Kim 2017; Wright, Christensen, and Pandey 2013). In fact, according to Vandenabeele et al. (2018) global measures of PSM bypass contextual sensitiveness of multi-dimensional measures and focus on the main driver of the concept (i.e., one is motivated to improve the society). Therefore, as we are interested in the in the unidimensional meaning of PSM and its relationship with the justification of unethical behavior, in this article, we will refer to PSM as a unidimensional concept.

Aside from the substantial body of research on the positive outcomes of PSM (Ritz et al. 2016), scholars only recently started to explore the dark sides of PSM. This stream of research can be further divided into two sub-streams. First, empirical research investigating negative attitudinal outcomes of PSM, such as stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction (e.g., Gould-Williams et al. 2015; Van Loon, Vandenabeele, and Leisink 2015). Second, there is theoretical research arguing that PSM may be associated with negative decision-making and behaviors (Gailmard 2010; Maesschalck, van der Wal, and Huberts 2008; Ripoll 2019; Schott and Ritz 2018; Steen and Rutgers 2011). Some of these authors explain the dark side of PSM by relying on the argument that people interpret the public interest differently.

According to Denhardt and Denhardt (2007), the public interest means different things to different people, defies measurement and provides frames of thinking and reasons for action. These elements of the public interest facilitate the existence of different conceptualizations and operationalisations of the concept. Abolitionists propose that it cannot be measured or observed. Normative defendants understand it as an ethical standard. Political process advocates affirm that it flourishes after aggregating and balancing interests. Finally, consensualists scholars stress that it is based on the active pursuit of collective values. In this article, we define the public interest as “the outcomes best serving the long-run survival and well-being of a social collective construed as a ‘public’” in a particular context (Bozeman 2007:12).³ This view is useful when applied to PSM as it reflects an institutional ideal or value played out at the individual level, and it is also inherently pluralistic.

Since PSM is linked to serving society, the public interest is one of its central aspects (Perry 1996; Steen and Rutgers 2011; Vandenabeele 2008). Public service motives fuel actions oriented to further the public interest (Wise 2000). Within the motivational structure of PSM, to be committed to the public interest is a norm-based motive reflecting a personal desire to fulfill a societal standard or obligation (Kim and Vandenabeele 2010). This makes the public interest a specific public value containing information about how society should be served, and guiding the behavior and attitudes of highly public-service motivated individuals. However, there are two considerations about the public interest that require us to refine this basic assumption.

First, there are many and diverse institutions (Scott 2007). Although commonalities may exist, there is not a single set of values attached to public institutions (Perry and Vandenabeele 2008). Thus, the public interest may be interpreted differently by individuals socialized by distinct public institutions. Schott and Ritz (2018) draw on insights from moral psychology (Graham et al. 2011) and philology (Sen 2010) to support the argument that the intentions to do good for society at large and contribute to the public interest (i.e., being public-service motivated) are not sufficient to always ensure good results for everybody. Second, the public interest may be too abstract to effectively guide individuals in their everyday actions. Andersen et al. (2013) suggest that more concrete public values are needed to specify how society is served when aiming to realize the public interest. In this sense, Long (1988) suggests a common-sense list of values as a starting point for operationalizing the public interest, including values, such as health, security, life and self-respect. This is an interesting approach to clarify what serving the public interest – or being public-service motivated – means. However, these specific public values may be inevitably contradictory or at least impossible to be pursued at the same time (Bozeman 2007).

Adding these two insights to the above assumption that PSM fuels actions directed at serving the public interest, the question of what we expect from highly public service-motivated individuals becomes difficult to answer. PSM is not linked to a clear-cut set of public values (Andersen et al. 2013). By contrast, individuals are motivated to pursue different interpretations of the public interest, which may be in conflict. These differences in what the public interest means to individuals set the foundations of a potential dark side of PSM. A misfit between organizational values and the ones preferred by high PSM individuals may lead to frustration, job dissatisfaction or even unethical behavior (Steen and Rutgers 2011). In the forthcoming sections we further

develop this argument by carefully examining how PSM can be linked to both ethical (bright side) and unethical (dark side) responses by individuals.

Theoretical perspectives on morality

Before engaging in a discussion about how this variability in the interpretations of the public interest can lead to unethical or immoral outcomes, we first make clear what we mean by morality. Ethics are broadly defined as a collection of values and norms to assess the morality of certain attitudes, decisions and behaviors (Lasthuizen, Huberts, and Heres 2011). One way to examine the morality of a decision or behavior is to differentiate between the *content* of the decision or action, and the governance *process* that leads to that decision or behavior (Huberts 2018). While the former refers to the essence, subject or orientation of a certain decision or behavior (e.g., developing policy A versus B), the latter is related to acting with or without making integrity violations (e.g., cheating or bribing). While the *content* can vary from one culture to another, integrity violations seem to move beyond cultural borders. In other words, what is morally right (i.e., just, good, ethical) in terms of *content* varies across individuals and institutions, while integrity violations (i.e., *process*) are unethical per se. In this study, these two approaches toward morality are used to explore the dark side of PSM in relation to ethics.

When inspecting the morality of attitudes, decisions and behaviors, researchers can also focus on *specific* attitudes or behaviors derived from individual ethical decision-making models. According to Treviño, Weaver, and Reynolds (2006) one frequently used model is James Rest's (1986) classic four-component model of moral behavior, which understands it as the product of four sub-sequential steps connected by feedback and feedforward loops: awareness (i.e., to detect the moral content of a situation), judgment (i.e., evaluate one's standards with those of the situation), intention (i.e., willingness to act according to one's judgment) and behavior (i.e., to act according to one's will). In this article, we focus on the second step of Rest's model, which is (un)ethical judgment, and investigate its relationship with PSM. This choice mirrors recent empirical works in the field (c.f. Kwon 2014; Ripoll and Ballart 2019; Ripoll and Breaugh 2019).

PSM and ethical outcomes: original and state-of-the-art approaches

Once the main concepts have been defined, we provide an overview of the relationship between PSM and ethics. According to Horton (2008), the ideal of a public service ethic has been a key concern since the ancient Greeks and Romans. In fact, "the essence of the idea is that a public servant sets aside his personal interest because he sees it as his duty to serve community" (Horton 2008:18). Incipient research addressing the relationship between PSM and ethics (e.g., Brewer and Selden 1998; Choi 2004; Kwon 2014; Maesschalck et al. 2008; Wright, Hassan, and Park 2016) relied on one single argument: there is a positive effect of PSM on ethical outcomes because PSM and ethics reflect similar public values and promote the public interest against behavior driven by self-interest. Although logical, this argument fails to explain counter-intuitive findings and approaches (c.f. Christensen and Wright 2018; Esteve et al. 2016; Schott and Ritz 2018). Therefore, it has recently been reformulated to sustain the explanatory power of PSM in ethics research.

Although originally conceptualized as a motivation, a growing number of scholars view PSM as a (social) identity grounded in public institutions (e.g., Bednarczuk 2018; Perry 2000; Ripoll and Breaugh 2019; Schott, van Kleef, and Steen 2015; Vandenabeele 2007; Perry and Vandenabeele 2008). These institutions nourish individuals' PSM, or *public service identity*, by transmitting their institutional logics (c.f. Thornton and Ocasio 1999) through different social processes such as socialization and social learning (Perry and Vandenabeele 2008). Hence, PSM is a self-concept imbued with public content that moves individuals to bring their acquired public

service values to multiple decision situations (Stazyk and Davis 2015). Therefore, individuals consistently regulate their ethical decisions and behaviors in line with the set of values, norms and rules (i.e., ethical frameworks) which have formed their public service (moral) identity (Ripoll 2019). This idea of self-regulation is further clarified by applying the distinction between *content* and *process* of morality presented above. When cultivating public service (moral) identities, individuals acquire the normative content defining what is ethical and what is not (i.e., *content*), and also develop a commitment to avoid integrity violations (i.e., *process*) that may present a risk to these public values.

PSM and the justification of unethical behavior

The presented line of reasoning emphasizes the importance of the public interest to understanding the ethics-related attitudes and behaviors displayed by highly public service-motivated individuals. However, as already discussed, the public interest is a “fuzzy” concept. Hence, mixing the novel argument with the possibility of existing multiple interpretations of the public interest, two main implications arise for the relationship between PSM and unethical judgment. The *content* and *process* framework of morality (Huberts 2018) is again useful to present these implications.

First, when focusing on the *content*, different highly public service-motivated individuals may feel attached to differing interpretations of the public interest. Hence, depending on the public institutions they are socialized by, their judgment about what is right or wrong is likely to differ. This means that for individuals with high levels of PSM judging behaviors and decisions becomes a matter of perspectives. Second, when focusing on the *process* aspect of morality, it becomes necessary to explore which attitudes, decisions and behaviors highly public service-motivated individuals seek to justify in order to advance or protect “their” interpretation of the public interest. As Ripoll (2019) argues highly public service-motivated individuals are “prisoners and servants of the public interest at the same time” (p. 27). The devotion to “their” interpretation of the public interest – e.g., strong compassioning – may lead to loss of neutrality and respect for public values such as equity, responsiveness to politics and lawfulness (Maesschalck et al. 2008). In particular, Maesschalck et al. (2008) refer to so-called “noble-cause corruption,” suggesting that police officers fighting for justice or against crime in order to advance the public interest may use illegal methods to reach this goal.

These two implications require researchers to take a different approach when studying the relationship between PSM and unethical judgment. This article speaks directly to the second implication by focusing on how highly public-service motivated individuals react to integrity violations (i.e., *process*) furthering their interpretation of the public interest (i.e., *content*). In line with the theoretical reasoning offered above, we expect that highly public service-motivated individuals will vary their justification of an integrity violation when this action advances or puts at risk their interpretation of the public interest. We put this argument to test by the following pair of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Highly public service-motivated individuals are more likely to justify an unethical behaviour when the value advanced by the behaviour is consistent with their interpretation of the public interest.

Hypothesis 1b: Highly public-service motivated individuals are less likely to justify an unethical behaviour when the value advanced by the behaviour is not consistent with their interpretation of the public interest.

Data and methods

Data

This study uses data from a survey targeting a representative sample of citizens from Catalonia (Spain). The data was collected between 25th of March and 10th of April 2019. The company

NetQuest performed the implementation of the survey. The survey was divided in three different blocks. First, individuals were asked to answer questions related to socio-demographic characteristics, health status and ideological preferences. In the second block, questions were related to identify the level of PSM and individuals' interpretation of the public interest. Finally, individuals were presented different experiments and vignettes. The questions and vignettes used to measure the dependent variables of this study were preceded by an experiment about satisfaction evaluations on health services,⁴ and followed by an experiment on corruption in public services.

The final sample size comprises 1512 individuals. To improve the representativeness of our sample, quotas were applied for age, gender and education. Table A1 in the Appendix provides the details and shows that this sample closely matches the Spanish population of this region. It is representative of the age and gender distribution of the Catalan population. Only "education" deviates slightly from the population. However, all education levels are equally represented in our sample.

For this study a sample from the general population was used for the following reasons. PSM is a universal concept, which can be found in public, private and nonprofit areas (Andersen, Pallesen, and Pedersen 2011), as well as in formal and informal institutions (Vandenabeele 2007). More specifically, Esteve et al. (2016) argue that PSM is "a behavioural predisposition of any individual, irrespectively of whether or where he or she is employed rather than a characteristic specific to the public sector" (p.178). This argument is supported by Perry's (2000) process theory of PSM, which suggests that PSM is affected not only by intra-organizational, but also socio-historical forces. The mix of public, private, and nonprofit respondents captures a better range of PSM response types. In addition, "a better understanding of PSM among citizens could be beneficial for conceptualizing how public responsibilities are devolved across our society" (Perry et al. 2008:446).

Research design and measurements

As outlined in the theory section, this study aims to test if individuals with high levels of PSM are more likely to justify unethical behavior when it furthers "their" public interest. The procedure for testing this hypothesis was divided in the three steps outlined below. More detailed and additional information can be found in the Appendix.

First step

We first identified the individual's interpretation of the public interest (i.e., independent variable). Although many categories of public values exist (Bozeman 2007), we believed that the public values citizens are most familiar with are those that belong to the category "relationship between the public administration and the citizens." Within this category there are different public value sets (Bozeman 2007). For this study, we selected three public values that come from different public value sets: efficiency, security and due process. This is important to ensure that conflicts may appear between them. The value of *efficiency* fits in the "timeless" set, *security* fits in the "protection of the rights of the individuals" set and *due process* fits in the "rule of law" set. *Efficiency* and *due process* were selected, because they are often reported as very important values for public servants (see, e.g., Vrangbaek 2009). By contrast, *security* was chosen because it presents the most central public value that is required of the government. Using the words of Bozeman (2007) "no greater public values failure exists than failure to provide human dignity and subsistence" (154).

Working for government usually means balancing different values, because social problems inherently raise conflicting interests (Bozeman 2007; Dewey [1935] 2000; Hood 1991). Values may be related in a variety of ways (Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007), which means that two values

Table 1. Vignettes and conditions.

Vignette	Conflicting public values	Main topic	Specific integrity violation	Integrity violation favors
A	Due process – Efficiency	Select a construction company	Conceal information: ignore the need to develop a public tender	Efficiency (against due process)
B	Due process – Security	Arrest a drug dealer	Manipulate information: manipulate a police report	Security (against due process)

may be in conflict in a specific situation but in harmony in another. In this article, we designed two situations (vignette A and B, presented in the “second step”) in which individuals have to choose one value above the other because these values cannot be realized at the same time.

Individuals create a hierarchy of values according to their relative importance (Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007), which allows them to choose one above the other in situations of value conflicts. Because of individuals’ ability to rank different values, we measured the extent to which individuals associate one of the two public values with the public interest. To do this, respondents saw two pairs of conflicting interpretations of the public interest. For each pair, respondents were asked to report the degree to which they identify with these two interpretations by distributing 10 points between each option (e.g., 7 points to public value X, and 3 points to public value Y). In each pair one interpretation of the public interest was *due process*. This interpretation conflicted with *efficiency* in pair 1 (vignette A) and with *security* in pair 2 (vignette B). Once the data was processed, we created two continuous variables representing individuals’ identification with *efficiency* or *security* in opposition to *due process*. To facilitate the interpretation of the results, each variable was transformed into a 0–1 scale.

Second step

To avoid self-selection or attention biases, we included an unrelated experiment (described above) in-between the measurement of the meaning of the public interest and the related vignettes. After this experiment, respondents were confronted with two hypothetical but realistic dilemmas that put in play the two conflicting interpretations of the public interest (see Table 1 for a summary of the main differences). Although the wording was different, the logic behind the two dilemmas was the same. Each situation revolved around a dilemma faced by a public servant (a policeman in vignette A, a bureaucrat in vignette B). In these dilemmas, a public servant did something (i.e., an integrity violation) against the rules (i.e., *due process*) but in favor of *security* or *efficiency* (see Appendix 1). Following Lasthuizen et al. (2011) we focused on “misuse and manipulation of information” as a type of integrity violation, which refers to “the intended or unintended abuse of (access to) information, such as cheating, violation of secrecy rules, breaching confidentiality of information, or concealing information” (p.388). In particular, the public servant conceals (i.e., vignette A) or manipulates (i.e., vignette B) information. Depending on individuals’ preferred interpretation of the public interest, the unethical action either advances or puts at risk their interpretation of the public interest.

Apart from showing theoretical consistency, the vignettes were formulated in such a way that citizens could easily identify with them. It is important to note that corruption scandals are salient issues in Spain.⁵ Vignette A revolves around a public contract to renovate a pool because calling or not for a public tender is the most common infraction in Spanish politics (Jareño Leal 2017). Vignette B focuses on the arrest of a drug dealer because, although not as common as the case of public tenders, newspapers have recently reported several cases of manipulation of policing reports to arrest suspects. Moreover, Barcelona (capital of Catalonia) has recently suffered an

increase in insecurity in some of its most tourist areas such as “el Raval,” and drug trafficking has been pointed as one of the main causes for this increase.

Third step

In a third step, the dependent variable was measured. Respondents were asked to report the extent to which they considered the unethical behavior as appropriate (1–7 Likert scale: 1 = not at all, 7 = completely). This item measures an individual’s willingness to accept misconduct (Klockars 1999) and is a good indicator of unethical judgment (i.e., second stage of ethical-decision making (Rest 1986)). After processing the data, two different continuous variables (one for each dilemma) were created (0–1 scale) representing the degree to which an unethical behavior is experienced as justified (i.e., dependent variables).

Measurement of PSM and control variables

There is not one single way to measure the concept of PSM. One of the main criteria for selecting one measure above others is the researcher’s interest in PSM as a uni- or multidimensional concept. There are unidimensional measures using single items and short multi-item scales (c.f. Bellé 2013; Houston 2011), or multidimensional measures using 16 and 24-item scales (c.f. Kim et al. 2013; Perry 1996). As we are interested in PSM as an overarching concept, we selected the 4-item global measure of PSM designed by Vandenabeele and Penning de Vries (2016). Respondents rated their agreement with the 4 items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Combining all items, a latent variable emerged. A CFA was performed to test the entire measure of PSM in our sample. The results of the model fit (Satorra-Bentler scaled χ^2 [df = 2] = 3.888, $p = 0.143$, RMSEA 0.025, CFI 0.999, TLI 0.996, and SRMR 0.007) are satisfactory. Factor loadings, Cronbach’s alpha and Joreskog’s rho demonstrate the internal reliability of the measure (see Table A2 in the Appendix). To develop the analyses, the average was calculated and rescaled to a 0–1 scale.

While the study is primarily interested in the effect of PSM and the effect of the interpretation of the public interest on the relationship between PSM and unethical judgment, there are a number of additional factors that may influence the likelihood of justifying unethical behavior. In line with previous studies delving into the relationship between PSM and ethics (Ripoll and Ballart 2019; Wright et al. 2016), the analysis controls for the following socio-demographic characteristics: gender (1 = female), age (continuous) and level of education (0 = primary, 1 = secondary, 2 = university). In addition, ideology (0–1 continuous scale, 0 = extreme left, 1 = extreme right) has been included as a control variable for three reasons. First, when evaluating the morality of a decision or action, people with left- and right-wing ideology tend to rely on a different set of moral foundations (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek 2009). Second, according to van Lange et al. (2012) conservatives tend to be more individualistic and competitive, while progressives are more prosocial. Third, left-wing individuals usually demand morally upright politicians, while those on the right are more likely to tolerate morality breaches (Allen, Birch, and Sarmiento-Mirwaldt 2018).

Common method bias

As respondents provided self-reported information on all key variables, common method bias may be present (Podsakoff et al. 2003). We are fairly confident that common method bias did not affect the findings for several reasons. First, this study tried to control the sources of this type of bias using different design procedures suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff 2012) and Favero and Bullock (2015) (e.g., psychological separation of

Table 2. Correlation matrix of continuous variables included in the models.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. PSM	–						
2. Efficiency	0.01	–					
3. Security	-0.01	0.52*	–				
4. Unethical judgment (vignette A)	-0.07*	0.04	0.04*	–			
5. Unethical judgment (vignette B)	-0.10*	0.04	0.05*	0.32*	–		
6. Ideology	-0.06*	-0.19*	-0.12*	0.08*	-0.12*	–	
7. Age	-0.18*	0.02	0.06*	0.09*	0.06*	-0.05*	–

Note: n = 1512.

* $p < 0.1$.

the key concepts, protection of anonymity, or reduction of evaluation apprehension). Second, to test the hypotheses presented, we ran interaction models. According to Siemsen, Roth, and Oliveira (2010) interaction effects cannot be the product of common method bias. Finally, despite being interested in the interaction effects, main effects will also be commented upon. Statistical remedies such as the non-ideal marker approach may help us to avoid common method bias when focusing on direct effects, however they may also remove the actual correlation between the variables along with the bias (Rutherford and Meier 2015). Therefore, we decided to conduct a common latent factor test (Podsakoff et al. 2003). The goodness of fit indicators show that the results are unlikely to be affected by common method bias (Satorra-Bentler scaled χ^2 [df = 27] = 545.630, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA 0.113, CFI 0.807, TLI 0.742, and SRMR 0.091).

Results

The correlation matrix of all continuous variables is displayed in Table 2. The descriptive statistics can be found in the Appendix (Table A3). The hypotheses have been tested using Stata. Given our interest in testing whether individuals with high levels of PSM modify their support to an integrity violation depending on the public value advanced (or threatened) by this behavior, we performed two moderated multiple regression analyses and two pairwise comparison tests of the predicted margins.⁶ This procedure allowed us to examine the relationship between PSM (independent variable) and unethical judgment (dependent variables), while accounting for the moderation effect of individuals' identification with the public values (i.e., interpretation of the public interest). Tables 3 and 4 present the results for vignette A (efficiency). Tables 5 and 6 show the results for vignette B (security). VIFs are below 5 and tolerances are higher than 0.1 except when including the products in the regressions. This is normal because interaction terms are highly correlated with the main effect terms. Once the variables were centered before estimating the two products, VIFs and tolerances remained below common standards (results available upon request). Overall, we can affirm that multicollinearity is not a concern in this study.

Model 3 in Table 3 shows that no statistically significant effects were found for gender or people with secondary studies. Older and right-wing individuals are more likely to justify unethical behavior to further efficiency. Individuals with university studies, in contrast, are less likely to show unethical judgment. Respondents with a higher identification with efficiency are more likely to justify unethical behavior, while those with higher levels of PSM are less likely to do so. Model 4 confirms the two hypotheses. The interaction between identification with efficiency and PSM on unethical judgment is positive and statistically significant. Figure 1 depicts how respondents with high levels of PSM are more likely to justify an integrity violation that furthers efficiency if they more strongly identify with this public value. Table 4 further supports this finding by showing that the predicted unethical judgment for individuals with high levels of PSM is 0.108 times higher for those who strongly identify with efficiency (vs. low identified). This difference is statistically significant.

Table 3. OLS regression models, unethical judgment (vignette A) as dependent variable.

Variables	1	2	3	4
Gender (female)	0.001 (0.015)	0.002 (0.015)	0.003 (0.015)	-0.000 (0.015)
Age	0.003*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)	0.002*** (0.001)	0.002*** (0.001)
Secondary studies	-0.011 (0.018)	-0.011 (0.018)	-0.009 (0.018)	-0.007 (0.018)
University studies	-0.107*** (0.019)	-0.111*** (0.019)	-0.109*** (0.019)	-0.106*** (0.019)
Ideology	0.107*** (0.037)	0.125*** (0.038)	0.120*** (0.038)	0.122*** (0.038)
Efficiency		0.107*** (0.041)	0.107*** (0.041)	-0.338** (0.137)
PSM			-0.070* (0.039)	-0.392*** (0.102)
Efficiency*PSM				0.633*** (0.186)
Constant	-4.947*** (1.057)	-5.020*** (1.055)	-4.599*** (1.080)	-4.483*** (1.077)
Observations	1,512	1,512	1,512	1,512
R-squared	0.040	0.045	0.047	0.054

Primary studies are the baseline category for education. Unstandardized coefficients are shown. Standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.01$.

** $p < 0.05$.

* $p < 0.1$.

Table 4. Pairwise comparison test of the predicted unethical judgment for high PSM (percentile 90) at different values of identification with efficiency, vignette A.

Margin for low efficiency	Margin for high efficiency	Contrast high-low	Standard error	t	p > t	Confidence interval (90%)
0.136***	0.243***	0.108	0.025	4.30	0.000	0.066 – 0.149

Estimates based on model 4 in Table 3. Low efficiency = percentile 10, High efficiency = percentile 90.

*** $p < 0.01$

Model 3 in Table 5 shows that the effects of control variables, identification with security and PSM are really similar to the ones found in Table 2. However, on the basis of the results of model 4 the two hypotheses cannot be verified. The interaction between identification with security and PSM on unethical judgment is negative and statistically significant. Figure 2 illustrates that highly public-service motivated individuals are neither more nor less likely to justify an integrity violation that furthers security if they identify more strongly with this public value. Moreover, Table 6 indicates that the difference in the predicted unethical judgment for high PSM individuals with low and high identification with security is marginal and not statistically significant.

Since the order in which the two vignettes appeared to the respondents was not randomized, participants' responses to vignette A might have influenced how they responded to vignette B. To account for this issue, we included the dependent variable of the first multivariate regression as an independent variable in the second multivariate regression. The results (see Tables A4 and A5 in the Appendix) show that the effects of ideology and the key variables used to test our hypotheses are unaffected by the included variable. In addition, they show that individuals who judged vignette A as unethical are more likely to judge vignette B as unethical, too. Finally, the impact of age and level of studies on unethical judgment becomes non-significant.

Table 5. OLS regression models, unethical judgment (vignette B) as dependent variable.

Variables	1	2	3	4
Gender (female)	0.024 (0.015)	0.023 (0.015)	0.023 (0.015)	0.024 (0.015)
Age	0.001*** (0.001)	0.001*** (0.001)	0.001** (0.001)	0.001** (0.001)
Secondary studies	0.010 (0.018)	0.010 (0.017)	0.013 (0.017)	0.011 (0.017)
University studies	-0.036** (0.018)	-0.038** (0.018)	-0.034* (0.018)	-0.037** (0.018)
Ideology	0.159*** (0.036)	0.169*** (0.036)	0.162*** (0.036)	0.162*** (0.036)
Security		0.099** (0.039)	0.098** (0.039)	0.313** (0.132)
PSM			-0.111*** (0.037)	0.068 (0.111)
Security*PSM				-0.310* (0.182)
Constant	-2.731*** (1.005)	-2.715*** (1.003)	-2.049** (1.025)	-2.173** (1.026)
Observations	1,512	1,512	1,512	1,512
R-squared	0.026	0.030	0.036	0.038

Primary studies are the baseline category for education. Unstandardized coefficients are shown. Standard errors in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$,

** $p < 0.05$,

* $p < 0.1$.

Table 6. Pairwise comparison test of the predicted unethical judgment for high PSM (percentile 90) at different values of identification with security, vignette B.

Margin for low security	Margin for high security	Contrast high-low	Standard error	t	$p > t $	Confidence interval (90%)
0.166***	0.152***	0.006	0.025	0.25	0.804	-0.035 – 0.047

Estimates based on model 4 in Table 5. Low security = percentile 10, High security = percentile 90.

*** $p < 0.01$.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to provide empirical evidence on a potential dark side of PSM: justification of unethical behavior. In particular, we focused on the *process* definition of immorality – “justification of integrity violations” (Huberts 2018; Lasthuizen et al. 2011) – and assumed that public-service motivated individuals will vary the justification of an unethical behavior depending on how this behavior impacts *their* interpretation of the public interest, which is a key aspect of PSM. Following this logic, two hypotheses were developed and tested using two different vignettes. In the light of the results, both hypotheses can be confirmed for vignette A. For vignette B, in contrast, the hypotheses cannot be verified. In the paragraphs below, we first summarize the results and then provide a possible explanation for the null-findings in vignette B. After that we point out two additional interesting findings of this study. Then, we summarize the contributions of this research, its limitations, implications for future research, and relevance for practice.

In vignette A, the integrity violation furthers *efficiency* (to the detriment of *due process*). Regression analyses show that individuals with high levels of PSM are more likely to justify an integrity violation if they identify with *efficiency*. When the level of identification with *efficiency* is low, in contrast, highly public-service motivated individuals are less likely to justify an integrity violation (i.e., violating *due process*). This confirms our hypotheses and unmask a dark side of

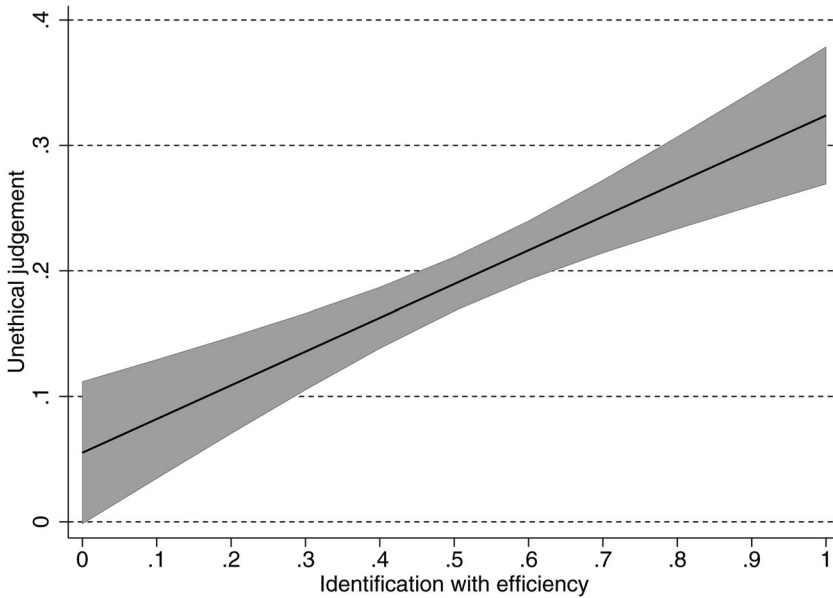


Figure 1. Marginal effects (estimates based on model 4 in Table 3) of PSM (percentile 90) on unethical judgment at different values of identification with efficiency (90% CI).

PSM: if possessing high levels of PSM, individuals' justification of unethical behavior positively depends on their interpretation of the public interest. The regression analyses based on vignette B, however, indicate that individuals with high levels of PSM are neither less nor more likely to justify an integrity violation (i.e., violating *due process*) if they are more identified with *security*. This null-finding provides no additional support for our hypothesis.

How can these different findings be explained? As stressed in the method section, the two dilemmas studied were thoroughly designed in such a way that citizens can easily identify with them. In addition, all choices were made on the basis of theory. In particular, (1) the conflicting values were taken from different sets of values within the same value category, and they reflect typical public values (c.f. Bozeman 2007; Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007; Vrangbaek 2009), (2) justification of unethical behavior is a crucial stage in Rest's (1986) classic four-component model of moral behavior, and (3) the selected integrity violation refers to misuse and manipulation of information (Lasthuizen et al. 2011). Hence, the logic behind the two dilemmas was the same. However, because of the unexpected findings, we looked at the dilemmas again.

It is noticeable that the two dilemmas differ in the extent to which the unethical action furthers the values of *efficiency* or *security*. In vignette A, opening the public tender will lead to a waste of resources and time. There is no (or at least no quickly accessible) alternative interpretation of *efficiency* that could be furthered by opening the public tender. Therefore, high PSM individuals who strongly identify with this public value are likely to have the very same understanding of how *efficiency* can be furthered in this vignette. By contrast, how *security* can be promoted in vignette B is less clear. If the police report is manipulated, the drug dealer will be arrested and the value of security is safeguarded. However, manipulating the police report may also provide a threat to security. In particular, because unethical behavior by police officers harms public trust, it is essential that police officers act within the confines of the law. Hence, protecting the integrity of the police also means defending *security*. Accordingly, highly public-service motivated individuals who strongly identify with *security* may feel that manipulating the police report threatens the public value of security, because they do not interpret this value as protecting society from those who break the law, but as defending the law protection system itself. Based on

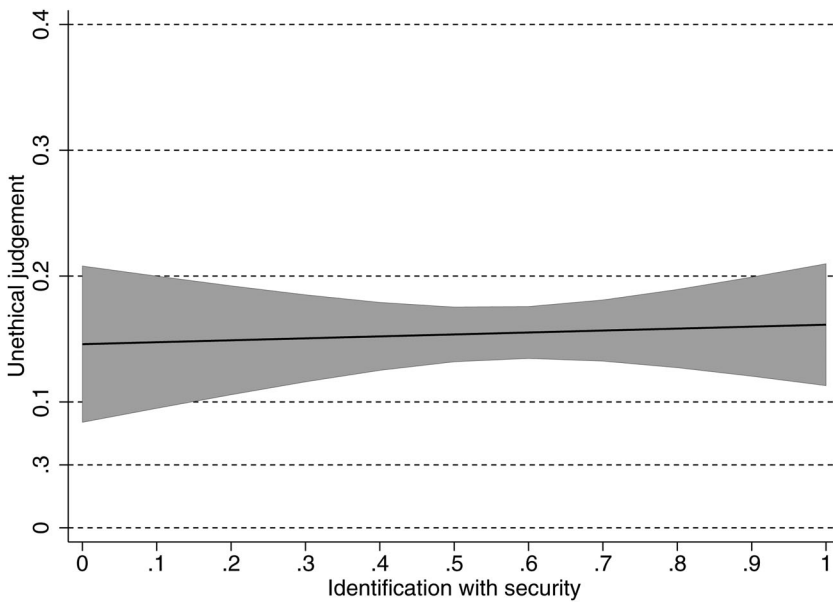


Figure 2. Marginal effects (estimates based on model 4 in Table 5) of PSM (percentile 90) on unethical judgment at different values of identification with security (90% CI).

this line of reasoning, we argue that in vignette B, some individuals may have interpreted the value of *security* differently from what we had in mind when designing the vignette. Put differently, the multi-interpretability of security in the context vignette B may explain that no stable pattern was found when inspecting the impact of the interaction effect.

Another interesting finding of this study is the positive and significant main effect of the identification with public values in both vignettes. If people strongly identify with a certain value, they seem to be more likely to justify unethical behavior making it possible to safeguard this specific value. This finding provides additional evidence for the benefit of viewing values as conceptions “which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action” (Kluckhohn 1962:395). Values and giving direction seem to be inherently related.

Finally, we want to highlight the negative and significant association between PSM and “justification of unethical behavior.” Further research needs to be cautious when examining the direct effects of PSM on the justification of unethical behavior. Although the direct effect is negative, it would be premature to conclude that PSM always reduces unethical judgment. In fact, we show that a critical view on PSM is warranted (Schott and Ritz 2018) and that it is very important to account for the identification with different aspects of the public interest when investigating both ethical and unethical consequences of PSM.

Limitations, directions for future research, and practical implications

This article provides some evidence to further understand a dark side of PSM: justification of unethical behavior. Although it makes important contributions, some limitations should also be acknowledged.

First, this study does not provide causal or consequential evidence to test the hypotheses. Although we used vignettes and adopted statistical remedies, biases may still exist. Therefore, we suggest the development of behavioral or experimental approaches when studying the issue at hand in the future. These studies should, for example, measure other stages of immorality (e.g., actual behavior or decision-making). They could also experimentally prime a specific

interpretation of the public interest (see e.g., the study by Arieli, Grant, and Sagiv 2014) so that stronger conclusions may be drawn.

Second, the analyses show that the explained variance is low. This means that the justification of unethical behavior is to a great extent explained by variables not included in the statistical models. Departing from Treviño's (1986) person-situation interactionist model, Kish-Gephart et al. (2010) differentiated three determinants of unethical outcomes: personal (e.g., locus of control or gender), situational (e.g., closeness to a value, anticipated harm) and contextual (e.g., ethical climate or organizational culture) characteristics. We examined the extent to which PSM (i.e., a person-based factor) moderates the effect of the identification with a public value (i.e., situational or dilemma characteristics) on unethical judgment by keeping contextual elements constant. Subsequent research could expand our analyses by accounting for other personal factors, changing the characteristics of dilemmas or adding contextual influences.

Third, the vignettes of this article were designed in such a way that respondents could easily identify with them. As they were designed for citizens from a specific country, the findings of this study need to be corroborated by other investigations using non-citizen samples, respondents from other countries, and, perhaps more importantly, different public values. For example, due to being socialized by formal public sector institutions, the preferences for a specific public value may be different for public servants. In addition, public values preferences as well as the degree of heterogeneity when interpreting the public interest might vary among specific groups of public servants. Public servants working in people changing organizations (i.e., teachers), for instance, often enjoy more autonomy to do their work if compared to public servants working in people processing organizations (i.e., police officers), and this may result in broader variety of interpretations of the public interest. In particular, police officers may have more similar views of the public interest due to similar working conditions and protocols. Future research needs to explore these avenues.

Moreover, we encourage research on different value conflicts including public values from different categories and value sets. In particular, we want to stress the need to pay attention to the multiple interpretations of the public values embedded in a vignette when designed, as our study shows that this is crucial for scientific inquiry. In short, testing the same hypotheses using different respondents and scenarios including different values is necessary to enlarge our understanding about the dark side of PSM.

Concerning other lines of future research, we want to highlight that this study mainly focused on the *process* aspect of morality while there is also a *content* dimension to it (Huberts 2018; Lasthuizen et al. 2011). For example, if decisions or actions go against individuals' interpretation of the public interest (i.e., *content*), are highly public-service motivated individuals likely to judge them as unethical even if they are morally good from a *process* perspective? In order to generate a more complete understanding we encourage scholars to think about possibilities of how the relationship between PSM and this second aspect of immorality can be empirically studied. Next to this, we invite researchers to look at the interplay between politicians' interpretation of the public interest and the relationship hereof with PSM. In particular, it is interesting to investigate whether individuals with high levels of PSM show loyalty or preference for one politician over another because of how well their own interpretation of the public interest fits with the one promoted by the politicians.

Before drawing conclusions and highlighting the contributions of the article, we discuss a practical implication offered by our findings. Assuming that the results also apply for public servants, they illustrate that HR-managers need to be aware of the potential dark side of PSM. In fact, when managers try to adjust the ethical standards of public-service motivated individuals, it is important to consider "their" interpretation of the public interest. This is particularly relevant because individuals' judgments, intentions, and behaviors are strongly interdependent (Armitage and Conner 2001; Nguyen and Biderman 2008). In sum, HR-managers need to be aware of the fact that individuals may have different views on what the public interest is, and that this is especially important for highly public-service motivated individuals as these different interpretations

might lead to ethics-related attitudes and behaviors which might not be aligned with one's own interpretation of the public interest. Although this article did not test how to handle this situation, based on prior research (c.f. Schott and Ritz 2018) we recommend reflecting on the value-composition of teams (i.e., homogeneous or heterogeneous). Heterogeneous teams may be preferable because they prevent "groupthink" and team members identifying with different values are likely to prevent each other from engaging in unethical behavior that furthers individual interpretations of the public interest. Further studies are encouraged to calibrate the extent to which this practical suggestion is a solution to the identified dark-side of PSM in this study – justification of unethical behavior –, or/and to develop new ones.

Conclusion

This study offers two important contributions. Most importantly, the results provide initial evidence that public-service motivated individuals vary their justification of unethical behavior (i.e., integrity violation) when this type of behavior advances or puts at risk their interpretation of the public interest. This finding contributes to the growing body of research on the dark side of PSM (e.g., Jensen, Andersen, and Holten 2019; Ripoll 2019) and supports the notion that "a more balanced view is needed" when studying PSM (Schott and Ritz 2018:40). Second, this study increases our knowledge regarding the role of PSM among citizens. Although Perry et al. (2008) had already highlighted the benefit of gaining a better understanding of PSM among citizens 10 years ago, most research on PSM has focused on public servants (Ritz et al. 2016). As stressed above, PSM is not confined to the public sector and it can be found in both formal and informal institutions. This article provides evidence that PSM theory also moves beyond the boundaries of the public sector. In particular, we showcase that citizens' ethical judgements involving public values are influenced by PSM in line with what theory suggests. We, therefore, provide some initial evidence that – also outside the working context – PSM can be both a curse and a blessing.

Notes

1. Ethical and moral are seen as synonyms in this study.
2. Institutions are defined according to Peters (2000).
3. This definition comes from the *public values* tradition (Bozeman 2007; Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007), which aims to study how public managers, politicians, citizens, and organizations define, identify and serve public values (Fukumoto and Bozeman 2019). The values pluralism, which inherent to this tradition, is well suited for the purposes of this article.
4. ANOVA tests indicated that the treatment of this experiment did not affect the dependent variable. Justification of unethical behavior in vignette A ($F(1, 1510) = 0.04, p = 0.842$) and B ($F(1, 1510) = 0.04, p = 0.845$) did not significantly differ across the two treatment groups.
5. Accusations and convictions because of corruption are common in the two main political parties of Spain: PP (e.g., Gürtel) and PSOE (e.g., ERTES). In Catalonia this is also the case, CiU (now PDeCAT), or the main ruling party of Catalonia for over 30 years, was convicted for illegal financing in 2018 (3% issue). This makes it a good scenario in which to run our experiment as we confront respondents with situations they have lived or at least heard and read of.
6. To identify high or low levels of our variables of interest, we used the following criteria: high = percentile 90, low = percentile 10. To check the robustness of our analyses we repeated the pairwise comparison tests of the predicted margins for different specifications (e.g., high = percentile 95, low = percentile 5, high = maximum, low = minimum). The results (available upon request) remain unaffected.

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Appendix

Please note, the vignettes used in this experiment were in the Spanish language, and were translated into English for ease of international dissemination.

Step 1: identification of the public interest

Efficiency – due process

Cuando se habla del interés general, se suele hacer referencia a distintos valores. Por ejemplo, en ocasiones se defiende que siempre se debe actuar de acorde con la ley (legalidad). En cambio, en otras ocasiones se defiende actuar rápidamente y sin malgastar recursos (eficiencia). Y tú, ¿qué valor prefieres "legalidad" o "eficiencia"? Distribuye 10 puntos entre las dos opciones (por ejemplo, 7 puntos a un valor y 3 puntos al otro).

Legalidad	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Eficiencia	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

When people talk about the public interest, they usually refer to different values. For example, sometimes people associate it with following the law (due process). By contrast, others associate it with not wasting resources (efficiency). And you, which value do you prefer? Due process or efficiency? Distribute 10 points among these two options (e.g., 7 points to one value, and 3 points to the other).

Due process	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Efficiency	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Security – due process

Cuando se habla del interés general, se suele hacer referencia a distintos valores. Por ejemplo, en ocasiones se defiende que siempre se debe actuar de acuerdo con la ley (legalidad). En cambio, en otras ocasiones se defiende actuar protegiendo a la gente (seguridad). Y tú, ¿qué valor prefieres “legalidad” o “seguridad”? Distribuye 10 puntos entre las dos opciones (por ejemplo, 7 puntos a un valor y 3 puntos al otro).

Legalidad	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Seguridad	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

When people talk about the public interest, they usually refer to different values. For example, sometimes people associate it with following the law (due process). By contrast, others associate it with protecting people (security). And you, which value do you prefer? Due process or security? Distribute 10 points among these two options (e.g., 7 points to one value, and 3 points to the other)

Due process	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Security	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Step 2: presentation of two dilemmas

Efficiency – due process

Imagina la siguiente situación. Le piden a un/a trabajador/a del sector público que recomiende, lo antes posible, una compañía de obras para construir una nueva piscina pública. Las normas estipulan la apertura de un concurso público en el que se detalla toda la información y los ciudadanos toman la decisión final. El/La trabajador/a público conoce la mejor compañía de obras de la región para hacer este trabajo y decide ignorar la necesidad de abrir un concurso público.

Imagine the following situation. A public sector worker is asked to recommend a construction company to build a new public swimming pool as soon as possible. The rules require to open a public tender in which all information is disclosed and the final choice is made by the citizens. This public sector worker knows the best construction company in the region to do this job and decides to ignore the need to develop a public tender.

Security – due process

Imagina la siguiente situación. Un/a policía está seguro/a de que un/a sospechoso/a es un/a traficante de drogas porque un “soplón” se lo ha dicho. Desafortunadamente, esta persona no quiere testificar. Manipulando un informe policial anterior, el/la policía tiene suficientes evidencias para arrestar al traficante de drogas.

Imagine the following situation: A police officer knows for sure that a person is a drug dealer because an undercover informant told him so. Unfortunately, this person refuses to make a public statement. By manipulating a police report made six months ago for a previous investigation, the officer has enough evidence to arrest the person in question.

Step 3: measurement of justification of unethical behavior

Efficiency – due process

		<i>1 = Muy en desacuerdo 7 = Muy de acuerdo</i>						
1. Es apropiado ignorar la necesidad de abrir un concurso público	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1. It is appropriate to ignore the need to open a public tender.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Security – due process

	1 = Muy en desacuerdo 7 = Muy de acuerdo						
1. Es apropiado manipular el informe policial	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. It is appropriate to manipulate the police report.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Table A1. Socio-demographic characteristics.

n = 1512	%
Gender	
Female	50.26
Age	
18–24	11.38
25–34	15.15
35–44	22.42
45–54	20.30
55–64	17.79
65–74	12.96
Level of studies	
Up to primary education	33.2
Secondary education	34.13
University education	32.67
Work status	
Working	61.11
Housework	4.3
Pensioners	18.25
Unemployed	8.4
Student	6.35
Other	1.59
Work sector	
Public	18.58
Private	41.14
Third	1.39
.	38.89

Table A2. Confirmatory factor analysis for PSM.

Public service motivation, $\alpha = 0.883$ $\rho = 0.885$	SFL	S-B SE
1. I am very motivated to contribute to society	0.787***	0.017
1. <i>Estoy muy motivado/a para contribuir a la sociedad</i>		
2. I find it very motivating to contribute to society	0.862***	0.013
2. <i>Me parece muy motivador contribuir a la sociedad</i>		
3. Making a difference in society, no matter how small, is very important to me	0.821***	0.014
3. <i>Crear una mejora en la sociedad, sin importar lo pequeña que sea, es muy importante para mí</i>		
4. Defending the public interest is very important to me	0.770***	0.018
4. <i>Defender el interés general es muy importante para mí</i>		

*** $p < 0.01$.**Table A3.** Descriptive statistics of continuous variables included in the models.

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Efficiency	0.514	0.187	0	1	-0.171	3.591
Security	0.567	0.181	0	1	-0.105	3.771
Unethical judgment (vignette A)	0.212	0.295	0	1	1.240	3.400
Unethical judgment (vignette B)	0.185	0.278	0	1	1.452	4.068
PSM	0.682	0.195	0	1	-0.451	3.265
Ideology	0.369	0.200	0	1	0.464	3.450
Age	45.387	14.933	18	74	0.020	1.985

Table A4. OLS regression models, unethical judgment (vignette B) as dependent variable.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gender (female)	0.024 (0.015)	0.023 (0.015)	0.023 (0.015)	0.023 (0.014)	0.023* (0.014)	0.024 (0.015)	0.024* (0.014)
Age	0.001*** (0.001)	0.001*** (0.001)	0.001** (0.001)	0.001 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.001** (0.001)	0.000 (0.000)
Secondary studies	0.010 (0.018)	0.010 (0.017)	0.013 (0.017)	0.013 (0.017)	0.015 (0.017)	0.011 (0.017)	0.013 (0.017)
University studies	-0.036** (0.018)	-0.038** (0.018)	-0.034* (0.018)	-0.007 (0.018)	-0.004 (0.018)	-0.037** (0.018)	-0.007 (0.018)
Ideology	0.159*** (0.036)	0.169*** (0.036)	0.162*** (0.036)	0.136*** (0.034)	0.130*** (0.034)	0.162*** (0.036)	0.131*** (0.034)
Security		0.099** (0.039)	0.098** (0.039)	0.072* (0.038)	0.072* (0.038)	0.313** (0.132)	0.350*** (0.126)
PSM			-0.111*** (0.037)		-0.091*** (0.035)	0.068 (0.111)	0.141 (0.106)
Unethical judgment (A)				0.285*** (0.023)	0.283*** (0.023)		0.285*** (0.023)
Security*PSM						-0.310* (0.182)	-0.402** (0.174)
Constant	-2.731*** (1.005)	-2.715*** (1.003)	-2.049** (1.025)	-1.308 (0.964)	-0.773 (0.984)	-2.173** (1.026)	-0.923 (0.985)
Observations	1,512	1,512	1,512	1,512	1,512	1,512	1,512
R-squared	0.026	0.030	0.036	0.117	0.121	0.038	0.124

Control for no randomization of the two vignettes. Primary studies are the baseline category for education. Unstandardized coefficients are shown. Standard errors in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$.

** $p < 0.05$.

* $p < 0.1$.

Table A5. Pairwise comparison test of the predicted unethical judgment for high PSM (percentile 90) at different values of identification with security, vignette B.

Margin for low security	Margin for high security	Contrast high-low	Standard error	t	$p > t $	Confidence interval (90%)
0.152***	0.158***	-0.014	0.024	-0.59	0.552	-0.053-0.025

Control for no randomization of the two vignettes. Estimates based on model 7 in Table A4. Low security = percentile 10, High security = percentile 90.

*** $p < 0.01$.