Graduate Students’ Attraction to Government Public Service Professions

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ABSTRACT

From data collected through an electronic survey and estimates from logistic regression models, this study identifies what, in the U.S. northeast, most strongly predicts MPA and MBA students’ decisions to enter government public service professions and examines how that decision is attributable to public service motivation, among other predictors. The predictors included organizational culture, career planning, motivation, socialization, and demographic characteristics.

INTRODUCTION

Attracting competent, committed candidates to full-time, salaried employment with the U.S. government, whether at the federal, state, or local level, is of ongoing concern to government leaders, recruiters, and citizens. Without employees capable of achieving governments’ objectives, acceptable standards in the democratic delivery of public services are difficult to achieve. The task of adequately staffing government agencies is even more challenging in a burgeoning multi-sector public service delivery environment, with a high rate of Baby Boomer retirements, changing perceptions of government as the leader in public service, succession plans compromised by downsizing, and uncompetitive recruiting processes.

The first goal of this study is to identify what predicts graduate students’ decisions to enter government public service professions. From the mid-eighties, there has been ongoing research aimed toward explaining the differences in behavior between public and private organizations and their employees. Central to that research is the development of a public service motivation (PSM) construct by Perry (1996), designed to measure public service motivation in the individual, as a predictor of “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions.” The PSM construct is grounded in traditional concepts of a public service ethos, the belief that government organizations and their employees value moral purposes—specifically, the common good—more than their personal gain (Plant 2003).

Traditionally, the public service ethos was seen to prevail mainly within government organizations, and choosing government public service professions was considered a response to a special calling and an affinity with employment environments imbued with a public service ethos. With public services now delivered from a multi-sector environment, the locus of the public service ethos is open to debate. Public administration scholars express concern that this ethos seems dispersed among sectors, as private businesses and nonprofits become increasingly involved in the delivery of public services.

The second goal of this study is to examine how the decision to enter government public service professions is attributable to public service motivation, among other predictors. During the twentieth century, theories of enculturation, career planning, intrinsic motivation, and socialization have been explored to explain career choice. These and their instruments facilitate
this research. This study contributes to the knowledge available to public personnel managers toward effectively targeting recruitment, is useful to university program development, and aids graduates in rationalizing their career choices.

**Government Public Service Professions: Challenges to Adequately Staffing Government Agencies**

**Baby Boomer Retirements**

According to research inspired by the Volcker Commission (Volcker 2003), the Baby Boomers’ retirement rate was expected to demonstrate a bulge in the first decade of the twenty-first century, with 31 percent of the federal workforce, eligible to retire around 2006. A study by the Government Accountability Office, requested by Rep. Joe Scarborough (R-FL), estimated that only about half of those people, or 15 percent of the workforce, would actually retire around that time. Although the impact of this employee exodus could be reduced by postponing some retirements, the Department of Labor Statistics (2007) further forecast a continued growth in the number of government jobs to be filled around 2006 – 2016. During this period 586,339 retirement-eligible employees are expected to retire.

**Changing Perceptions of Government as the Leader in Public Service Delivery**

Empirical evidence from recent studies indicates that “government is seen as the employer of last resort” (Light 2000a; Chetkovich 2001; Light, 2003a), and public office is said to have little prestige (Alonso and Lewis 2001), with some no longer regarding government as the best employment position from which to help others (Light 2000). Criticism of government efficiency also abounds in the media and in the press. Nonprofits have been rated as the first choice for careers in public service (Light 1999), with business in second place. Paradoxically, enrollment in MPA programs continues to increase, as do the numbers of MPA degrees being conferred. This suggests that the U.S. government is not benefiting directly from the efforts of public universities to respond to the call from the Volcker Commission (Volcker 1989) to rebuild the public sector by developing the appropriate human resources.

**Succession Planning**

In the context of contemporary New Public Management, the downsizing of government agencies is largely responsible for the absence of an internal talent pool from which to draw replacements for retiring public personnel. Government agencies must compete with businesses and nonprofits for public service professionals. Businesses are increasingly being contracted to provide public services, but a synthesis of traditional public service values (self-sacrificial concern for the community and other non-utilitarian values) with business administration ethics (efficiency, productivity, and more utilitarian values) is less advantageous to the government than to private businesses. Whereas the outcomes of private business transactions can be measured according to such outcomes and in the short-term, assessing the delivery of public services must often include developmental mandates and normative goals with qualitative indicators that become discernible over longer time-frames.
Uncompetitive Recruiting Processes

Government employee recruiting is marred by complicated and lengthy hiring processes, inadequate availability of information about jobs, and faint visibility of recruiting officials. Government hiring processes can involve up to thirty-five pages of job application instructions and a wait as long as six months to a year before getting a federal job offer—while receiving little or no feedback from recruiting officials. Penn, Schoen, and Berland Associates (Friel 2003) found that more than two-thirds of college students are unwilling to wait for more than one month for the Federal government to make an offer (Partnerships for Public Service 2005).

Students simply do not know enough about government to be interested in careers in government. Toward rebuilding student interest in government employment, the Volcker Commission (Volcker 1989) recognized the need to make more job-related information available to them. Rynes, Bretz Jr., and Gerhart (1991) informed on the importance of job information to job applicants. All of the student participants in their survey mentioned job characteristics as influencing almost every aspect of their assessment of the job opportunity, including their perception of their fit with the organization, its attractiveness, and why initially least attractive positions became more appealing.

THEORIES AND HYPOTHESES

What Predicts Graduate Students’ Decisions to Enter Government Public Service Professions?

The theoretical framework for this study was derived from three bodies of literature: organizational behavior, vocational counseling, and public administration. It incorporates four sources of predictors: organizational culture, career planning, intrinsic motivation (PSM), and socialization. The frameworks converge on the importance of employee and organization compatibility. Through importing different variables to the equation, they facilitate the examination and explanation of a complex and multi-dimensional process involved in choosing to enter government public service professions.

Organizational Culture

Early consideration of the relationship between the individual and the organization was provided by Barnard, who pointed out that different kinds of people are attracted to different organizations (Schneider 1987). This suggests that interaction between individuals and organizations may foster understanding organizational attractiveness (Turban and Keon 1993). Although many aspects of organizations and people are important in determining behavior (e.g., abilities, job requirements, personality traits, and vocations), a fundamental and enduring aspect of both organizations and their people are their values (Katz and Kahn 1978; Chatman 1989).

People are attracted to the organization that they view as having values and situational norms they deem important (Chatman 1989). Conceptually, person-to-organization fit signifies a level of congruence between a job seeker’s culture preferences and an organization’s culture (Judge and Cable 1997). Fit is represented as the relationship between the fundamental characteristics of an organization and a person. For the organization, these characteristics traditionally include culture, climate, values, goals, and norms. For the person, the characteristics
most often studied are values, goals, personality, and attitudes (Kristof 1996). The most frequently used operationalization of this perspective on fit is the congruence between individual and organizational values (Kristof 1996).

According to Kristof, person-to-organization fit can be measured by equivalent terms, for example, by a match between a person’s values and the values of the organization. In order to determine the effects that organizational membership has on an individual’s values and behaviors, and the effects the individual has on an organization’s norms and values, assessment must first be made of the extent of agreement between the person’s values and the organization’s values (Chatman 1989).

**Hypothesis 1:**

Individuals’ high expectation that values important to them are shared by the organization is a strong predictor of their choice of employment with that organization.

**Career Planning**

Career choice is seen as a matter for individual decision (Care 1984), on which there may be many influence. Career counselor Marianne O’Hare (1987) stated that one of the most frequent problems that students report to career counselors is their inability to make career decisions. To assist students, counselors have developed career decision-making models.

Early in the twentieth century, career psychologists identified practical and social factors that influence the individual’s career choice. Frank Parsons established a Vocation Bureau in Boston, MA as the first formal career-counseling center in the US. It is considered to mark the beginning of the development of the counseling profession (Hartung and Blustein 2002).

Parsons presented a seminal model for “wise career decision-making.” It involves three broad factors: (1) a clear understanding of oneself; one’s aptitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, resources, and limitations; and the causes of those limitations; (2) a knowledge of the requirements, conditions of success, advantages, disadvantages, compensation, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work; and (3) sound reasoning on the relations between these two groups of facts (Parsons 1909). Although career psychologists have studied other factors in explaining career choice, the precepts of Parsons’ model have endured.

Holland (1959) described career choice as an expressive act, which reflects individuals’ ability, knowledge, motivation, and personality as they search for situations that satisfy their “hierarchy of adjustable orientations.” According to Holland, an occupation is a way of life and is contextual, not simply a set of isolated functions or skills. Holland developed a Vocational Preference Model (1959, Holland et al 1994) to guide individuals in their search for their environment fit. He identified six personality types (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional) and matched these with appropriate environments. The match is based on the person’s ability, aptitudes, competences, and life goal. Holland described the personality type associated with public affairs, as “Social.” An individual’s ability to relate to others is associated with a social personality, a capability for interpersonal problem solving, and a commitment to putting the interest of others before his or her own. The model is one of the most used in career psychology.

Similarly, London (1983) conceptualized career motivation as a multidimensional construct internal to the individual, influenced by the situation, and reflected in the individual’s
decisions and behaviors. Each *individual characteristic* associated with career motivation corresponds to a *situational characteristic* and a *career decision behavior*.

Individual characteristic has the following dimensions: needs, interests, and personality variables potentially relevant to a person’s career. These dimensions are grouped into three domains: career identity, career insight, and career resilience. Career identity reflects the direction of career motivation; career insight and resilience reflect the arousal, strength, and persistence of career motivation.

Situational characteristics are elements of the person’s work environment that are likely to be important to career motivation. They consist of staffing policies and procedures, leadership style, job design, group cohesiveness, and career development programs. These are likely to vary among organizations. These are also arranged into three groups.

Career decisions and behaviors consist of generating alternative courses of action, seeking information about them, evaluating the information, and setting goals. These behaviors may be linked to individual and situational characteristics and related to career identity, career insight, and career resilience.

As pointed out by Parsons (1909), Holland (1959), and London (1983), career planning should involve self-assessment, knowledge about the work environment, and understanding the relation between the two. An important aim of their models for guiding career choice is to help individuals achieve compatibility with the careers they choose.

**Hypothesis 2:**

High levels of public service motivation and career planning combined is a strong predictor of choosing government public service professions.

**Hypothesis 3:**

Self-assessment as “social” is a stronger predictor of choosing government public service professions than self-assessment as not social.

*Public Service Motivation*

Motivation theory is central to determining what influences people’s behavior. Behn (1995) identified public sector (service) motivation as one of the most important questions facing government. According to Behn, in schools of public policy, thinking about work motivation is dominated by the economic perspective, which is based on rational choice and monetary incentives. Behn interpreted this methodology, rather, as aimed toward achieving control, and he advocated scholarship on psychology as an alternative source for work motivation techniques.

With reference to the psychologists, Herzberg (2003) observed that spiraling wages motivate the employee simply to seek the next wage increase. Summarizing his findings from twelve investigations, Herzberg found that achievement, advancement, company policy, growth, recognition, responsibility, and the work itself were more motivational than security, status, or work conditions. Herzberg concluded that work motivation is intrinsic, coming from within the individual and not from external incentives.

In public administration scholarship, the public service ethos primarily provides the framework for describing public service motivation as developed by Perry (1996). Initially, Perry and Wise (1990) synthesized traditional concepts of a public service disposition, as discussed in
the public administration literature, to arrive at a typology of motives essentially intrinsic but also rational, as follows: affective, normative, and rational.

Affective motives were described as commitment to government programs through genuine conviction about their social importance (based on respect for the objectives of the public service), an extensive love for all people within the parameters of political frameworks, and the imperative that they must be protected in all of the basic rights granted to them by the enabling documents (Perry and Wise 1990).

Normative motives reflect the desire to serve in the public interest, a commonly normative foundation for government employment. They are essentially altruistic (Downs 1967), involving a unique sense of loyalty to duty and to the government as a whole (Mosher 1968). A normative anchor for public administrators was considered to flow from the concept of social equity (Perry and Wise 1990).

Perry and Wise (1990) made a strong case that public service motivation is sometimes grounded in rational motives. Although participation in public policy formulation can be considered normative, they argued that it is likely to appeal to more individuals in more rational terms. It can be exciting, dramatic, and reinforcing of an individual’s image of self-importance. According to Rawls, a greater realization of self emanates from the skillful and devoted exercise of social duties (1971). Someone drawn to government to participate in policy making may be satisfying personal needs while serving social interests. The person might, in fact, be committed to public programs because of personal identification with them.

Key to this study is Perry’s assertion that public service motivation has significant behavioral implications; he stated that it defines the public service ethic in that the level and type of an individual’s public service motivation and the motivational composition of a public organization’s workforce have been posited to influence individual job choice, job performance, and organizational effectiveness (Perry and Wise 1990; Rainey 1982; Romek 1989). In particular, the proposition that “The greater an individual’s public service motivation, the more likely the individual will seek membership in a public organization” (Perry and Wise 1990) is the framework for the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4:

High level of public service motivation in an individual is a strong predictor of choosing to enter a government public service career.

Empirical Testing of the Public Service Motivation Construct and Choosing to Enter Government Public Service Professions

Perry recognized that despite the strength and frequency of claims about public service motivation and themes about the public service ethos, there was little empirical research. He therefore attempted to close the gap between such statements and empirical research, by translating the public service motivation construct comprising affirmative, normative, and rational motives, according to a measurement scale comprising the following four dimensions:

1. Attraction to public policy making
2. Commitment to public interest civic duty
3. Compassion
4. Self-sacrifice
Studies concerned with Perry’s PSM construct in relation to choosing public service professions in government, represent 11 percent of the studies related to public service motivation. A total of thirty-five studies from 1985–2006 that addressed the topic of public service motivation were reviewed. All of them addressed the concept as both a dependent variable and an independent variable. As a dependent variable, it was conceptualized in relationships with the following independent variables: antecedents (educational, political, professional, religious, and social), culture (national), demographics, individual conceptions, organizational strategy, public policy, and political rhetoric contained in U.S. Presidents’ inaugural addresses. As an independent variable, it was conceptualized in relationships with job attraction, commitment, performance, retention, and satisfaction.

Seven studies in the public administration literature from 1995–2005 examine the relationship between public service motivation and public service career choices. One of these, Gabris and Simo (1995), predated Perry’s scale for measuring levels of public service motivation in the individual. This is one of the few studies in which no distinction was made between private and public sector behavior. In the study, public sector (service) motivation was considered as an independent variable, operationalized as individual demographic characteristics affecting career decisions.

The study sample from six organizations comprised ninety-five individuals: forty-two in public organizations, twenty-one nonprofit, and thirty-two private. In 72 percent of the sample, no positive relationship was found between family affiliation with public sector organizations and job satisfaction, job likes/dislikes, ratings of individual motivation needs, perception of factor efficiency, or perception of work opportunity. Survey questionnaires were employed, and analysis was based on Analysis of Variance and Chi-square tests. Gabris and Simo (1995) concluded that motivation to serve the general community was not exclusive to any particular sector.

In the six other studies (Lewis and Frank 2002; Knapp 2000; Knapp and McLean 2003; Dalehite 2002; Standerfer 2002; Vandenabeele, Hondeghem, and Steen 2004), at least some aspect of the PSM construct was used in both dependent and independent variables. Regarding dependent variables, Lewis and Frank looked at age, education level, family affiliation with public organizations, gender, and political affiliation. They extracted a sample of 2,609 from respondents to the 1989 and 1998 General Social Survey.

The study sample of Lewis and Frank (2002) was constructed based on participants’ indication of their interest in working for government. Those who preferred working for government or were at the time employed in government represent 24 percent of the respondents. Lewis and Frank utilized descriptive and correlation statistics, finding a positive relationship between high levels of public service motivation and value for high pay (32%), comparatively high value for job security (29%), high priority on helping others (29%), and those with high school diploma or less who wanted to work for government (27%). Levels of motivation were found to be highest among Democrats, minorities, older Americans, and veterans.

Knapp (2000) and Knapp and McLean (2003) explored what prompts individuals to seek employment within the public parks and recreation field. These studies sought to understand whether parks-and-recreation professionals have an orientation toward public service. They noted that positive feedback from the community helped to form a sense of accomplishment for many parks-and-recreation professionals. This was considered to satisfy the need within individuals who are motivated toward public service as a means to contribute to society or the
community. Many employees who were surveyed identify having an orientation toward public service as a key aspect of their jobs.

Based on their studies, Knapp and McLean concluded that it would be advantageous for those in the field of parks and recreation to provide opportunities that cater to the intrinsic motivation and public service orientation of staff. She also recognized that employees should be educated early and often regarding how their work impacts their communities and society as a whole.

Dalehite (2002) examined the antecedents of public service motivation as a predictor of the willingness among high school students to perform compulsory military and public service. He also sought to establish the correlation between a willingness to perform compulsory service and an individual’s likelihood to enter into public service. Dalehite considered favorable parental association, religiosity, and political ideology as being positively related to the willingness to perform compulsory service, and socio-economic status as negatively related. Demographics, race, and gender were control variables. Data were collected from a sample of 1,134 high school students, taken from an overall sample of 1,647 observations in the High School and Beyond Survey (1983). Of these, 513 observations were dropped, as they contained missing values. Logistic regression was then used.

In this study, Dalehite also found that parental occupation, family income, political ideology, and gender were individually significant at different levels in distinguishing between an individual’s dispositions toward performing compulsory service. Parental occupation was found to have the strongest effect on the dependent variable. Political ideology was only marginally significant, and religiosity was not significant. Socio-economic status, measured in terms of family income, also had a strong negative effect on the probability of choosing compulsory service. For every increase of $10,000, the probability of choosing military service decreased. Whereas females were more inclined toward public service than the military, the reverse applied for males.

Standerfer (2002) used levels of public service motivation to differentiate between paid and volunteer public workers. A sample of sixty-one participants was solicited from potential public service employees from among AmeriCorps*Vista recruits attending pre-service orientations in six states. They were asked why they decided to become members, what they consider rewarding or unrewarding about service, and what they anticipate their biggest challenges to be during their term of service.

Standerfer (2002) used Q-methodology to collect and analyze the data. Participants were presented with a series of statements about a particular issue and were asked to sort the statements based on how they matched their own points of view. This method is utilized to discern patterns of subjective meaning. From the data, Standerfer was able to classify six groups: Adventurers, Advocates, Altruists, Communitarians, Social Workers, and Testers/Seekers. The study is useful in differentiating between individuals pre-disposed toward public service but motivated to act at the individual rather than communitarian level, as demonstrated in the differentiation between the Social Workers and the Communitarians.

Vandenabeele (2004) considered the proposition made by Perry and Wise (1990) that public service motivation is defined by an individual’s predisposition to respond to motivations grounded uniquely in public institutions and organizations. In this regard, he investigated whether PSM has an impact on the attractiveness of a prospective employer. Vandenabeele hypothesized a correlation between public service motivation and the attractiveness of government employment in Belgium.
Utilizing the PSM construct with minor adjustments justified by perceived cultural differences, Vandenabeele (2005) examined a sample of final-year college students. Two multiple regression models were used: the first was to assess whether the dimensions of individual PSM correlate with the attractiveness of a government employer; the second was to test the same presumption for a private sector employer. The proportion of the explained variance found in the two models was almost the same. It was observed that public service motivation was already present in the individual before entering public sector employment.

Blank (1985) addressed the issue of individual attraction to government employment. This study, which preceded the PSM construct, examined the May 1979 Current Population Survey data to investigate whether workers with different personal characteristics have differing probabilities of choosing public versus private sector employment. The study showed a stronger orientation toward government employment among non-whites, women, and veterans. Those with higher levels of education and more experience were also far more likely to choose the public sector, which Blank interpreted as an indication that such individuals consider work in the public sector as more rewarding.

Three observations were made from these studies. First, Perry’s PSM construct has not been tested in its original form except by Perry (1996) during the initial stages of its development, utilizing the 24-item scale. Most of the studies involved abstractions from the general debate on differentiating the public and private sectors, and the study that most closely considered Perry’s PSM construct was not framed within the U.S. Second, apparently no studies since Perry (1996) have sampled the graduate student population for public service motivation. Based on the assumption that graduate program selection is an indicator of career commitment, students enrolled in public and business administration programs would provide for a good comparison with the general population. Finally, in the four studies examining the relationship of some aspect of the PSM construct with public employment, all showed a positive relationship with most of the independent variables tested.

**Socialization**

Perry continued developing the PSM construct by seeking to identify its antecedents. Using the same sample as he used in itemizing the PSM construct, he focused on what were considered plausible correlates of public service motivation: parental socialization, religious socialization, professional identification, political ideology, and individual demographic characteristics. Other scholars also examined some of these variables, as described below.

**Parental Socialization.** Perry posited that the primary context for socialization within American society is the family, particularly parents. Empirical evidence has established a relationship between altruism and both parental modeling and favorable parental relations. Compassion and self-sacrifice are closely aligned with altruism. Perry therefore reasoned that they might be a product of parental socialization. Parental employment socialization as one aspect of parental socialization is operationalized as parents having more months of public sector employment experience than work experience in private businesses.

**Hypothesis 5:**
There is a positive relationship between individuals’ employment and parental employment socialization in the public sector, and the choice of a public service profession.
Parental Educational Socialization. This is another important aspect of parental socialization. Studies in career psychology have demonstrated the strength and influence of the family on career choice (Arnold and Feldman 1988; Bud and Miller 1988). In addition to the direct influence of the family through advice or example, Werts (1967) found from a sample of 127,212 freshmen students from 248 four-year colleges and universities, that career choice was predicated by the individual’s father’s level of education. Werts found, for example, that in the case of the 724 participants in the study enrolled in Government Administration programs, the mean average of father’s education among 380 males was high school graduate, and among 344 females was some college education.

Hypothesis 6:
There is a positive relationship between individuals’ parents’ level of education and the choice of a public service profession.

Religious Socialization. Perry (2006) found that religion is related directly to several facets of the PSM construct, specifically commitment to the public interest / civic duty and compassion. He argued that religion is the institution where Americans develop beliefs about their obligations to others and are provided with opportunities to fulfill those beliefs. The pluralistic character of American religion assures varied public opinion on differences between public and private motives.

Perry posited, however, that public service motivation is likely to be negatively affected by involvement in church activities, church membership, and active participation in its programs, because they can be very time-consuming. He asserted that an alternative indicator of religious socialization is needed. In this regard, Mockabee, Manson, and Grant (2001) found that although there were differences across traditions, the frequency of attendance at religious services and the frequency of prayer stood out as the two items most uniformly considered as very important by members of all major religious traditions. Based on the doubtful value of the church attendance and involvement variables, frequency of prayer was selected to measure level of religious socialization in this study.

Hypothesis 7:
Individuals’ strong inclination toward prayer is a strong predictor of their choosing a public service profession.

Professional Identification. Perry (2006) found that professionalism is typically associated with ethical responsibility for use of expertise, including making it available for the common good (Mosher 1938). According to Perry, many professions historically have been repositories for public service motivation—such as medicine, law, and the clergy—advancing such social norms as caring, social justice, and the common good. A professional’s socialization to his or her ethical responsibility suggests that identification with a profession positively influences public service motivation.

Hypothesis 8:
Individuals’ high level of PSM is a strong predictor of commitment to professionalism, measured by their membership in professional organizations.
Political Ideology. According to Perry (2006), individuals adopt political ideology through political affiliations and distinct positions in the political arena have historically been taken on ethical issues. He reasoned that political ideology should therefore be associated with an individual’s public service motivation. Perry proposed a direct measure of political belief as conservatism-liberalism, with increasing liberalism positively related to public service motivation.

Hypothesis 9:
Political liberalism in an individual is a strong predictor of the person’s choice of a public service profession in government.

Race. From a study of 687 undergraduate students, Gloria and Hird (1999) concluded that ethnic identity was a more significant predictor of career choice, self-efficacy, and trait anxiety for racial and ethnic minorities than for whites. The group comprised 589 whites and 98 racial and ethnic minorities.

Peck (1975) investigated the possible existence and stability of different national patterns of career values in eight countries: Brazil, England, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the U.S., and Yugoslavia. He administered an Occupational Values Inventory to 6,400 urban children in seven of the countries in 1965 and to a sample of 3,600 in 1969. The samples were stratified by age (10 and 14), sex, and socioeconomic status (upper-middle and upper-lower). A four-way analysis of variance revealed distinctive national profiles that were stable across the two samples except for some changes in three countries.

In the U.S., Peck’s study was conducted in two cities: Chicago, IL and Austin, TX. In Chicago, he found high value placed on altruism, management, self-satisfaction, and security. Low occupational value was placed on independence, success, creativity, prestige, and the surroundings. In Austin, high value was placed on esthetics, security, economic returns, and associates. Low value was placed on independence, success, and creativity.

Fouad and Byars-Winston (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of research between 1997 and 2004 that investigated the relationship between race/ethnicity and vocational choice. From a total of sixteen studies, they concluded that race/ethnicity differences do not greatly affect career aspirations, but there are differences among racial/ethnic groups in perception of career-related opportunities and barriers. The target populations of those studies included adult women, college students, and high school students.

Hypothesis 10:
Racial classification of white as opposed to “other” is a strong predictor of choosing a government public service profession.

METHODOLOGY

Survey questionnaires were used to collect numerical data for this study. The population for the study comprised graduate students of public administration and business administration programs at universities in the Northeast. Seventeen universities agreed to participate. The
The survey was administered through Zoomerang zPro for Education software, which allowed for the data collected to be downloaded into Microsoft Excel.

Graduate students in the fields of public and business administration were chosen for the sample because they represent a group that is most likely to have made a definite choice of career sector, since study at the graduate level represents a specialization. Additionally, according to Light (1999), graduate students today include increasing numbers of individuals who have five or more years of experience of working in government agencies and business organizations. This conveniently facilitated the inclusion of practitioners, as well as students, in the sample.

The Survey Questionnaire

The index used for the survey followed the theoretical framework comprising four sections: organizational culture, career planning, PSM, and socialization, with the addition of demographics and relevant categorical data. The number of items in each section varied. Each questionnaire section was tested to ensure its internal validity.

The majority of the items in the questionnaire were measured on a five-point Likert scale: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Undecided (3), Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5). The complete scale from the PSM construct, as devised by Perry (1996), was employed in twenty-four of the fifty-eight survey questions.

Description of Variables and Data Analysis

This study employed the following variables derived from the literature:

1. Dependent variables (1)
   Sector of preference for employment (government or other)
2. Demographic and descriptive variables (7)
   State where undergraduate education was completed
   Foreign country outside of US where undergraduate education was completed
   Graduate program enrolled in
   Number of semesters spent in graduate program
   Individual’s age group classification
   Individual’s racial classification
   Individual’s gender classification
3. Independent variables (45)
   a. Organizational culture (3)
      Expectation of commitment to public service value sharing with government
      Expectation of job security value sharing with government
      Expectation of pay value sharing with government
   b. Career planning (3)
      Collection of information on employment opportunities
      Attendance at career counseling
      Assessment of social personality type
   c. PSM (24)
      Attraction to public policy, opinion on politics
Attraction to public policy, opinion on politicians
Attraction to public policy, opinion on policy making
Public interest, community events
Public interest, unselfish contribution to community
Public interest, meaningful service important
Public interest, favor the common good
Public interest, public service is civic duty
Compassion for plight of the underprivileged
Compassion toward important social programs
Compassion toward people in distress
Compassion toward the welfare of others
Compassion toward the welfare of strangers
Compassionate about human interdependence
Compassion toward unassertive people
Compassion toward public programs
Self-sacrificial attitude toward making a difference in society
Self-sacrificial attitude toward duty
Self-sacrificial attitude toward doing good deeds
Self-sacrificial attitude toward a bigger cause
Self-sacrificial attitude toward serving citizens over monetary reward
Self-sacrificial attitude toward giving to society rather than taking
Self-sacrificial attitude in the interest of helping others
Self-sacrificial attitude in the interest of the good of society
d. Socialization (15)
  Religious socialization
  Current employment sector and status
  Individual’s months spent employed in business
  Individual’s months spent employed in government
  Individual’s months spent employed in nonprofits
  Father’s months spent employed in business
  Father’s months spent employed in government
  Father’s months spent employed in nonprofits
  Mother’s months spent employed in business
  Mother’s months spent employed in government
  Mother’s months spent employed in nonprofits
  Individual’s political orientation
  Father’s level of education
  Mother’s level of education
  Commitment to professionalism by professional organization membership

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<th>Hypothesis</th>
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<th>Independent Variable</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Bivariate logistic regression</td>
<td>Expectations of shared values</td>
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RESULTS

Profile of Survey Respondents

The 291 respondents represented primarily two sampling groups: students enrolled in public administration programs (64) and students enrolled in business administration programs (227). In both graduate programs, the sample comprised combinations of practitioners and students. The respondents covered a wide range of ages, but most are under 35 (N=190, n=65.29). The distribution of respondents by race was that most were white (N=226, n=77.66%) and most of the white respondents were enrolled in public administration programs. Of the ten hypotheses, three were confirmed, two were partially confirmed, and five were rejected.

Table 2 Summary of research hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Individuals’ perception that their expectation that values important to them are to a great extent shared by the organization is a strong predictor of their choice of employment with that organization.</td>
<td>Partially Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>High levels of public service motivation and career planning combined is a strong predictor of choosing a public service profession in government.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Self-assessment as “social” is a stronger predictor of choosing public service professions than self-assessment as “not social.”</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>High level of public service motivation in an individual is a strong predictor of choosing to enter a public service career in government.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Individuals’ employment and parental employment socialization in the public sector is a strong predictor of choosing a public service profession in government.</td>
<td>Partially Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Individuals’ parents’ level of education at bachelor’s degree or higher is a strong predictor of choosing a public service profession in government.</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Individuals’ strong inclination toward prayer is a strong predictor of their choice of a public service profession.</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Individuals’ high level of PSM is a strong predictor of commitment to professionalism, measured by their membership in professional organizations.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Political liberalism in an individual is a strong predictor of choosing a public service profession in government.</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Racial classification as white as opposed to other is a strong predictor of choosing a public service profession in government.</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results of Hypothesis Testing

Table 3 Summary of hypotheses and results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Organizational culture</td>
<td>Expectation of shared values</td>
<td>Y: .004 g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Career planning</td>
<td>Career planning activities</td>
<td>Y: .002**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Career planning</td>
<td>Self-assessment as social</td>
<td>N: .436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Public service motivation</td>
<td>Perry’s PSM construct</td>
<td>Y: .001 g*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Employment status / parents’ employment</td>
<td>Y: .000*/.096***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Parents’ education</td>
<td>N: .744/.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>N: .173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>PSM</td>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>Y: .003**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Political orientation</td>
<td>N: .851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>N: .651</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. Significance is measured by the Model Chi-square statistic for each variable or set of variables. N = No, not supported; Y = Yes, supported; g = Government. * p < .001; ** p < .01; *** p < .10.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results show that 47% of the sample would choose to work for government after graduation. These represent 58% of the students enrolled in public administration programs.

As a predictor of career choice, the strength of significance of perceptions by respondents that their expectations of shared values would be to a great extent met in organizations was dependent on the level of those expectations. High overall expectations were strong predictors of career choice. These expectations included those related to all three factors considered: commitment to public service, job security, and pay. High overall expectations to be met in government organizations was a strong predictor of the decision to enter into a government public service profession (p < .01).

Combined with PSM, career-planning activities proved to be a strong predictor of the decision to enter government public service professions (p < .01). Individually, however, none of the three career planning variables predicted the decision to enter government public service professions. In comparing them, collecting career-related information was higher priority than participating in career counseling. The ineffectiveness of collecting career planning material may
result from the reported unavailability of adequate information on government employment. Self-assessment as “social” was too highly biased (93.1%) to be useful in case classification.

High level of public service motivation proved to be a strong predictor of the decision to enter government public service professions (p < .001). A closer look at the four dimensions of the PSM construct as predictors indicated that the first and fourth dimensions were stronger than the second and third. The first, attraction to public policy making, was significant at p < .05 (.017), as was the second, self-sacrificial attitudes (.012). These were stronger predictors of the decision to enter government public service professions than were public interest (p = .038) or compassion (p = .17).

Specifically, among the individual items in the entire construct, attraction to public policy making, self-sacrificial attitudes toward doing good deeds, and placing priority on doing good deeds over personal financial gain were the strongest predictors in the 24-item PSM construct. All three exhibited strength as predictors of the career decision to enter government public service professions (p < .05).

The employment and professional socialization variables were the strongest within the concept of socialization. Graduate students who were currently employed in government organizations indicated their intention to enter into government public service professions. This variable exhibited predictor strength at p < .05 (.016). In addition, respondents whose fathers were mainly employed in public service, whether in government or nonprofits, also tended to choose public service careers in government, although to a lesser extent (p = .08).

Parental education to at least bachelor level was not significant as a predictor of the decision to enter government public service professions, with p = .842 for fathers and p = .357 for mothers. Even parental education through only high school was not a significant predictor.

Religious socialization as measured by the frequency of individuals’ inclination toward prayer was not accepted as a predictor of the decision to enter government public service professions (p = .205).

Political liberalism was also rejected as a predictor of the decision to enter government public service professions (p = .677).

In assessing the relationship between individuals’ high levels of PSM and professionalism, neither the impact of PSM on professionalism (p = .086) nor the impact of professionalism on PSM (p < .03) was significant at p < .05. Neither of the two strongest PSM variables, attraction to public policy making and doing good deeds, was a strong predictor of professional commitment. None of the nine socialization variables was a significant predictor of PSM, but the individual employment (p = .126) and professionalism (p = .103) variables were the closest and were significant as predictors of the decision to enter government public service professions.

Race, as white or not white, was rejected as a predictor of the decision on entering public service professions (p = .202). Because the sample was predominantly white, no other race was isolated.

Finally, demographic variables of age, race, and sex were not confirmed as predictors of career choice. These variables were useful in describing the sample and perhaps the cohort group in general. This information is of value to program directors and public personnel recruiters who are monitoring the talent pool.

CONCLUSION
The following variables were the strongest predictors of the decision to enter government public service professions: graduate students’ perception that their expectations of shared values of commitment toward public service will be met in government organizations, professional commitment measured by membership in related professional organizations, father’s employment experience mainly in government and nonprofits, attraction to public policy making, self-sacrificial attitudes toward doing good deeds over seeking personal financial gain, and, marginally, completion of undergraduate education in the U.S. northeast region. In total, the combination of these variables as a model was highly significant based on the Model Chi-square statistic.

The complete PSM construct was confirmed as a predictor of career choice in government, based on high scores of PSM. Two variables stood out in most significantly predicting the career decision to enter government public service professions: attraction to public policy making and self-sacrificial attitude toward doing good deeds. The PSM variables ranked fifth and sixth out of the seven variables accepted in the final model.
REFERENCES


